

RECOVERY ALIVE!



Raising Hope from the Dead!

What is Recovery ALIVE?

Recovery ALIVE prioritizes the Power of Jesus through the Holy Spirit to raise Hope from The Dead. Recovery ALIVE is an organic, living program, representing a living God. Recovery ALIVE works through a 12-step recovery process to promote healthy change centered around “3 P’s”, the POWER of Recovery, the PEOPLE of Recovery, and the PROCESS of Recovery. Our program harnesses the unchanging truth of Jesus Christ and His word to a living, organic process, to reach and minister to an ever-changing world.

Who is Recovery ALIVE for?

Recovery Alive isn't for anyone; it's for everyone! It is not defined by an issue such as drugs and alcohol. It is defined by a process. We have found that the Christ-Centered 12 Steps of RA works for any issue that breaks a person. We have also found that everyone is broken in some area of their life.

What are POWER Groups, PEOPLE Groups and PROCESS Groups?

A typical weekly Recovery ALIVE meeting (the POWER GROUP) will offer a teaching on one of the steps guided by the core questions you will find in the 12 chapters of the RA Handbook. Some weeks, someone will share their Recovery Story with us. The program will then break up into PEOPLE GROUPS (small groups) that will again be focused on the core question taught during the main session of the program.

At the end of every chapter of the RA Handbook, you will find PROCESS GROUP questions. Process Groups questions and exercises, simply put, are a deep dive into the steps. Process Groups function as a vehicle for working more intentionally through the 12 steps. The Process Group exercises can be worked through on your own, but they are exponentially more effective within a Recovery Alive! Program.

What does a PROCESS GROUP consist of ?

Process Groups are small group sessions offered throughout the week by your local or online Recovery ALIVE! program. Process Groups function as a vehicle for working intentionally through the 12 steps.

Process Groups are a key part of recovery!

- Process Groups are gender specific and issue non-specific. This means that you will have groups of women who struggle with a wide variety of issues, and groups of men with diverse issues.
- Process Groups are scheduled for the same day, time, and location each week.
- Process Groups are closed groups. Once the groups are formed, the same group of people will participate from beginning to end. This allows participants to form strong bonds for support and accountability in working through the 12 Steps.

- Process Groups require both individual work and group sharing. Participants will work individually throughout the week, out of the Recovery ALIVE Handbook. This includes reading the lesson and answering the associated Process Group questions. Participants will then share their answers in the weekly group session.



BOOK SAMPLE

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INTRODUCTION

“If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about- turn and walking back to the right road; and in that case, the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive.”

C.S. Lewis (1)

I don't know exactly why you're reading this. I do believe it must have something to do with a need for change. Maybe you have an addiction you can't kick. Maybe it started as something that you used to manage your life, but now it's managing you. Maybe you're just angry all the time, or anxious, or depressed. Maybe you've been betrayed, rejected, abandoned, abused. Perhaps you are in the midst of a failing relationship. You'd fix it if you knew how, or even just where to start. Or maybe you're watching someone you love self-destruct and you need some direction on how to help her change, or him change, or them change. Truth is, you are powerless to change them or you. If you could have, you would have. But you haven't, because you can't. You really can't. You are powerless, and your life is unmanageable. Let me validate that this is a terrifying reality to admit. However, without this admission, the 12 steps will be of no benefit. You can keep trying to change if you want, (we call this insanity) but it won't work because, did I tell you this already...?

YOU ARE POWERLESS!

At the same time, I am very excited to let you know that you can change. You really can! Confused? I get it. I was too when I started my recovery journey. I remember reading step 1 for the first time and thinking, “Boy, that's depressing.”

And it would be, if not for step 2 and 3 and all the others. But we'll get to that soon enough. Let's take this one step at a time, shall we? For 85 years, the 12 steps have provided a process and system of support for millions of people dealing with a variety of life-altering struggles. These steps were written by a man named Bill Wilson ("Bill W."), who, after a decades-long battle with alcohol, found sobriety through a powerful spiritual experience in a Manhattan hospital. The result of his spiritual awakening was not just sobriety, but a new understanding of change. He discovered a road, a pathway to healing—for himself and for others. This pathway is outlined in the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Recovery ALIVE! is a Christ-centered 12-step program inspired by this time-tested process. It acknowledges the contributions of Bill W. and his wife Lois in pioneering the personal transformation we now call "recovery." We share the values that first defined recovery in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous: vigorous honesty, unity, servanthood, carrying the message to others, and the ultimate authority of a loving God. In weekly Recovery ALIVE! meetings all over the country, hundreds of people are finding a safe place to work through the process outlined in this handbook. The 12 steps of Recovery ALIVE! follow the letter and the spirit of Bill W's original content closely. We believe so strongly in the efficacy of the steps, that we have sought, as a ministry, to encompass a greater audience for these recovery principles. In order to further our reach, to cast a bigger net for recovery, a broadening of the 12 steps has been necessary. In adjusting the language, we have been able to include a greater variety of struggles in this process, thus opening the door for anyone to benefit from these recovery principles. The original 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) give special emphasis to the recognition and correction of personal wrongs (step 5), defects of character (step 6), and shortcomings (step 7) of the individual working their program—and they do this for good reason. AA gives high priority to fault ownership, principally because Bill Wilson knew firsthand that the alcoholic is, above all things, selfish. As Wilson himself wrote in the resource recovering alcoholics affectionally call *The Big Book*, "Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible ...Selfishness, self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles."(2)

Though the addict must continually confront their ego, selfishness is not the root of every struggle Recovery ALIVE! addresses. For example, when working with a survivor of abuse, healing occurs when personal responsibility is released,

not owned. In Recovery ALIVE!, fault ownership and forgiveness are given equal emphasis because those who hold resentments—the betrayed, the bitter, the victimized—gain their freedom not by taking hold of their responsibility, but by letting it go. Recovery ALIVE! invites an expansion of struggles, requiring a more inclusive approach. This broader inclusion is reflected in steps 5, 7, and 9 of Recovery ALIVE!

Recovery is so much more than helping people get sober. Ultimately, “recovery” is defined by our program as God’s supernatural plan to breathe life into every lost and dying soul through the Holy Spirit-empowered process of the 12 steps. Revivalist Leonard Ravenhill wrote, “Jesus did not come into the world to make bad men good. He came into the world to make dead men live.”⁽³⁾ We believe the Power behind the process of recovery brings forth true freedom and healing in each of us who are not just lost, but dead without Jesus Christ. Recovery ALIVE! is a program created, facilitated, and empowered by the work of the Holy Spirit and those He has rescued to raise hope from the dead in a lost and dying world. At Recovery ALIVE! (RA) we not only believe change is possible, but that it is inevitable when you engage the 3 P’s of our program. If you commit to working the process of Recovery ALIVE!, if you intentionally reach out to the safe and supportive people in Recovery ALIVE!, and, most importantly, if you surrender to the power of Jesus Christ, which is prioritized at Recovery ALIVE!, it will happen...you will change. The process of RA offers a path for progress in recovery. Safe and supportive people provide the encouragement and accountability to start and sustain the RA process. Most importantly, it is the power of Jesus Christ that gives us the ability not just to improve, but to completely and utterly recover from whatever keeps us in bondage. This RA Handbook is intended to be an all-inclusive resource to help you, the reader, connect to these three P’s (Process, People, Power) of recovery. I highly recommend you find a Recovery ALIVE! program or similar 12-step fellowship as you work through this resource. At the very least, invite one safe person you can trust into your 12-step excursion. The path of recovery is not meant to be traveled alone. I also recommend you get your hands on a Bible as you work through this handbook. The Life Recovery Bible is a great supplement to the work we will be doing. It is offered in the New Living Translation, which is the version of the Bible referenced in these pages.

If you are involved, or are looking to get involved in Recovery ALIVE!, the RA handbook will be invaluable to you. Recovery ALIVE! ministries are built around this material and will serve to navigate you through the teachings

(called “step talks”) and small group experiences offered in RA programs.

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At the end of every chapter of the RA Handbook, you will find Process Group questions. Process Group questions and exercises, simply put, are a deep dive into the steps. Process Groups function as a vehicle for working more intentionally through the 12 steps. The Process Group exercises can be worked through on your own, but they are exponentially more effective within a Recovery ALIVE! program.

I am so happy you have found this resource. My prayer, and the prayer of our Recovery ALIVE! ministry team, is that you will discover the hope and healing you are looking for. Remember, life is full of new beginnings. Recovery is about progress, not perfection. The fact that you are seeking a better way means you are heading in the right direction.

CHAPTER 1
THE POWER OF WEAKNESS

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless
and that our lives had become
unmanageable.

“I want to do what is right, but I can’t.”
Romans 7:18

“If you board the wrong train, it is no use running
along the corridor in the other direction.”
Dietrich Bonhoeffer¹

The following questions are organized around concepts found in chapter
1.

Reflect on each one before, during, and after the reading.

CORE QUESTIONS:

Ask yourself honestly, “What do I have control of?”

How has the illusion of control been shattered in your life?

What are your fears of “letting go?”

What insights, clarity, or hope did you receive from Jamie’s story?

How do you think admitting your powerlessness will help you?

WEAKNESS IS A REALITY.

Ask yourself honestly, What do I actually have control of?

As I write this, the one window that punctuates the far end of my office welcomes in the warm, bright morning sunlight. The far trees are perfectly still against the field of pale blue sky, where beneath it gray stones stand in neat rows as far as the eye can see. These perfectly sculpted, unmoving markers represent thousands of lives that once drove kids to school, planned vacations, went out to dinner, walked golf courses, and sat in offices—maybe just like the one I am sitting in right now. I could draw the shade, but I find the graveyard outside my window a sobering daily reminder of the reality of my powerlessness.

As I write this, my phone vibrates with another response to a group text regarding a couple who has lost everything in a house fire. “Praying!” is the reply. It’s very similar to what I wrote not long ago when I was first included in the details of this family’s tragedy. I added, “Let me know what we can do to help!” What else can I say? What else can I do?

As I write this, we are in the twelfth month of COVID-19. It’s hard to imagine life before masks, social distancing, shelter-in-place orders, and quarantining. Yet, a year ago there we were, obliviously attending concerts and sporting events, mindlessly throwing the small 4-pack of toilet paper into our grocery carts (if only we knew!), waving and smiling with naked faces at our friends and neighbors on our way to work or school or the gym...and then the unpredictable, the unimaginable, the unthinkable happened. Countless lives were upended, destroyed, devastated. The most healthy of us were infected, the most secure of us were bankrupted, the most successful businesses failed, the most prepared of us were caught off guard. As participants in a global pandemic we have, en masse, been accosted with the harsh reality of our powerlessness, begging the question: What do we truly have control over? It’s a question many of us would rather not ask. We like a world we can manage, and if we dig deep enough into the question of control, we find a reality we would all prefer not to face. And so, we don’t face it. Our happiness, we believe, is rooted in our ability to keep the reality of our powerlessness buried outside a shade-drawn window. The activities, distractions, goals, and pursuits of our life keep us afloat in the illusion that we are in charge that we call the shots, even amidst overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Ellen Langer, the first woman to be tenured as a psychology professor at Harvard University, wrote a groundbreaking article in 1975 for the *Journal of*

Personality and Social Psychology called “The Illusion of Control.”² Based on her Yale doctoral thesis (yeah, she’s pretty smart!) Langer elaborated on a series of studies she had conducted to shed light on the tendency for human beings to believe they can control outcomes they have no demonstrable influence over. Over time, many others have run similar experiments with similar results, corroborating Langer’s original conclusions. Simply put, people, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, believe they have control over what they KNOW to be uncontrollable. In experiment after experiment, people have been shown to:

- believe they have a better chance at winning the lottery if they pick their own numbers instead of having them randomly assigned.
- believe they are less likely to get into a car accident if they are driving than if they are in the passenger seat.
- believe the harder they throw a pair of dice, the higher the numbers will be.

We are desperately attached to the belief that we are in control. We protect the illusion because to align with the truth is to embrace our powerlessness. The illusion provides a temporary panacea for our impotence, our fragility, our weakness. It gives us something to “do,” something to hope for as the traffic of life hurtles unpredictably around and about us. Case in point, New Yorkers dutifully obey the following instructions at some 3,250 crosswalks throughout the city:

TO CROSS STREET - PUSH BUTTON - WAIT FOR SIGNAL

Yet, according to the New York Times, the vast majority of these buttons are relics of the 1970s that have been out of operation for nearly 40 years. Deemed too expensive to take down, city officials have allowed them to remain as mechanical placebos for impatient pedestrians. Folks on elevators are also treated with a placebo. Since the American with Disabilities Act of 1990, the “close door” button, still displayed on control panels in buildings all over the country, has faded into obsolescence. These buttons do nothing, change nothing, yet people keep on pushing them. None of us really wants to admit how little control we have.

DENIAL: THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL

“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”

Romans 12:2

The Apostle Paul wrote that in order for change to happen, for old patterns to be broken, we must change the way we think. Contrary to what most of us believe, life change begins not with a change of circumstances, nor with a change of behavior, but with a change of mind. John Milton wrote that “The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell or a hell of heaven.”(3) The mind is where many of us have been taken captive, where strong-holds have been built and fortified. As Joyce Meyer says, the mind is indeed a battlefield!(4) In working the 12 steps, a courageous and uncompromising honesty is required, because it is in our thinking that the war for our recovery is won or lost. The Apostle Paul tells us that we must capture rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ. He wrote that in order to resist conforming to the world, we need a personal transformation, and that transformation begins internally. (2 Corinthians 10:5, Romans 12:2)

Recovery is a shift in thinking that equips us to (1) face and (2) live in reality. Denial, on the other hand, is both the thought and action of living outside of reality. Denial is accepting and living the illusion of control. To fully recover, one must confront denial, not through a cessation of detrimental behaviors, but by a thorough rejection of false and harmful beliefs. Our behavior is a byproduct of our beliefs. We may call a person “crazy” who straps a bomb to his body and walks into a coffee shop in Tel Aviv. However, if we explore his life more closely, we will find that most likely a toxic and dangerous belief system is driving his harmful and destructive behavior. His behavior is a logical and rational byproduct of his beliefs.

In order for recovery to begin, we must confront our beliefs and tell ourselves the truth. Other people can confront our denial, but unless we ourselves become acquainted with the truth in an intimate way, the truth is of no use to us. Jesus explained that before we can be set free, we must “know the truth.” (John 8:32) In step 1 we seek to accept the truth regarding our weakness. In step 1 we embrace that we are powerless and our lives have become unmanageable.

To begin our recovery journey, each of us needs to confront the reality of our denial. We must confront the illusion of control.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE CONTROL OF?

The words of a man named Victor Frankl, a holocaust survivor, may be worth considering before answering this question. The horrors of Hitler's death camps revealed to the Austrian neurologist just how fragile life is, and how little control he had over it. After having his life's work torn from him, his wife, mother, and brother murdered, and his freedom stripped away, Frankl realized he was left with one choice:

Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms- to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way...(5)

Frankl's conclusion of what we have control of, in my opinion, is one of the most profound statements ever written: "When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves."

Life can be a cruel teacher, and though we most likely will not experience trauma on the level of Frankl's, addiction, abuse, crushing depression, overwhelming anxiety, and relationship conflict can all increase an awareness of our own powerlessness. When this awareness increases, many of us double down on control. We deny help, deny the hurt, deny our need. We yell and scream, we manipulate, we work our fingers to the bone, and though we may do well for a time, white-knuckling our problems and our pain, each of us inevitably comes to the end of our strength and resources. There is a limit to even the strongest will. We want to give up, but we are terrified to lose control. We resist our desire to escape, to turn to unhealthy habits, unhealthy people, but we fail. And when we do, shame becomes our constant companion.

Change seems an impossibility as we find ourselves ashamed of our inability to "pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps." We know we must change, but we slam up against reality in various frustrating and unpleasant outgrowths of our powerlessness. We begin to see clearly that control is an illusion. Whether it's drugs and alcohol, anger and rage, workaholism, perfectionism, codependency, eating disorders, suicidal ideation,

hopelessness...dysfunction has a way of controlling us the more we try to control our dysfunction. We find ourselves saying, along with the Apostle Paul, "I want to do what is right, but I can't." (Romans 7:18). We come to the end of ourselves, and in doing so, discover the key to unlocking the prison that holds us.

Letting go of the illusion of control is a choice we can make. Deciding to confront the denial we have lived in and face the truth of our powerlessness can be a carefully calculated act of the will. However, letting go of the illusion of control typically isn't a decision we work through as a result of an examination of the pros and cons of living in denial. Most of the time, letting go involves a shattering of the illusion, what many of us have called "hitting bottom." The car being repoed, a spouse packing up and leaving, discovering drugs under your teenager's bed, the loss of a loved one, a DUI, a second DUI, a cancer diagnosis, a restraining order...life has a way of shattering any illusion that we were ever in control in the first place. The mirage vanishes in the darkness of abuse, in trials and storms, in dire consequences and tragedies. When the illusion of control shatters against the brutality of life, the reality of our weakness becomes undeniable.

SESSION 1

PROCESS GROUP

STEP 1: WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS AND
THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE.

1. Ask yourself honestly, what do you have control over?

2. In what ways, have you tried to control...
 - People (spouse, kids, family, friends, co-workers):

 - Circumstances (what you have done, what others have done to you, past and future events):

 - Things (habits, unhealthy behaviors, your own pain):

Contact Us:

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**Check out our Meetings In-Person or
Online:**

Wednesdays at Noon

EST Fridays at 7pm EST

