Recovery FAQ Sheet

What is Recovery?

“Recovery is a state of mind characterized by abstinence from alcohol, drugs, and behaviors that have caused problems for people previously, to the point where a person desires and actively seeks out a new way of life.

“This new way of life is characterized by a strong desire to stay sober, participating in growth opportunities for one’s mental health (such as working a program of sobriety like the twelve steps, faith based healing, SMART, or CBT).

“Recovery is not the same for everyone; no two people lead the same recovery lifestyle. People are invited to use the tools and skills that keep them sober and happy with their lives.

“However, the common theme of all people in recovery is abstinence from addictive behaviors, such as consumption of alcohol and drugs of abuse (including marijuana and all legal and illegal drugs of abuse, excluding caffeine and nicotine and drugs taken for legitimate medical reasons), addictive sexual behavior, and any behaviors that cause physical harm which is a danger to sobriety.”

- Student on the CRC Implementation Committee

Do people still drink when they are in recovery?

No. Recovery is based on complete abstinence from alcohol, drugs, and problematic behaviors. Although individuals may have a relapse (where they end up drinking or using), the purpose of recovery is to learn to live life sober, in a healthy, sustainable, and enjoyable way.

How is recovery different from moderation?

Moderation is reducing frequency and/or quantity of alcohol use and other substances to a healthier level in order to reduce negative impacts on other aspects of your life.
Recovery starts with recognition that the individual has a physiological disorder, and that mood-altering substances have a negative effect that leads to craving, loss of inhibitions, and inability to moderate successfully. Therefore, recovery is focused on living life abstinent from alcohol and other substances.

**So, people in recovery have found a new sense of willpower over substances?**

People in recovery have personally admitted to themselves that their body reacts abnormally to substances. While the person in recovery often is able to exert willpower successfully in other aspects of their life, they have demonstrated to themselves prior to getting sober that they do not consume or think about substances the same way as other people. When it comes to substance use, people in recovery have admitted that they have no willpower or self-control, when they are not engaging in a sober lifestyle. As a result, people in recovery live according to a sober lifestyle. They have regained the willpower to run their life as they desire, free of substances.

An ecosystem is a helpful analogy for understanding recovery and willpower. Humans, who are generally at the top of the ecosystem, can exert themselves and their willpower however they wish within this ecosystem, with moderate to great success. This is mostly true for people in recovery as well. However, substances are at the top of the recovering person’s ecosystem. Substances, when ingested, have control over the recovering individual, not because of a lack of willpower, but because the recovering person is physiologically different. Their body chemistry does not respond well to substances, like an allergy of the mind and body. The only way for the recovering person to live successfully in such an ecosystem is to avoid substances, as they will consume them, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly.

**How can I support the recovery of a family member or friend?**

It may be helpful to the person in recovery if you express that you are supportive of their recovery, and would like to hear from them how you can best support the recovery process.

**What is a CRC?**

CRC is an acronym for Collegiate Recovery Community. It is a community organized at a university, to meet the unique needs of students in recovery. These
needs are met through space provided for recovery-oriented meetings, opportunities for sober activities, enhanced academic support, and enhanced peer support.

**What are the different methods used for recovery?**

There is no one standard for how people start and maintain their recovery. The most commonly used methods include 12-step format (Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, etc.), SMART recovery, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and Faith-based recovery.

**What does anonymity have to do with recovery?**

Anonymity helps to protect the privacy of people in recovery. While recovery is generally viewed as a proud aspect of an individual’s life, they may not want to talk about it with everyone, especially those outside of recovery. This is especially true for people who are new in their recovery. These newcomers to recovery have adopted a new identity for themselves, and may not be completely comfortable talking about recovery and what it means to them, outside of confidential, anonymous environments.

Unfortunately, there is still stigma surrounding being in recovery. The general public doesn’t always fully understand what it means to be in recovery and this leads to flawed judgment.

Anonymity is also important to people in recovery, because no one person should be the “poster child” for recovery. There are so many faces, styles, and facets of recovery that having a public representative would not paint an accurate picture of what recovery is or what it does for people.

**What do people in recovery do with their free time?**

Many of the same things people who are not in recovery do with their free time! People in recovery can and do engage in pretty much any activity they desire. They just do it sober.
Are people in recovery reliable?

Yes. They are very reliable. Many individuals in recovery take great pride in setting and achieving goals in school and the workplace. As part of the recovery lifestyle, individuals place great importance on finishing any commitment they start, giving 100 percent of themselves every day. Individuals in recovery are highly committed to serving others, as a part of staying sober. Serving others means more than just doing community service once a month. It means being available for your boss, coworkers, peers and family, to help whenever possible. It means keeping commitments, and being willing to do everything within one’s power to help another person.

Will being around alcohol trigger a relapse for someone in recovery?

This is a setting that people in recovery must assess for themselves, based on their security in their recovery, time sober, their general mood at the time of being in such a setting, and the reasons behind being in such a setting.

The rule of thumb is that a person in recovery should feel reasonably safe and comfortable in these situations if they have a good reason for being there (for example, a work social/function, or formal dinner with family). The situation is generally free of excessive use of alcohol or other substances. It may also be important that the recovering individual have a planned method of exit, should they find themselves in a situation that is overly challenging to their sobriety or healthy coping strategies.

Why does Oregon State University want to support people in recovery?

For many young people in recovery, going to college seems like an impossible dream. The college culture, historically, has been riddled with drug and alcohol abuse. This is not a conducive environment for recovery. Oregon State wants to change that dynamic. We want students from all walks of life to feel safe and supported on campus, with services and housing available to support recovery, as well as social outlets that do not pose a risk for relapse.

Students in recovery, overall, demonstrate high levels of academic performance, achievement, and a desire to lead and serve others. It is in OSU’s interest to meet the needs of these students, as they make the campus a better place for others.
Why should a university have a collegiate recovery community?

Young people in recovery are very much like their peers who are not in recovery. They need a lot of the same types of academic and social support, but also need support for their sobriety. Historically, college campuses have not been a safe place to get and stay sober, for fear of social stigma, loss of friends, and loss of enjoyable activities. Students in recovery deserve a great college experience just as much as anyone else, and they deserve support that meets their unique needs. The Collegiate Recovery Community features, among other things, sober event programming, outdoor adventure trips, a 24/7 meeting/study/social Club House, extensive support through Counseling and Psychological Services, and study skills support. The list of services provided to students in recovery continues to grow. By providing these services, OSU is not only supporting the needs of students in recovery, but also reinforcing sobriety on campus as an enjoyable, cherished, and admirable way of life.

How can I get involved?

Contact Robert Reff at 541-737-7564 or robert.reff@oregonstate.edu, to discuss opportunities.