

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION TO TREATMENT

*“Let the beauty of what you love,  
be what you do.”*

*Rumi*

### BEING IN TREATMENT

It is not likely that any one of us will go through our lives without having any significant problems. Some of us will experience typical problems such as the death of someone we love and others may face life threatening situations such as car accidents or severe illnesses. When we are faced with problems sometimes we are able to work through them without getting professional help or entering treatment. However, for many people the only way to get better is to enter and complete a specialized treatment program for the particular problem he or she is facing.

Being in treatment is not a sign of weakness. Many problems are so difficult to work on that without being in treatment the person will not get better. If you have heart disease, you need to see a doctor and get medication, and in severe cases you may require surgery. If you have an addiction to alcohol or drugs, you need the help of a professional or a specialized program. If you have a problem with abusive, aggressive, or violent behavior, or sexual behavior problems, you need to work with a professional or enter a program that specializes in working with these particular problems.

### REASONS FOR WANTING TREATMENT

There are many reasons why you may enter treatment. The most common reason is to work on a particular problem. When you try to work on a

particular problem and do not know how to fix it, or you are unsuccessful in your attempts, then you need the help of a professional or specialized program. You may enter treatment by choice, because you know you have a problem and want to get better. However, if you are in trouble with the law, you may be required to go to treatment. When you are required or forced to do something you do not want to do, you may resist or try to get out of doing it.

If you have made a decision to enter treatment on your own, you are on the road to recovery. Recognizing that you have a problem and wanting to correct it is a very responsible and healthy decision. Reading the material in this workbook will help you in your personal recovery program. You may have been pressured into or mandated to go to a treatment program. If so, you may feel reluctant to enter treatment or resistant to become involved in treatment. Either way, I encourage you to give treatment a chance; to work on making your life better. There are a variety of reasons people want to enter treatment for their problems and how they benefit. Some of these reasons are listed below.

### UNDERSTAND AND FEEL BETTER ABOUT YOURSELF

When you are in touch with your thoughts and feelings, you are more likely to be a happier and well balanced person. Right now, you may not

be happy with the person you are. You may have qualities you do not like such as not being honest or not acting responsibly. Maybe you are addicted to drugs and/or alcohol, or you abuse people. You may have decided to enter treatment to work on bettering yourself and developing the positive qualities you admire in others. This is an excellent reason to get help.

*“The secret of success is to know something nobody else knows.”*  
Aristotle Onassis

## **LEARNING SELF-CONTROL AND HOW YOUR BEHAVIOR AFFECTS OTHERS**

When you are in control of your life, you are listening to your thoughts, feeling your emotions and therefore, in touch with your behavior. Many people who act out do not intend to hurt others. They lose control and the people they care about most end up being hurt. Sometimes the harm to the person or people you hurt is psychological and sometimes it is both physical harm and psychological harm. In either case the person or people have been harmed in some way. If you have acted out and hurt someone physically or psychologically, you need to get help. Being in treatment can help you learn to manage your anger and behaviors.

## **WORK ON YOUR ANGER AND BECOME MORE ASSERTIVE**

Anger is something we all experience and it can work for us to make us stronger and better people. It can motivate us to help us solve problems. But, if you find that you are angry a good part of the time, then you may have an anger problem. When you are angry you may be dealing with your anger in unhealthy ways that include passive anger, aggressive anger, or passive-aggressive anger. If you are angry most of the time, you probably feel depressed too.

Nobody likes to be around hurtful, angry people. If you discover that you are losing friends or pushing people away that you care about, working on your anger is a good thing. If you look closely at your anger you will see that the anger comes from other feelings such as fear, shame, guilt, and depression. Your anger may be an unhealthy way to cover up and control these unpleasant feelings. In most cases, when there is anger there is fear and vice versa. In treatment you can learn to manage your anger. As you learn to manage your anger, you will learn how to be appropriately assertive and get your needs met without stepping on the rights of others.

## **WORK ON YOUR FEARS**

You can be strong enough to address any fears that you may face. You can learn the skills to deal with situations that create fear. People can have a variety of fears that developed from abuse, neglect, trauma, or other problems. You may have entered treatment with a variety of fears. You may fear being in treatment. You may fear the change process and you are wondering what you will be like if you change. You may have any number of other things that you are afraid of. Fear is a common emotion that everyone experiences and as noted above is usually associated with feeling angry. Being in treatment is one of the best places and times to work on your fears, no matter what they are.

## **DEVELOP DESIRABLE BEHAVIORS AND QUALITIES**

Everyone has strengths and positive qualities that others admire. You are no different. Being honest, trustworthy, patient, respectful, caring, giving, assertive, etc., are all examples of positive qualities you may see in others that you would like to have yourself. You may have certain behaviors and qualities that you do not like and/or that oth-

ers dislike. Being in treatment is an excellent opportunity to work on developing the qualities, values, and behaviors you admire in others and want for yourself.

## BEING MORE HONEST

You have the ability to be honest in what you say and do. However, sometimes we grow up learning to be dishonest because that's what others taught us or it was a means of surviving abuse or other situations. You may have a problem with lying. When you lie you are always defensive. Most people lie because they fear telling the truth and the consequences of being honest. They believe they have something they must hide.

Being in treatment is an excellent opportunity to practice being honest with yourself and others. It is the perfect time to reveal all the lying you have done and begin to correct the lies with the truth. Correcting lies is difficult but responsible behavior. It helps you work on your problems with a clean conscious. There are many benefits to being honest. You no longer have to run from your problems or lies, you don't have to hide, people will begin to like and trust you, and as you practice being honest with yourself you will begin to feel better about yourself. Honesty is the foundation for positive, caring relationships with others. Honesty and trust go hand in hand.

## DEVELOP TRUST

Everyone wants to trust others and you are no different. You came into this world trusting everyone you met. Trust is essential to healthy relationships. If you came into treatment and have had problems in your past, you may have learned to lie in order to protect yourself. If you were abused or mistreated, you may have learned to not trust people. Trust is an essential part of developing and maintaining relationships. Learning to develop trust when your trust has been broken takes time. As you work on developing trust in other people,

choose people with strong positive values and morals. Go slow and easy, one step at a time. Let your trust build, and don't set yourself up for failure. Being in treatment is a way to work on developing trust as you work on being honest.

## CORRECTING YOUR THINKING

Your thinking can be clear and healthy if you want it to be that way. Dishonesty, anger, lack of trust and other problems are the result of using distorted, unhealthy thinking to support the anger, dishonesty and mistrust. Your thinking plays an important part in having an unhealthy cycle of problem behavior or acting out. If you do not work on changing the way you think, successfully working on and correcting your problems is impossible. Your thoughts govern everything you say and do. Behavior does not occur in a vacuum.

Working on your thinking can benefit you in many ways. You will make better and healthier decisions for yourself, others will respect you more, and you will begin to feel better about yourself because you are more honest with yourself and others. While in treatment you can learn to correct the distorted thinking that supports unhealthy behavior.

## LEARN TO MANAGE STRESS

Treatment can help you learn to manage your stress. Stress can be the result of both good and bad events. Graduating from college, participating in sports events, and getting married are all examples of fun and positive, but stressful life events. Having problems and being angry are examples of negative stressful life events and situations. When you are stressed, you do not think clearly and your behavior can be problematic as you react to problems and situations versus responding to them in productive ways. When you are stressed and angry, you may not breath properly and therefore your thinking gets clouded.

## ACCEPT YOUR LIMITATIONS

Accepting your limits is essential to your recovery. Accepting others limits is a part of developing respectful relationships. Everybody has limits to what they can do. Some people readily accept their limits while others do not. No one is perfect, everyone makes mistakes, and not everyone is good at doing everything. To be safe and lead a healthy life you have to both know your limits and accept them. One of the most difficult aspects of being in treatment is learning to accept your limits and to develop and respect your personal boundaries. It is also important to recognize, understand, and acknowledge others' limits and personal boundaries.

## LEARN TO COMMUNICATE

Communication is the basis of all healthy and meaningful relationships. Healthy communication is based upon both active listening in order to understand others as well as appropriate self-expression. All of our needs are met through our ability to communicate with others. Communication requires being able to understand both verbal and nonverbal communication. Good communication skills are essential to being in treatment. If you are in a treatment program you will have many opportunities to learn and practice your communication skills.

*"I knew very well what I was undertaking, and very well how to do it, and have done it very well."*  
Samuel Johnson

## RECOGNIZE THE VALUE OF TREATMENT

Some people enter treatment for the wrong reasons. They may be in treatment because they have been ordered to by law, but their motivation to be in treatment is to manipulate the system, to simply do as they are ordered to do, and get it over

with. If you are in trouble with the law and/or being required to participate in a treatment program, you may not realize now that being in treatment could be the best thing that has ever happened to you.

Maybe you are in treatment because your family or close friends have told you that if you do not enter treatment they will not continue to have a relationship with you. It does not feel good to be threatened or forced to do something. Being required, forced, or threatened to do something, sets up a situation in which you may be resistant to treatment, possibly out of fear. That same pressure may result in your denying that you have a problem in the first place. However, being required to be in treatment does not have to be a bad experience.

Denial is another reason why some people enter treatment but do not participate or take it seriously. These people may enter treatment and sit quietly in therapy sessions but are not interested in changing and resist treatment efforts. They think that if they deny long enough that others will believe that they do not have a problem. Denial is just a block to treatment and experienced professionals are used to working with people who deny their problems. These professionals are not going to be convinced that the problem does not exist.

Others may try to influence you to be in denial. You may recognize that you have a problem and accept the treatment more readily while others resist and deny. For example, family members, friends, and coworkers may not believe that you have this problem. They have always seen you as a "good person" and do not want to accept that you have a problem. They may say things that reinforce your various types of denial such as, "it wasn't that bad," "It only happened once," or "don't let people pressure you or push you around."

Others try to manipulate the system by pretending that they are interested in treatment or participating in a treatment program when in fact they are not. They are pretending to want help in order to get out of the situation or meet the requirements of the law. Their motivation for treatment is not sincere, and they may try to influence you to be in treatment for the wrong reasons too. You will need to be aware of this attitude in others and not let it influence you in a negative way.

Treatment does not work unless you take it seriously. Some people try to game their way in treatment while others just say what they think the therapist wants to hear. These efforts will not produce change and are a waste of your time. If you have questions about being in treatment or what treatment is like, then talk to the professional(s) working with you. He or she will be happy to explain treatment and answer your questions.

## SETTING GOALS FOR TREATMENT

The best way to benefit from treatment is to set goals for yourself. What problems do you have? What do you want to work on? Goal setting is an important part of succeeding in treatment. The key to successful goal setting is to set just a few goals at a time, maybe two or three. Make sure you can reach the goals you set for yourself. You can always set higher goals as you improve yourself. Sometimes goal setting means setting the same goal each day and taking one day at a time. For people who are drug and alcohol abusers, staying clean and sober one day at a time is a significant goal and achievement. For people who are aggressive and abusive, managing one's anger each day and not exploding with anger is a major accomplishment. For people with sexual behavior problems and sexual addictions, not using pornography, not having sex every day, or not having deviant sexual thoughts and fantasies is a reasonable goal to set.

*“What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us.”*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

# CHAPTER ONE: ASSIGNMENTS & EXERCISES



1-A)

1. Make a list of the “wrong” reasons for wanting treatment.
2. Make a list of constructive reasons for wanting treatment.

1-B)

Set some goals for yourself you can begin to work on immediately.

List both short term goals (what you can do now to begin changing) and long term goals (the end result of working on changes).

1-C)

- 1) Ask a professional you are working with to give you examples of people succeeding in treatment but who at first resisted treatment when they:
  - tried to manipulate the system
  - were forced to enter treatment
  - were in denial upon entering treatment

2) What helped these people turn around and work hard in treatment?

3) How did working in treatment change the lives of these individuals?

1-D)

What questions, concerns, and/or fears do you have about starting treatment?

# CHAPTER TWO

## ACCEPTING MY PROBLEMS

*“Excellence is to do a common thing in an uncommon way.”*

*Booker T. Washington*

### EVERYONE HAS PROBLEMS

Throughout the course of your life cycle, there will be times when you are doing well and your life feels positive and healthy. However, because you are human, there will be times when problems occur. Most people accept the fact that they have a problem when one arises. We are used to dealing with problems in everyday life, both small and large. The mature and responsible thing to do when you have problems is to accept that they exist and work on correcting them. Personal growth and change occurs when your thinking is healthy. Healthy responsible thoughts about your problems and problem behaviors include: “I did it”; “This is my fault.”; “I did everything she said.”; “I made a bad decision.”; and “My behavior was wrong.”

In some cases, people have severe (big/serious) personal problems. In that case, they may have more difficulty accepting a particular problem. It is not uncommon for people with severe problems initially to try to avoid the problem. In some cases accepting severe personal problems can be very difficult.

If a doctor tells us that we have a severe or terminal illness such as cancer or a brain tumor, our initial response may be to think that the doctor is

wrong and that he must have made a mistake. Some people may get a second opinion. It is after the second doctor has told them that the first doctor was right that they begin to accept the reality of having this problem. When a close relative or friend dies, many of us have a hard time accepting that the person is dead. When we become emotional over problems we may feel many emotions including anger, fear, shame, and guilt. These feelings can lead to denying our problems.

Unfortunately, denial does not work in the long run and often makes matters worse. Like other defense mechanisms, denial may feel better at the time you are denying your behavior, but in the long run denial will work against you and you may continue to feel guilty about what you have done and shameful about lying and denying. When people continue to deny their problems the denial becomes a block to personal growth, the change process, and recovery.

### DEFENSE MECHANISMS<sup>1</sup>

Defense mechanisms are ways people avoid dealing with truth or reality. They are the way people protect themselves psychologically (mentally) and an example of unhealthy thinking (cognitive distortions or thinking errors). By avoiding the truth the temporary result is to feel safe, better, or