

# The Recovery Book

**Answering All Your Questions About  
Recovering from Addiction and Alcoholism  
and Finding Health and Happiness in Sobriety**

Al J. Mooney, MD ▪ Catherine Dold ▪ Howard Eisenberg

Foreword by Dr. Harry Haroutunian, Physician Director, Betty Ford Center

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[www.TheRecoveryBook.com](http://www.TheRecoveryBook.com)

The Recovery Book, first published in 1992, has been completely updated for 2014. Like the first edition, the second edition contains a wealth of practical advice about getting into and living in recovery, with a strong emphasis on the 12-step philosophy.

It also contains some entirely new concepts. It is now structured around the Recovery Zone System, a blueprint for first getting into recovery and learning how to avoid a relapse, then rebuilding your life, and finally living a long and healthy life steeped in the culture of recovery. It also incorporates what we now know about neuroplasticity, and how you can use that to remold your brain around recovery.

Below is a brief synopsis of what is new, with excerpts.

## **1. The Recovery Zone System**

*“Dr. Al’s Recovery Zone System, new to this edition, breaks recovery into three distinct zones. In the following chapters, we’ll give you clear guidance on what you need to do and when, in regard to treatment, joining a fellowship, healing your brain, step work, avoiding relapse, restoring relationships and your health, and much more. First up is the Red Zone, where you focus on saving your life and fully engaging in the recovery process, to the exclusion of nearly everything else. Next is the Yellow Zone, where you start to rebuild your life. Last is the Green Zone, where life is really sweet. Follow this system (which works hand-in-hand with the 12-step philosophy) and you can build a strong recovery with minimal risk of relapse.”*

We give readers plenty of guidance on when they might be ready to move forward to the next zone. Also integral to this system is the idea that people can move *back* a zone at any time, refocusing their efforts on recovery, in order to avoid a relapse. We encourage them to do regular Recovery Zone ReChecks, an inventory of their lives, in order to anticipate upcoming events (surgery, new job, etc.) that could upset their recovery and lead to a relapse. If they spot anything, they can move back to an earlier zone temporarily and ramp up recovery activities.

We are also developing Recovery Bands -- colored wristbands that people in recovery can wear to remind themselves what zone they are in.

## 2. Brain science and neuroplasticity

We have included a summary of what we now know about how alcohol and drugs affect the brain. And we talk about how people can use the same processes to “remold” their brains around recovery.

*“Alcohol and drugs changed your brain, yes. But you can use these same brain processes to stay sober. You can “remold” your brain around recovery.*

*It won’t happen overnight. It will take some time and effort. But if you commit to and follow a good recovery plan, your brain will change. Your brain will heal. Eventually, staying sober will become your routine way of life, and you won’t feel like you are constantly fighting off urges to use alcohol or drugs.*

*How do you do that? You use the power of your brain to focus your thoughts and actions. You focus on the principles and activities of recovery, and on the sweet rewards coming your way, such as the return of your loving family and better health. You do all you can to avoid stress as well as cues and triggers, which can reactivate the drug-seeking pathways. And you do everything you can to think positive thoughts and banish negative thinking. Over time, you’ll develop new neural pathways—ones that are not focused on addiction—to guide your life and your decisions and actions. Slowly but surely, rather than thinking about your next drink all the time, your brain will change and you’ll more naturally focus on recovery. You will have fewer negative thoughts and more positive ones. Your cravings and anxiety will subside, and sobriety will become your way of life.”*

Throughout the book, we encourage people to follow simple guidelines for healing their brains:

*“Best of all, you don’t need to learn all about brain science to heal your own brain. Just remember TAMERS:*

- *Think about recovery & Talk about recovery*
- *Act on recovery, connect with others*
- *Meditate & Minimize stress*
- *Exercise & Eat well*
- *Relax*
- *Sleep”*

**3. Our digital lives.** We have included information on how to live your life online when you’re in recovery -- how to do a “digital detox” so you can avoid triggers such as party photos on Facebook, how parents can monitor their kids’ online interactions, and more. We’re also including an extensive list of online resources, which we’ll keep updated on our website, [www.therecoverybook.com](http://www.therecoverybook.com).

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