

When we're busy in recovery, it doesn't take long before the Big Picture of Our Life starts filling up. Soon, we go from experiencing relief to experiencing some life satisfaction. Then, periods of joy occur and meaning returns to our life! It's a process... the recovery process!

If we Allow Time for Our Changes to Take Root, good things will happen. At first, one or two good things happen. These things serve as a foundation. When we build on these improvements, several more good things happen...then several more...and several more.

Just like one thing led to another and our life fell apart, it comes back together the same way... bubble by bubble, piece by piece. It's a reverse Domino Effect. Once some areas improve, others improve as well.

When we're living a Recovery Lifestyle, we're doing the things that add meaning and satisfaction to life... things that fill our emptiness. That's because we're FILLING UP our life with meaningful activities and relationships.

AS RECOVERY TIME INCREASES, the Big Picture of Our Life begins to come together and MANY GOOD THINGS HAPPEN. For instance, we have adequate housing and sometimes our own place to live! We land a job. We get enough money for a down-payment on an ugly \$500 car that runs. Our family invites us over for Thanksgiving for the first time in years. We get to see our kids. We acquire possessions like a bed, a sofa, a TV, a DVD player, kitchen goods, clothes, and hobby stuff. We have six months on the job and we get a raise. We join a volunteer group or a church and are involved in the on-goings. We make new friends who invite us to other positive activities. Maybe we're dating someone who lives a healthy lifestyle. Maybe we filled out papers for financial aid and we go back to college or get our GED. We're STARTING to feel PRETTY GOOD about OURSELVES and OUR LIFE. THESE ARE THE GOOD THINGS THAT HAPPEN BETWEEN POINT B AND C.

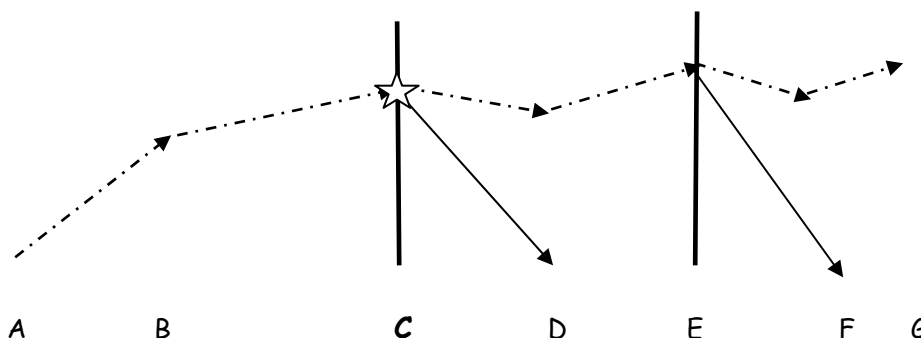
The Truth About the Lies

With all this said...WHAT IS THE TRUTH behind the Self-Defeating, Suffering-Inducing Lies we tell ourselves...the lies about how things will NEVER get better even though we TRY to make things better? What's the truth behind "Why try, things never get better?" _____

The TRUTH... THINGS GET BETTER WHEN WE GET BETTER. THINGS CHANGE WHEN WE CHANGE. However, Group Members respond, "Things may get good FOR AWHILE, BUT SOMETHING HAPPENS and they GET BAD AGAIN."

When a Boulder Lands on Our Recovery Path

From Point B to C, things rock along okay for awhile...3 months, 6 months, sometimes longer. We're DEALING WITH STUFF that Comes Our Way...and we're MAKING GAINS day by day...and then, **SOMETHING HAPPENS. BOOM!** It's



We're always better off trying...because when we try, good things happen. If we don't try, good things rarely happen.

The truth...LIFE IS GOING TO HAPPEN. Difficult things WILL Come Our Way and boulders WILL land on our Recovery Path.

Our world gets rocked when Something Happens. It's either something WE CAUSED or something that just happened...

something we had NO CONTROL OVER.

Sometimes, the Something that Happens is good, like a promotion, new friends, or moving to a nice area. Though they're positive changes, they can become a boulder.

They may cause anxiety and self-doubt or they may bring up old issues...and Something Happens and we don't deal with them well...and, we relapse.

like a boulder falls out of the sky and smashes right into the middle of our Recovery Path. We're now faced with a huge stumbling block...something BIG...and something HARD TO GET AROUND.

The **HEAVY** line at **Point C** marks the point when **WE GET HIT WITH A BOULDER!** That's when...SOMETHING HAPPENS...when something difficult Comes Our Way...something very undesirable and upsetting. For example, since we're clean and have changed, maybe our best friend or romantic partner leaves us to be with someone who parties. Maybe our great job ends because of a lay-off of the most recent hires. Maybe the engine in our car burns up and we lose our transportation. Maybe we get evicted from our affordable apartment because the building was sold. Maybe our spouse or parent is diagnosed with cancer, our dog gets hit by a car, or an old friend suicides. Maybe we become over-confident about our recovery and we get BLIND-SIDED by temptation and it knocks us off our feet and off the Recovery Path. ALL KINDS OF THINGS CAN HAPPEN and DO HAPPEN in people's lives.

The boulder that SLAMS INTO our Recovery Path may be an old friend who shows up one day, maybe someone we've been in love with before. We're feeling all the FUN and EXCITEMENT of the GOOD OL' TIMES. We're TEMPTED to spend time with them to relive old times and cherished memories...HOWEVER, THEIR SITUATION OR LIFESTYLE CONFLICTS WITH OUR RECOVERY PLAN. Maybe they still drink or use drugs, or cut, or shoplift...maybe they have a bad attitude or they don't have steady work and want to stay with us for awhile...maybe they're moody and get very critical and ugly...maybe they've abused us before.

If we spend time with someone on Relapse Road, what will likely happen to us? _____

What boulders have landed on your Recovery Path in the past or ARE on your Recovery Path right now? Make note if they NEARLY knocked you off course or if they DID lead you into relapse. _____

To Flee or Not To Flee

At Point C, we're faced with a major life event or stressor. We have two choices how to respond. What do you think they are? _____

The direction our life goes depends on the choice we make when we're faced with difficult situations. It's like we come to a fork in the road. We can keep on the right path or we can go down the wrong road. No matter what we do, WE ALWAYS HAVE A CHOICE... to stay on the Recovery Path or to go down Relapse Road.

We get on the wrong track when we try to shortcut the process by running to old Self-Destructive Coping Behaviors to Numb-Out and White-Out reality.

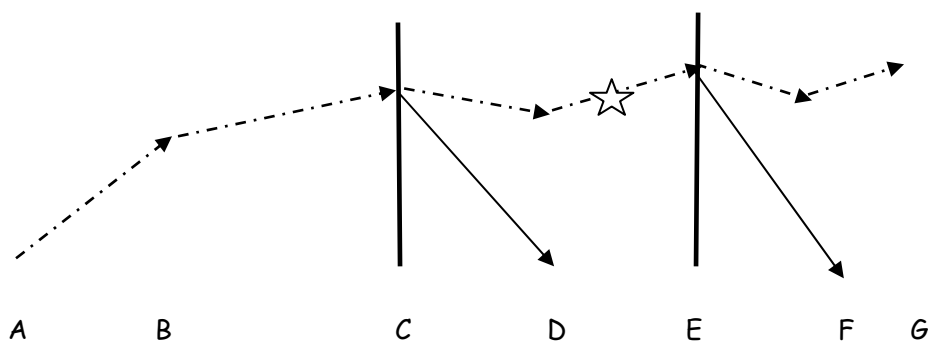
Getting around, through, and passed a boulder takes time.

We're impatient creatures...especially when we're expected to tolerate discomfort, inconvenience, pain, and suffering. WE DON'T WANT TO TOLERATE DISTRESS and it's VERY TEMPTING to give up...and give in to old ways...the ways of relapse.

10- Especially when more than one boulder hits at the same time. It seems like they come in waves of two's and three's.

This is pretty cut n' dry. One is TO STAY ON the Recovery Path, the other is TO RELAPSE. If we choose to stay on the Recovery Path, we'll probably have a tough time dealing with the situation AT FIRST. Emotional Mind will be hitting us HARD. We'll likely feel confused, overwhelmed, and upset...with lots of other feelings, too. That's why the **ARROW goes down some** (upper arrow - Point D). To Get Through this tough time, we'll HAVE TO give ourselves TIME to adjust to the situation. We'll need TIME to process the whole thing. We'll need TIME and SPACE to PROCESS AND EXPERIENCE ALL THE NORMAL HUMAN EMOTIONS which go along with a difficult situation. **THEN**, we'll need TIME to develop a Game Plan for dealing with it. **THEN**, we'll need TIME to follow our Game Plan...**AND THEN**, we'll need TIME to Work Through It and Get Through It!

This whole process of processing stuff TAKES TIME...and we don't want to take the time IT TAKES...to process our stuff!! WE WANT THE PAIN AND DISCOMFORT TO GO AWAY...FAST. We DON'T WANT to deal with it. We DON'T WANT the stress. We DON'T WANT the heartache. We just want to BE HAPPY. We want life to go smooth...and when it DOESN'T, we get discouraged. We want to call it quits. If life has to be like this, WE DON'T WANT ANY PART OF IT. Sounds like Emotional Mind kicking up its heels! Sounds like STINKIN' THINKIN' and the grand entry to Relapse Road.



SOMETIMES, WE HAVE TO FIGHT REAL HARD TO STAY ON THE RECOVERY PATH WHEN THE BOULDER HITS.¹⁰ When we Fight to stay on the Recovery Path, things continue to improve in our life. **Notice the arrow goes up again from Point D to E!** Things improve in our life not only because we stayed on the Recovery Path...but for another VERY important reason. What do you think it is? Why else would life continue to improve at this point? _____

11- Astray - (uh-stray) -
to go off the right
path...to go the wrong
way.

BECAUSE WE FOUGHT HARD AND WON. WE KEPT OURSELVES ON
THE RECOVERY PATH despite all pressure to go astray.¹¹
BECAUSE WE MADE IT THROUGH the huge obstacle in our path.

Why would this be such a big therapeutic event? How does such a challenge or setback IMPROVE our life? _____

12- Empowered -
(em-powered) - to feel
great strength or power.

Because WE DID IT! We've had a MAJOR SUCCESS! We GOT THROUGH
SOMETHING BIG that would have been a Relapse Point for us before. WE FEEL
EMPOWERED!¹² We can't believe WE DID IT! We're SO AMAZED and PROUD
of ourselves! We have RENEWED CONFIDENCE! We now know WE CAN!!!!

Other than this major psychological boost, we have gained something else VERY valuable. What do you think it is? _____

*We learn a lot by
Going Through
AND Working
Through trying
times...and by
OVERCOMING
THEM!!!*

*We've been there,
done that, and are
reading the book...
and it's just made us
a more confident
and more skilled
person...skilled at
MANAGING LIFE!*

*We've gained KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE. We used the skills we've been
learning and tried new ones. We ALLOWED ourselves to experience NORMAL
HUMAN DISTRESS and NEGATIVE EMOTIONS WITHOUT DOING our favorite
Self-Destructive Coping Mechanisms to take away the pain and distress. We came up
with a Game Plan. We did things to deal with the boulder in a way that allowed us
to stay on the Recovery Path and to protect the Big Picture of Our Life.
WE TOLERATED THE DISTRESS adequately and ALLOWED TIME TO GO BY.
We WORKED THROUGH the situation. WE DID SOMETHING REAL BIG!!!!
That's why the line goes up again! WE'VE GROWN! SOME BIG, MAJOR,
THERAPEUTIC THINGS ARE HAPPENING in our life...and LIFE IS GOOD!*

Write about two times when you PULLED THROUGH something YOU THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER GET THROUGH...and you felt the EMPOWERMENT that comes with a major success. _____

*Getting Through life
is a process and
we've got to allow
ourselves time to
process life!*