

## Discipline, Entry #1 of 3

Discipline is not a practice that comes naturally to most addicts, and the need to say “no” to ourselves can be quite a challenge (*Guiding Principles*, Tradition Seven, “For Members”).

The freedom we find when we stop using drugs is incredible. We regain so much in terms of the time, energy, and other resources that were previously devoted to sustaining our addiction. Saying “no” to our disease frees up to say “yes” to things we’d been missing out on. As we revel in our newfound ability to say “yes” to ourselves, some of us find ourselves looking for relief from other behaviors. “Getting clean saved my life, but I gained so much weight my first year clean that I got stretch marks!” Another member shared, “The money I’d been spending on drugs was diverted to shopping. Retail therapy became my new self-care routine—but I was still unhappy.”

Discipline can sometimes feel like a punishment—like we’re denying ourselves things we really enjoy. If we’re free, why do we have to say “no” to ourselves? Our freedom has its limits, as do our resources. Discipline calls on us to shift our thinking from what we are denying ourselves—an extra piece of cake, or an online shopping purchase we don’t need—to what we are gaining when we use our resources wisely, like greater peace of mind and financial security.

Discipline is the willingness to say “no” to things that feel good in the moment but cost us later. We do so as a Fellowship when we say “no” to money from outside NA—and “yes” to our ability to make our own choices as a Fellowship, remaining free from the influence of outside entities. In our personal recovery, we say “no” to momentary impulses for the sake of our longer-term peace of mind. Would we rather have a little bit of fleeting comfort right now, or a deeper, lasting sense of comfort and security over time? The choice is ours.

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*I can't say "yes" to everything—I will reserve my "yes" for what's truly important to me today.*

## Discipline, Entry #2 of 3

Discipline is commitment in action, a demonstration of our willingness (*Living Clean*, Chapter 6, "Commitment").

Because of its past association with punishment, rigidity, or plain old drudgery, discipline is one of those recovery principles that we have to reimagine when we get clean. And when we realign discipline with our newfound values of commitment and willingness—and begin to practice our program of recovery—we experience positive results. Our lives change.

Discipline's relationship with the principle of commitment definitely merits discussion. Our commitment to NA and spiritual growth is crucial to the life we want, but it's more internal. It's in our hearts. We can be committed or hold a commitment, but are we disciplined about that commitment? As one member observed, "We say, 'It works when you work it.' Not 'it works when you think, believe, or feel it.'"

Discipline gives us the willingness to transform our commitment into action. Sometimes the commitment we're acting on is more on the surface, say, just following sponsor direction without knowing why. Other times, it's deeper, more heartfelt. In either case, our commitment is measured by our willingness to act. When we're active in our commitment to the Fellowship—when we are disciplined—our disease of addiction is rendered powerless.

Though we may strive to view discipline in a positive light, it's not always easy. It takes practice. It *is* practice. Discipline is the drive to move forward regardless of our mood. We say yes to sponsorship. We attend our home group and fulfill our commitments, because we said we would. Discipline leads us back to the message again and again.

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*I'm willing to transform my commitment to action. Discipline takes practice, and practice starts now.*

### Discipline, Entry #3 of 3

What matters most are the actions we take. Consistent application of the tools of recovery changes us (*Living Clean*, Chapter 7, “Awakenings”).

“My parents sent me to military school when I was a kid, in hopes of drilling some discipline into me,” a member shared. “They said it would build character. It built rebellion instead. It would be a long time before I’d see discipline and character in a positive light. But here I am, grateful that my rebellion landed me here. NA gave me what military school could not. You people showed me the value of a different kind of discipline, a spiritual discipline, and through it, I’ve become a person of good character. It’s all that matters.”

Many of us have negative associations with the word “discipline.” It conjures up memories of the principal’s office or worse. We understand discipline to mean punishment—and it does!—but there’s another definition that’s a better fit for our lives in recovery.

As a spiritual principle, discipline refers both to the good habits that support our recovery and the self-control that develops as that work pays off. When we’re disciplined about our spiritual maintenance, we’re less distracted by our base desires and more apt to listen to the quiet, steady assurances of our conscience or higher self. As we improve our conscious contact, we find it easier to curb our impulses and to strengthen our character. As one member wrote, “My daily practices give me command of my actions and emotions. I can practice restraint when it’s called for because I’m no longer governed by impulse.”

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*My character is defined by my choices; who I am is what I do. Are my current routines providing adequate spiritual maintenance? How might I strengthen my character by being more disciplined?*