BUILDING RECOVERY

A six week course to help you understand, structure and build your personal recovery

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## INTRODUCTION

So you are thinking about your recovery, how to approach it, is it possible? Maybe you have tried it before and failed? Maybe you are trying to recover now as we speak!

The aim of this publication is to help you do three things; PREPARE, PLAN and PRODUCE your recovery. I can’t tell you how important it is to think about what you are doing. Those that fail to plan are planning to fail!

Its amazing how a simple picture helps us understand the way something works, helps us make sense of something complicated. A picture that helps us understand something and tells the ‘story’ of how something works is called a metaphor, and in this course we are going to use the metaphor of a building, and the story of the building is told by putting you in the position of the builder. When you are put in this position it helps you understand that your recovery needs building and you are responsible for that! If you wanted to build a house you wouldn’t just start by laying bricks! You would think about the land you own and the plan of the house. What materials you would need and how much it would all cost. That is what we need to do now with your recovery.

This publication is split into three major parts or sections, the foundation, the first floor and the second floor. Broadly speaking the foundation is the planning and basis of your recovery, it is the biggest determinant of your success. If you build your foundation with the proper solidity, plan and boundaries you will have a much greater chance of success. The first floor is mainly about ***functioning*** which means taking your floor plan and building the rooms the plan represents. Then making sure that the rooms are functioning, so, we will be looking at how you are doing in each of these areas of your life, work marriage etc. The Second floor is mainly about ***flourishing*** which means adding some different rooms which go beyond the basic aims of coping and managing and introduce the ideas of succeeding and growing. This brings in the concept of goals and future plans.

As you read on you will see that these floors represent the preparing, the planning and the producing of your recovery. We will cover the main parts of all three but you must understand that a publication like this can only ever be general in its outlook. That means that it will apply to your recovery *in general* but everyone is unique and so there will inevitably be things you need to add because of your particular circumstances. If you want further advice on how to implement this approach please contact me on [dave@davecoopercounselling.org.uk](mailto:dave@davecoopercounselling.org.uk) and find more resources at http://www.davecoopercounselling.org.uk/blog/

## BUILDING RECOVERY - FOUNDATION

Let’s first acknowledge the most important thing about a building, every building. It rests stands and relies upon a foundation. If the foundation is not strong enough, the wrong size or not solid enough, the building will not stand! It does not matter how well you build the rest of the house. It will not matter how good the balcony looks or how stylish the chimney stacks are finished. The whole thing is going to come down. So here is principle number one

Your whole recovery is going to rely on your foundation

Now, there are two ways to make your foundation strong enough to support your recovery. Either you must make a thorough and solid foundation, or you must limit the size of your recovery! I want you to recognise this and choose the first option! Ask yourself this question, “do I want an authentic recovery, or do I want a limited recovery”? Authentic recovery brings the possibility of growth, success and fulfilment, a recovery limited by a weak foundation cannot grow! Picture a large concrete foundation badly built with a small tent in one corner and you get the picture!

Before we go on to the details of how to build a proper foundation we should first define what we mean by this, what would a good foundation look like? Let me tell you how I define this. When you have built a good foundation you will be able to say this;

Nothing anyone can do or say can make me use or act out

So you can see from this that the foundation is hugely important! It is no small thing to achieve a good foundation! It is so great an achievement that there are some people that actually consider this foundation to be recovery! They would tell you that they have recovered because they have achieved this, but I am defining it as only the beginning of an authentic recovery. If we stop there we have no house to live in, just something to stand on! I want to encourage you to build an authentic recovery. A recovery that includes the solid base to stand on, the house to live in and the possibility of growth towards the person you were always meant to be!

### SOLIDITY

The first function of a foundation is solidity. It cannot move around and it must be able to take the weight of what we are going to build on top of it. It must also be the right size for our building and be built inside the grounds of our property. When we use this picture as a metaphor for our recovery that tells us that before we attempt to recover we must prepare in the following ways;

1. Solidity – We will not be made to ‘use’ or ‘act out’ by others or by circumstances.
2. Planning – We must plan which areas of our life (rooms) are going to be included in our life and which ones are going to be left out.
3. Boundaries – We must be clear about what is ours and what belongs to others.

#### Building your own recovery

We are going to take these one at a time starting with solidity. The quality of your building is not going to be tested on the basis of someone else’s house! It doesn’t matter how strong their foundation is, it will not help your building stand. People are important and we sometimes say things like, “I wouldn’t have made it without you” and this may be true, but it’s not a foundation based statement, it’s a relationship based statement. It’s not from your foundation it’s from your first floor. This will become clearer later on but the bottom line is that you are responsible, not them. It is a good idea to develop relationships with people who have recovered and are strong in their recovery, but learn from them, do not be fooled into thinking that it will rub off on you!

#### Building on solid ground

Many of you will be tempted to use ‘head in the sand’ thinking, which goes something like this “If I can’t see it, it won’t hurt me”. Do not be fooled, what is unseen can still be devastating. This is the equivalent of not checking the ground you are building on. Interestingly it can develop as part of a strong commitment to recovery! Have you ever had this type of attitude “I don’t care what they throw at me I’m not giving in” This kind of commitment is impressive but not that smart, much better to have the humility and courage to look at where the ground is not solid, where are you ‘trusting to luck’ where are you ‘afraid to look’, what do you hope you can ‘cover up’ with determination and hope? Don’t ensure that your weaknesses will trip you up later but turn your weaknesses into strengths by looking at them, being honest about them, talking about them, getting advise about them and only building on them when you have solidified them.

### PLANNING

Yes, planning starts at the foundation stage! Every building needs the walls of its rooms planned into the foundations. There are two reasons for this. Firstly it helps with solidity as the walls need extra strength, and secondly we need to plan how many rooms there will be, their size and relation to each other. The first car built by FORD failed because it had no reverse gear! That story is as much a testimony to determination as anything else as it did not stop them from becoming the biggest car company in the world, but it also speaks about planning as essential. This is also true about your recovery.

Ask yourself now about what rooms are going to be included in your recovery? And just as important, what rooms are not going to be included? Remember that in this metaphor the rooms are areas of your life such as; Family, work, hobbies, friends, partners etc. It is at this stage that you must make some tough decisions. Ask yourself firstly, who is going to support my recovery and who is more interested in keeping me the way I was? This is true not only of casual friends and acquaintances, but also of family and partners. In fact the closer someone is to you, the more important the question as they will have more influence and be part of a deeper relationship as well as spending more time with you generally.

Ask yourself secondly, what rooms have not been included in my life recently that I need to include in my recovery building? Some of you will have been working a lot of hours to the detriment of other areas of your life (this is the equivalent of making one of the rooms way to big) others will have not been socialising or doing things that you wanted to do (no play room). Still others will have not been working at all and had a belief that no one will employ you or that you are finished is as a worker (no study). Whatever your situation it is important that you plan! A good design for your building will have a good balance between the size of the rooms and the type of rooms you have. I have included a diagram for this purpose. Spend some time thinking about what rooms you need in this building called recovery and if you have already started your recovery then use the diagram to see how balanced your approach is and what changes you might want to make.

Finally we need to revisit the idea of solidity in the context of ‘rooms’. Now that you have your design it is becoming clear which room has any softness or mushy foundation in it. This is perhaps best understood through asking the question “Is there anything anyone in this room can do or say that could have me using or acting out”? Again, it is so important to know this beforehand as planning that includes knowledge of your weaknesses is much more likely to succeed. If it becomes obvious to you that all your weakness belongs in one room then you have learned something really valuable! Your decision then is to either change the way you live in that room or do not include the room in your design. I know that can sound radical and extreme, and that’s because it is! Your foundation planning has to include these types of possibilities in order to be solid enough to build on. Much better to make these choices in your planning than to be forced to later on.

### BOUNDARIES

The next thing we need to look at in building a proper foundation to your recovery is your boundaries. Now, simply stated, a boundary is a line dividing your property from another’s. It is what tells us where our land ends and someone else’s starts. When we use this picture as a metaphor for our recovery we start to see the importance of boundaries. If you picture a garden fence at the front of the house, a wall at the side and a larger fence at the back you will start to get the idea.

#### Each boundary is personal

Whenever we consider a boundary it is always between our self and someone else. These boundaries are important because they strongly constitute the relationship we have with the other person. Notice that when you shift a boundary fence of yours you also seem to be shifting theirs at the same time! Just take a moment now to ask yourself what relationships you are in that needs a boundary shift. How to make that shift is what we will look at later but for now we will look at what happens when the boundaries are in the wrong place.

#### The boundary fence

Basically, if you think about it, there are only two mistakes we can make when it comes to boundaries, we can either put them too close to us (some of our property will be outside our fence) or we can put them too far away from us (some of our neighbours property will be inside our fence). Amongst addicts and addictive personalities the most common mistake is to place the boundary too close to ourselves and not take enough responsibility for our property (lives). This is most often about selfishness and neediness and an expectation that others will pick up the tab for our behaviour, lifestyle and mistakes.

As you think about planning your recovery many challenges such as this one will arise. It is not easy to acknowledge that you have put your boundaries in the wrong place and to accept the challenge and responsibility of changing them. Ask yourself now if you are ready to ‘do the work of recovery’. It is all about seeing the benefits of rising to challenges like this one.

#### And finally

I want to add one more thing about your foundation before we move on to the restorative work of the first floor. Make sure this is your building! This design and room choice, even the responsibility of which boundaries to change must come from you! Look out for anyone trying to influence you. Ask yourself are you allowing someone else to design and configure your recovery? Is someone else masterminding this work? Just allow yourself to develop a vision for your recovery now. Let it be a building that is in your imagination. Let it be truly you!

## GROUND FLOOR

Part two of this recovery building is the first floor. Before we get to the particulars I want to say a few general things about this floor that are very important to understand.

Firstly we need to understand the general aim of this floor. It is not the same as the second floor which will be about goals and moving forward. This floor is more about restoring your life to what most people would consider normality. Yes I know I used the ‘normality’ word! But I used it on purpose! Too often we hear the tired old idea ‘what’s normal’ or ‘who knows what normal is’. Well I don’t agree with this! I think we all know what normal is, even though we are all unique in some ways, what connects us is far more important than what separates us. Paradoxically, if we did not know what normal was, how could we know we were not normal!

Seriously, I believe that we can talk about normality in terms that make sense to most of us. I think it is normal to be somewhere if you say you will be. I think it is normal to pay something if you say you will. I think it is normal to be reasonably confident of your ability to manage responsibility. In building this floor we have the aim of restoring ourselves to normality!

If you imagine a horizontal line drawn half way up a page, our first floor when it is complete will raise us up to that line (call it the line of normality). When the second floor is complete we will be raised well above that line towards our true potential! So in the metaphor of our house the line of normality is the ceiling of the first floor.

Of course, unlike the second floor, this floor is based upon the design of the foundation. In other words we knew what rooms we would include in the first floor before we built it. So now is the time to take a look at those rooms, make sure we have a solid foundation and start to understand where we are falling short of a reasonable level of normality, or a reasonable level of functioning.

In order to understand this better, we need to look at the concepts of relationships, communication and responsibility.

### RELATIONSHIPS1

Well, here we are starting on the first floor of our recovery! Just a quick note for those of you who like to rush ahead, if you try to build this floor without a solid foundation it will fall! So, just to recap, a solid foundation is one where we can say that ‘nothing anyone can say or do will cause me to use or act out’.

So what role do relationships play in building the first floor? It is not an understatement to say that relationships are the single most important factor in the backsliding, lapsing and relapsing of addicts in recovery. In order to give ourselves any chance of success we must, and I am using the word must here! We must reach a ‘normal’ level of functioning in our relationships.

So what does this mean? Firstly I would say that boundaries are critical and you should constantly be checking your foundational boundaries in the context of every relationship. In the early days don’t worry if you see that you are going a bit ‘over the top’ in monitoring this. Far better to err on this side than to be caught out because you did not see the problem before it cost you.

Secondly (and this is where it gets very hard) make sure that you have your priorities right. There are some things that are, at least for the moment, overwhelming to you. That means that it is not wise to think that you can cope with everything. There may be some relationships that you have to give up for a while, but you will not be able to do this if you do not have your priorities right.

Remember;

If you let anything become more important than your recovery, that’s what will rob you of it

Ask yourself in all circumstances, can I handle this and stay clean? I want to give you an analogy that might help you to answer this question. Imagine you were given a new born baby. When you are in difficult circumstances just look down and see that baby in your arms, weak, helpless and depending on you. Ask yourself is this atmosphere, relationship, temperature good for baby? If the answer is no then get out of there quick! Baby is relying on you!

For those relationships that you can stay clean in but present challenges (that’s all the rest by the way) the way forwards is to ask yourself “how do I need to change in this relationship”? Notice that I said that you were to change, not the other person! Of course there are no perfect people and others will behave badly at times, but even when they do, the way we thank about addressing those difficulties is still a change we are making, not them.

#### Rooms – Building life in balance

Take a look at your building now. What rooms have you got? Should there be other rooms in there that you have not been including? Once you have got all the rooms in that you should have, the next stage is producing balance. You can see that the design of your building is in balance. Rooms are in a good relationship with each other, there is access and there isn’t one room bigger than all the others, out of proportion as it were. If you were to build your recovery on the foundation of the way you have been spending your time and resources, what would it look like? Would there be one room much bigger than the others? Would there be some rooms that were really tiny? Think about how you spend your time as ‘room size’ and it will give you a clear picture of how you are ‘investing’ in the relationships in your life.

So how do we change inside relationships? Mainly through communication, and this is what we are going to address next.

### COMMUNICATION1

If relationships are the most difficult thing we face in attempting a recovery (and that is true even if we are avoiding them all at the moment or even if we don’t want any at the moment), then communication is the biggest factor in determining the quality of those relationships, the threat they are to your recovery (the baby) and the method of improving them!

There are very few of us that could not benefit from a review of how we communicate with others, but when it comes to addicts who want to recover it is even more important. It can definitely be the difference between success and failure in our efforts.

#### Direct and indirect communication

How do you communicate? Well there are basically two ways. Whether you think of yourself as the quiet type or are rarely quiet, you are communicating both directly and indirectly. Let me define those two types now.

Direct communication is looking someone in the eye and telling them how you are feeling, what you think or what you want. Indirect communication is everything else you do that attempts to get an idea across to someone without saying it.

If all our communication was direct, honest and simple we would be doing very well! Think of the last time you did something that attempted to get an idea across without saying it. What was it? It might have been a shrug of the shoulders, a rolling of the eyes, a ‘tut’ or a tone of voice you used. It could have been the way you closed the door a bit too strongly, or the way you turned away from someone or gave them a false smile. It could have been the telephone call you didn’t make! We all do this and I want to define indirect communication as;

Saying something to someone without the consequences of saying it

The way to develop better communication is to raise your awareness of your ‘indirect communication’ and then follow this process;

1. make it polite – Translate it into non offensive language
2. Make it assertive – Translate it into ‘I’ instead of ‘you’
3. Make it relevant - Decide whether to say it or not

So this is something you can practice without anyone else knowing. You can practice until you are ready to communicate it directly. Let’s go through these steps one at a time.

#### Step One – make it polite

We first need to know what we are saying. Exactly what we are saying! So say it! Say it now in whatever words come to you. We first need the natural language. This is often necessary because we get so angry and frustrated. It starts out as private language (just in your head) and this is often rude and quite colourful! So this is an important step.

Because we now have this in natural language we next need to make it ‘listenable’. If we skip this step people will not take on board what we are saying because they will be too busy feeling insulted and hurt. When we make it polite, we are showing them that we are in our reasonable and thoughtful state, our adult is speaking and we are worth listening to.

#### Step Two – make it assertive

The next step is to make it assertive. So let me say what this means. In communication terms telling someone else to do something is aggressive, when you say “do this” or “do that” we should think of ourselves as being aggressive. In order to make it assertive we need to change the ‘you’ to ‘I’ so instead of saying something like “stop that” we say something like “when you do that it makes me feel worthless/unhappy/hurt”. Forcing someone to do something feels like the fastest way to get what you want but again, look at the evidence of your own experience. Is it working?

When we filter our communication through step two we are challenged to become vulnerable. This step asks us to look at what we feel and the idea that something is hurting us. It takes us past our more basic reaction when we are hurting which is often to hurt someone back!

Once we have done this step we need to make a decision, whether or not to say it! But let me say this, if you have taken this to this stage then you have already achieved something therapeutic and substantial. There may be a period of practice where you take things to this stage for a while without ever sharing them. Let’s look at what happens next if you decide to say it.

#### Step Three – make it relevant

When we make it relevant we are going to say directly what we have been saying indirectly. I want to let you into a little secret of indirect communication, they never get it! That’s right, when you communicate something indirectly they never get it! It also works the other way, you think you understand what others mean when they communicate indirectly with you, but you don’t! Let this secret encourage you to think about letting people know who you are!

When you are thinking about the decision of whether to tell people what you are saying to them indirectly, here are a few things to consider. Remember first that this is the message you have been saying and this is the person you have been saying it to. They just haven’t heard it yet! So are you ready to face the consequences of letting someone know who you really are? This is what you have been avoiding. So what are the consequences? What will happen when you say this? We don’t know! That’s what makes it so hard to do. We don’t know! That’s what keeps your relationships stuck in this unhealthy place.

Let’s bust another myth while we are at it. The myth of control, the myth that you can make people approve of you, like you, love you! It’s a myth! Let me assure you of something now (and I have never met you) some people like you and some don’t, and what’s more, you had very little to do with it! Once you accept this, once you allow people their own opinions, once you realise that they are human, just like you. Just as complex, unusual, weird and wonderful. Once you offer them the dignity of self determination and the right to their own opinions, you will be ready to let them know who you are.

#### *Letting people know who you are*

Let’s look at the consequences of not doing this. You will be living and working with people who do not know who you are! They do not know who you are because you do not tell them. You then blame them for not knowing!

There is however a much simpler and more convincing way of checking out what this is like, the experience and the consequences. You are living with them right now! Just check out how it feels to be you!

I hear some of you saying “but I do let people know who I am! I tell them what I want and they still won’t do it”. Of course there is the other side of the coin, selfishness, manipulation and flat out bullying! But I guarantee you are not following the guidelines I set out above or you would be much happier with your relationships and the way they are developing. Don’t take my word for it, try it for yourself!

## FIRST FLOOR

If we think of the ceiling of the ground floor as the ‘line of normality’ then the second floor represents achievements over and above this level. In early recovery it can seem like just ‘getting clean’ is good enough but thinking this way unwise as it means that we become stuck in a position that is not completely healthy, much better to make recovery a more complete picture by including all that you can be, and maybe should be in life. Now this growth should only be attempted when the foundation and the first floor are firmly in place, when you are ready and when you have proved to your own satisfaction that you can take the pressures and responsibilities that come with it. We can only flourish once we have learned to survive!

What does success mean to you? What career path were you on before addiction consumed you? What is the thing you would really like to pursue now but stop yourself or tell yourself that you are only dreaming?

### RELATIONSHIPS2

In the first floor exercises the main idea in reviewing relationships was to bring them up to the level of normality, make them balanced healthy and functioning. On this floor we need to do more than that, we need to make them productive!

#### Giving up your serenity

In early recovery you will probably be familiar with the idea of serenity and will have appreciated it when you found it! It will have been hard won and well deserved. It will have come in part from developing some of the ideas mentioned in the first floor section of this programme. Of course in some cases it will be a form of seclusion or hiding which pretends to be serenity, but whatever it is if we are going to develop a healthy second floor we have to consider giving it up!

Now I am not talking about giving it all up, and definitely not giving it up permanently! I am talking about the need to sacrifice for your goals. In order to achieve serenity it is necessary to accept everything as it is. However, in order to achieve something worthwhile in life it is necessary to *not* accept everything as it is, and to do this you have to lose a little of your serenity. You want to *change something*, this means you do not accept it as it is.

When you develop your relationships as part of what you want to achieve it is important to accept that old strategies will not do. Threatening, bullying, manipulating and lying may have been your ‘go to’ strategies in the past but now we need some new ideas. Whatever your plans you are going to have to develop some of your relationships into solid partnerships that can take strain and be genuine. We are going to offer just a couple of ideas now that will help you do this.

#### Win win win

In this idea we have a way of checking our motives and our attitudes. When something is right it is right for you, it is right for the other person and it is right for the world. If you use this idea to think about what you want from the other person, what you want to happen, ask yourself is it good for me? Is it good for them? Is it good for the world? If the answer is no for any of these three questions then it is not good and we need to rethink it. Use this idea whenever you want to win someone to an idea you have. What’s in it for them? What will it cost? Selfishness shows when we find that we will benefit but others will not.

This is definitely a ‘second floor’ project as you are going to need a lot of stability to give up serenity, but I have a strategy that I think will help you in your efforts. I want to now introduce a new concept that I call the concept of intentionality.

#### Being intentional

When we become intentional we ‘take charge’ of our own lives! We choose and we choose to choose! It can get newly recovering individuals through some very difficult times because it makes a very important shift in your position. You see the most frustrating place in life is one where someone else is calling the shots, where you want someone else to be different and they will not do it! So what difference does it make to become ‘intentional’? Let’s say you wanted to have an exciting weekend doing all kinds of stuff and at the last minute it’s all cancelled and you are at a loss. You can either sit there resenting the ones who are responsible for cancelling or you can become intentional. In this case it would mean choosing to be on your own, reading or watching films, gardening or catching up on sleep. Whatever you are doing, it is the intentionality of ‘choosing it’. As soon as you do this, you stop being governed by others and you take charge of your own life again.

### COMMUNICATION2

In the first floor section communication was a matter of getting our levels up from what is often an extremely unhealthy form of indirect communication and a way of avoiding consequences of saying something.

In this second floor we are trying to achieve something external to ourselves. Not just our own recovery and survival but something such as getting a job or starting our own business, developing an intimate relationship or winning people to an unpaid opportunity!

In order to do these things you will have to have built a solid first floor and so be able to deal very well with disappointment and disapproval, some things which may have seemed impossible at one time.

#### Goal setting

One of the ways we keep our recovery on the move is to set goals for ourselves. These goals can be small medium or large, they can be soon, middle distance or long term, they can involve lots of people or can be something we can do on our own.

As you think about your goals and what they might involve, I would like to give you a little exercise now which helps us to check out where we are with our attitude towards our recovery, our goals and others. I want you to take yourself forwards in time. Go forwards to that time when you want to achieve your goal, it may be six months, a year or several years but as you do this I want you to see yourself as having achieved your goal and the changes it will make in yourself. Allow yourself to imagine full success in this goal, so if your goal will make you richer, imagine yourself richer. If achieving this goal will make you happier, imagine yourself happier. Now, as you imagine yourself in this improved position, take a look around and see all the people you know. They have gone into the future with you. They are all there, but there is one important difference. They have not changed! You must imagine them exactly as they are today. They look the same, they act the same and they talk the same. Does it seem difficult to you to hold on to this image of success in yourself whilst picturing them unchanged? This exercise helps you to check out whether your goals are taking into account one of the most important recovery principles

No one has to do anything different or say anything in order for you to recover

If your goal needs someone to change the way they are in order to happen then we need to restructure the goal or the way we complete it. In order for your goals to fit into your recovery keep trying the exercise and making sure that you can take everyone forward into the future exactly the same as they are today.

Now this principle does not mean that we can never ask someone to change, do something differently or help us with something, but it does mean that our goal must not depend upon it. For instance, if you need three people to help you with a particular goal and the first one you ask says no, this just means you need to find someone else who says yes! So the goal is about getting three people, not three particular people. If your goal cannot be achieved without one particular person changing in important ways then all you can do is ask and if they say no you need to accept it and find another way round it. Whatever you do, do not let this become an excuse for not doing anything with goals!

Remember anything worthwhile is going to mean giving up some of your serenity and probably involve others, so we need to look more and more at our communication styles and approaches. Keep working on translating indirect communication into direct communication. With practice it will improve, but we now need to look more closely at one aspect of communication and relationship building that troubles most of us and especially addicts in recovery. The question is, how do we go on and communicate better? How do we achieve togetherness, teambuilding, even intimacy? I can answer with one word, vulnerability.

#### Vulnerability

When we were addicted and living in an unhealthy way, we were running scared and often defensive. Our main aim was often to protect ourselves. We protected ourselves from ridicule, exclusion, rejection and feelings generally. Most of all we protected ourselves from discomfort! Some addicts develop the belief that they cannot survive discomfort of any kind! Even though we all see adults putting up with the discomfort of all kinds as part of their responsibility they go on protecting themselves against it. In recovery we learn two important things about discomfort, firstly, it doesn’t kill you! Secondly, nothing worthwhile will be achieved without it!

If we are prepared to become vulnerable we can achieve much more than we realise. Becoming vulnerable can change everything you do! It does involve deliberately doing something that will cause discomfort, so become intentional about that!

We all have shame but we need to challenge it at this stage as we cannot become vulnerable until we challenge our shame. It is the act of allowing ourselves to be seen, really seen by the ones we hold to be important in our lives. I often say to new clients that the process of recovery is the process of going home and letting them know who you really are.

We need to understand that protecting ourselves is not the way to success. It is not possible to just protect yourself in the important ways but let all the other stuff happen, if you make yourself numb to some feelings you will be numb to all feelings. We cannot numb ourselves to pain and then expect to feel joy and happiness.

If vulnerability is not a big part of your new communication strategy your second floor cannot be built. Think now about what it is about yourself that you are hiding. How does it feel when they say things like that? How does it affect you when they don’t like your idea? Ask yourself what it is about you that everyone is going to reject?

Remember, your second floor has some of the same rooms in it but there are some different ones, you are developing some positive goals now and this requires different rooms and different points of balance.

Here are some important words to build your second floor with

Vulnerability – gratitude – kindness

## CONCLUSION

So we have a picture, and because it is a picture that is telling us about something else, something other than itself it is a metaphor. We have a house that is a metaphor for a recovery. Let us now review what we are suggesting about this metaphor and how it can help us.

There are four parts to this house, the garden, the foundation, the ground floor and the first floor. The garden we use to understand ‘boundaries’ and ‘exits’. The foundation we use to understand different areas of our life and achieving a normal level of functioning. The first floor we use to understand the concept of ‘goals’ and who we are growing to be.

### Garden

The way we use the garden is to place our boundary fence in the right place and to be aware of exits.

As we think about the garden, review all your relationships, ask yourself if your boundary (garden fence) is placed too close or too far away from the house. Make changes to each individual relationship as you review them.

Be aware that the garden has a gate. This is translated as an ‘exit’ in recovery terms. An exit is the door available to an addict when they ‘act out’ or ‘use’. Think of it as a way of ‘not being you’ for a while, when things get too tough. When this is within ‘normal’ parameters it is called ‘escapism’ and is what people are doing when they watch a feature film or read a novel. This is a relief from the pressures of the day and is perfectly normal. What addicts do is like watching a film and thinking “that was great! I think I’ll stay up and watch eight more and I will feel even better!”

So when the temptation, compulsion to ‘exit’ comes, we learn to think of it as evidence that something just happened that we cannot cope with and ask a question like “what is happening in my ‘house’ at the moment that I believe I cannot be around?”

### Foundation

The way we use the foundation is to plan, and solidify our recovery.

We design rooms in the planning stages and think about what rooms (areas of life, family career etc.) we want in our life

We are also checking for solidity in each area. This is defined as ‘is there anything that anyone in this area can do or say that could have me using or acting out’? It is important to identify these things before we attempt to build anything further.

### Ground floor

The way we use the ground floor is to raise our standards, thinking, beliefs and behaviour up to a ‘normal’ level of functioning.

This ground floor can be started once we have a solid foundation. We have our rooms planned out and now should review relationships in all these areas to check if we are happy with our level of functioning. Do we do what we say we will do? Do we pay what we say we will pay? Do we manage our responsibilities well? It is on this floor that we learn to change ourselves and take responsibility for our own recovery.

### First Floor

The way we use the first floor is to set goals and develop into the people we are capable of being.

This floor is where we build above the level of normal functioning and look at genuine achievement. In the foundation and the ground floor we have learned to ‘survive’ on this floor we learn to ‘flourish’. This is where we try out the things we have been preparing for. Times where we need to give up a little of our ‘serenity’, times where we need to become a little vulnerable, times where we need to be more assertive.

Whatever our goals are we need to look at the cost of achieving them and ask ourselves if we are willing to pay it, or if we are still expecting someone else to pay for us (boundary issue). So we are still constantly checking our motivation and attitude.

### Finally

Thank you for taking the time to read this publication, please think of it as a text book, read it over and over as your understanding grows. It is meant as a companion to the ‘building recovery’ course.

For more resources please visit

[www.davecoopercounselling.org.uk](http://www.davecoopercounselling.org.uk)

[www.inwardhouse.co.uk](http://www.inwardhouse.co.uk)

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