

## Introductory Materials

Welcome to Recovery International!

Congratulations on taking your first steps toward better mental health!

Recovery International (RI) is a self-help mental health program that offers you a proven method to build and maintain your emotional health using cognitive behavioral tools.

To gain inner peace, you learn how to change the way you respond to people and everyday stressful situations. Additionally, you learn how to identify and manage negative or insecure thoughts and impulses that can lead to emotional distress and symptoms. These simple expressions and tools, called "spots" (page 3), are part of the Recovery Method.

We offer peer-led group meetings via phone, Zoom, chat and in-person. We encourage you to review this Newcomer Packet before attending your first meeting. We even have special meetings just for newcomers to learn RI concepts and the 4-Step Method. We hope you will consider joining us! Please find out more at [RecoveryInternational.org/newcomers](https://RecoveryInternational.org/newcomers).

You can also phone our office at 312-337-5661 for more information or for help signing up for a meeting.

Welcome, and ENDORSE yourself for making your mental health a priority today!

"The Recovery program gave me the courage and confidence I needed to make some very needed changes in my life. It helped me feel that I was in control of my illness instead of feeling that the illness was controlling me. With the tools I learned and with the community to support me, my journey to better mental health is so much easier!"

*Lynette B., Winter Springs, FL*

"These are life-changing tools for managing and maintaining mental health."

*Erin W., Mesa, AZ*



Recovery International is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Donations are essential to maintain our services, and are deeply appreciated. However, everyone is welcome to attend our meetings, regardless of ability to contribute financially.

## How a Recovery International 4-Step Example Should be Constructed

The major portion of each RI meeting is the presentation of very structured examples by the group members. These examples illustrate our use of the RI Method and tools to deal with temperamental reactions to trivialities in our daily lives.

The presentation of each example consists of the steps outlined below. Each example presentation should last **no more than five minutes**.

### OUTLINE

**Step 1.** Report a single situation or event that occurred – an everyday event when you began to work yourself up. Focus on a **brief description** of what happened: specifically, what triggered temper and symptoms.

**Step 2.** Report the **symptoms you experienced** – both physical and mental. *(For instance, angry and fearful thoughts, confusion, palpitations, disturbing impulses, tightness in your chest, sweaty palms, and so on.)*

**Step 3.** Report your **spotting of fearful and angry temper**, the **Recovery International tools** you used to help yourself, and your **self-endorsement for your effort**.

**Step 4.** Begin with **“Before I had my Recovery training...”** and describe the temperamental reaction and symptoms you would have experienced in former days. What would have happened *then* versus what happened *now*? *(This will help you to note the progress you have made.)*

The example format also helps RI group members to:

- Report rather than complain.
- Note our symptoms.
- Check on our responses.
- Control our behavior.
- Use the tools to change our thoughts.
- See our progress.
- Praise ourselves for the effort.
- Learn simplicity instead of complexity.

## A Sampling of Tools or "Spots"

This Sample Tool List is designed for newcomers so you can easily and quickly join Recovery meetings. We are glad that you are here! We encourage you to participate and endorse you for your participation. These tools are quoted or adapted from Dr. Low's books: ***Mental Health Through Will Training*** Fifth Edition (MH), ***Selections from Dr. Low's Works*** (SEL), and ***Manage Your Fears Manage Your Anger*** (MYF).

The page numbers where these spots may be found are listed for each tool. Please read the whole chapter so you understand the context of the spot. You will find many more tools within Dr. Low's works. *"Learning the Recovery language of self-confidence and fearlessness will free your imagination of the dead weight of panics and anxieties."* MH 8

### Some Basic Tools

- **Treat your mental health as a business, not a game.** MH 156
- **Temper is our worst enemy, humor our best friend.** MH 54
- **If we can't change a situation, we can change our attitude toward it.** MH 10, SEL 31-32, MYF 108
- **Be self-led, not symptom-led.** MH 24, MYF 114-118, 280-283
- **Sensations are distressing but not dangerous.** MH 62, 68, 69, 70, 126
- **Have the will to bear discomfort.** MH 89, 91, 92
- **Comfort is a want, not a need.** MH 93
- **Temper produces temper. Calm produces calm.** MH 112
- **When we laugh at ourselves, we choose humility, common sense and averageness.** MH 61
- **Be group-minded, not self-minded.** MH 16
- **Feelings call for expression, temper for suppression.** MH 115
- **Helplessness is not hopelessness.** MH 47, MYF 184
- **Temper creates tenseness, and tenseness creates symptoms.** MH 152
- **Do tasks in part acts.** MH 178, 181
- **Endorse your successes and refrain from condemning your failures.** SEL 45-47, 132
- **Try, fail, try, fail, try – succeed.** MH 69
- **Practice the courage to make mistakes.** MH 183, MYF 60-61, SEL 108
- **Feelings are not facts.** MH 62, 67, MYF 77-80
- **Command your muscles to do what you fear to do, as long as there is no danger.** MH 248
- **Every act of self-control produces a sense of self-respect.** MH 105
- **Decide, plan, initiate and act.** MH 3
- **When you can't decide, any decision will steady you.** MH 3, MYF 5
- **If you can't anticipate securely, don't anticipate.** MH 62
- **Replace an insecure thought with a secure thought.** MH 62, MYF 2-3
- **A thought of security can modify or eliminate a thought of danger.** MH 68
- **Sometimes people do things *that* annoy us, not necessarily *to* annoy us.** MH 296
- **Excuse, don't *accuse*, yourself or others.** MH 16, 146
- **Mere acceptance of a view is easy, but practicing it means sustained application.** MH 257
- **Tempers are frequently uncontrolled but never uncontrollable.** MH 296
- **Control of inner environment is more important than control of external environment.** MH 61
- **Endorse yourself for the effort, not only for the outcome.** MH 196

## Terms

**Angry Temper** — Negative judgments directed against another person or situation (such as resentment, impatience, indignation, disgust, hatred).

**Averageness** — Most of the things we experience, including nervous symptoms are average; most people have experienced them. Only our tendency to work them up makes them seem exceptional to us.

**Endorsement** — A mental pat on the back, self-praise for effort or control. This allows us to learn to praise ourselves, rather than depending on the praise of others.

**Fearful Temper** — Negative judgments directed at myself (such as discouragement, preoccupation, embarrassment, worry, hopelessness, despair, sense of shame, feelings of inadequacy).

**Inner Environment** — Everything inside yourself: feelings, sensations, thoughts, impulses and muscles.

**Muscle Control** — Controlling the muscles not to act on the impulse to do something that would be bad for our mental health (such as controlling our speech muscles by being quiet).

**Muscle Movement** — Commanding the muscles to do something that we are resistant to do (such as keep walking when we would prefer to rest).

**Outer Environment** — Everything outside yourself: places, people, events, and the past.

**Sabotage** — When we ignore or choose not to practice what we have learned in RI. When we do not do what is best for our mental health.

**Spotting** — Identifying a disturbing feeling, sensation, thought or impulse, previously unseen, then applying helpful Recovery tools.

**Trivialities** — The everyday stressful events and irritations of daily life. Compared to maintaining our mental health, most events are trivial.

"RI has helped me take back control of my thoughts and emotions. It gave me tools to come back from isolation and rejoin society. It saved my life."

*Michael W., Pittsburgh, PA*

"This program was so helpful to me as a caregiver for my mom with Alzheimer's. I would get worked up during our time together and at some of her behaviors. I used the RI tools to better manage my anger and impatience. It saved our relationship."

*Angela S., Oak Brook, IL*

## Important Concept #1 Two Kinds of Temper

You are probably used to thinking about “temper” as being associated with anger directed at someone else, or expressed outwardly. But there are times when you might also feel angry with yourself and your own actions, which is anger and/or fear directed inwardly. Look at the difference between these terms.

	<b>Angry (Outer) Temper</b>	<b>Fearful (Inner) Temper</b>
<b>Judgment</b>	Judgment that the other person is wrong or has wronged me.	Judgment that I am wrong.
<b>Feelings</b>	Irritation Resentment Impatience Hatred Disgust Rebellion  Can you think of more?	Worry Feeling inadequate Hopelessness Fear of damage to myself or my reputation Sense of shame  Can you think of more?

With **Angry Temper**, we are judging that another person has wronged us. This judgment is directed outward. This type of temper can also be referred to as **Aggressive Temper**, which appears in various shades and nuances: resentment, impatience, and others listed under the *Angry Temper* column above. We may not have all the facts, but we feel they are wrong.

With **Fearful Temper**, we put the blame on ourselves for being wrong. This type of temper can also be referred to as **Retreating Temper** which may express itself in many different qualities and intensities: discouragement, preoccupation, embarrassment, withdrawal, and others listed under *Fearful Temper* above. We direct our judgment inward.

Judgment is the one thing that both types of temper have in common. The Recovery Method is about learning how to **drop the judgment** against ourselves and others for the sake of our mental health. It's not easy, but the cognitive behavioral tools you learn in this program will help.

## Important Concept #2 Inner and Outer Environment

### Outer (External) Environment

**You CAN'T control people, events, the past or future.**

### Inner (Internal) Environment

You CAN'T control your initial emotions and sensations but you CAN control your thoughts and impulses.

As much as we would like to, we cannot control our friends, family members, the passenger on the bus or the driver in the vehicle next to us. We also have no control over weather, world events, or the decisions we made in the past.

After our initial feelings and sensations during an event, and the uninvited thoughts that enter our mind, we need to focus on what **we can control**. We can control our thoughts and impulses, and our actions and reactions to situations. In Recovery language, that is "controlling our muscles"— such as controlling our speech or keyboard muscles and refusing to say something that's hurtful, or controlling our muscles to walk away from a situation instead of engaging in conflict. It's helpful to realize what can and can't be controlled in each situation to help us choose how to respond.

<p><b>Feelings – CAN'T control</b> Initial emotions such as anger, fear, impatience, hatred, worry, embarrassment, shame and many more. You cannot control what your initial feelings are.</p>	<p><b>Sensations – CAN'T control</b> Physical responses such as blushing, racing heartbeats, tense muscles, teary eyes, and many more. You cannot control these initial sensations.</p>
<p><b>Thoughts – CAN control</b> Ideas produced by thinking, such as "He is annoying," "This is fun," and so on. You can learn to change your thoughts.</p>	<p><b>Impulses – CAN control</b> What you first want to do, such as punch, run, hug, laugh, yell and so on. You can learn to control your impulses.</p>

## The Concept Review

This is a review of the most important elements that are found in each example. We "spot" on each element to reduce/eliminate our symptoms.

**After the group members spot on each example,\*** we work through the review.

1. **Angry Temper** – Negative judgments directed against the other person or situation. *(Related feelings: resentment, impatience, indignation, disgust, hatred)*
2. **Fearful Temper** – Negative judgments directed against oneself. (Related feelings: discouragement, preoccupation, embarrassment, worry, hopelessness, despair, sense of shame, feelings of inadequacy)
3. **Muscle Control** – Controlling the muscles not to act on the impulse to do something that would be bad for our mental health. (Example: Controlling our speech muscles.)
4. **Muscle Movement** – Commanding the muscles to do something that we are resistant to do. (Example: Attending an RI meeting when we'd rather not.)
5. **Sabotage** – When we ignore or choose not to practice what we have learned. When we do not do what is best for our mental health. (Example: Not endorsing, or using temperamental language.)
6. **Endorsement** – Finding other opportunities for self-endorsement. *(What we put into practice and have learned using our Recovery training.)*

*\*(Note: In a peer group meeting, there is often a recap of these concepts. The Example Giver does not participate in this review. They listen to what others are saying and can quietly accept or reject what they hear.)*

"Once I realized that most of life is trivialities, I was able to release much of my anxiety and need for control. Understanding I could not control my external environment helped even more. I am a much calmer and more peaceful person now."

*Mark R., Austin, TX*

"Recovery International has given me my life and it has given me a philosophy to help me cope with everyday living. Today, I continue to attend RI meetings and even train new peer leaders."

*Celinda J., Los Angeles, CA*

## Self-Endorsement

- Self-endorsement is praise we give ourselves for any effort. It's like patting ourselves on the back. We do not look for endorsement from others. We endorse ourselves.
- We endorse ourselves for any effort we make to control how we think and act, whether we are successful or not.
- We endorse for our efforts to improve our mental wellbeing. We focus on effort, not results.
- What are some efforts you can endorse yourself for today?

---

---

---

One self-endorsement is worth thousands of endorsements from the outer environment.



**Here are some self-endorsement tools to get you started:**

- Endorse for the effort, not just the outcome.
- Self-endorsement leads to self-respect.
- Self-endorsement creates a feeling of security.
- Endorse even our smallest efforts.

## Sabotage

We must learn to be aware of when we are sabotaging our efforts to maintain our well-being. We sabotage when we don't use the tools we know to change our thoughts and control our impulses.

As we become more aware of what we do to sabotage ourselves, we can spot more quickly instances of potential sabotage. Then we can use our tools to redirect our thoughts and impulses. The more familiar we become with using the tools and the more we practice using them to handle daily stressful events, the less we will engage in sabotage.

Examples of sabotage include:

- Using temperamental language – extreme words such as always, never, can't, impossible, etc.
- Avoiding the use of "spots" or "tools."
- Self-diagnosing.
- Using the *judgment* of right and wrong in everyday, trivial events.
- Not controlling muscles: whether to stop what we shouldn't do, or don't start what we need to do.
- Failure to endorse yourself.
- Talking it up or making it into a long story instead of a brief one (storytelling).
- Having unrealistic expectations.
- Judging yourself or others.

## Sense of Humor

To feel better about ourselves, we need to develop a good sense of humor. This doesn't mean always cracking a joke or laughing; it might be as simple as smiling at ourselves instead of scowling. How can we do that? We must train ourselves, and that training needs to be ongoing.

Pay close attention to developing a sense of good humor. We have to give ourselves time and continued training. We can't be disappointed if we make up our minds today to use our sense of humor, and find out tomorrow that we haven't used it. That's perfectly average. We just need to keep working at it. Humor is our best friend.

## Constructing a 4-Step Example Worksheet

1. **Report a single situation or event that occurred** — an everyday event when you began to work yourself up. Focus on a brief description of what happened: specifically, what triggered temper and symptoms?

2. **Report the symptoms you experienced** — both physical and mental. *(For instance, angry and fearful thoughts, confusion, palpitations, disturbing impulses, tightness in your chest, sweaty palms, and so on.)*

3. **Report your spotting of fearful and angry temper**, the RI tools you used to help yourself, and your self-endorsement for your effort.

4. **Begin with “Before I had my Recovery training”** and describe the temperamental reaction and symptoms you would have experienced before you began practicing the RI Method. What would have happened then versus what happened now? (This will help you to note the progress you have made.)

**More worksheets can be downloaded and printed at [RecoveryInternational.org/Newcomer](https://RecoveryInternational.org/Newcomer)**

## Meeting Guidelines\*

In keeping with RI policies and the importance of having discipline in your practice, the following guidelines are in place for RI meetings.

- The examples you hear in meetings are about daily stressful events (trivialities), not traumatic events. If you find yourself in need of additional support for a larger life issue, please contact a licensed professional or call the **Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988**.
- When offering an example in the 4-Step Method, be brief and keep details to a minimum. The Method is designed to be highly structured, not confessional or storytelling.
- When someone is giving their example, the group listens respectfully and doesn't interrupt. During the group spotting portion, the example giver listens to the additional tools offered by the group and stays quiet, not interrupting or commenting.
- The group offers additional tools or spots to the example giver in the third person. (Example: "I spot that the example giver..." or "I spot for Jim that....") This practice is used to provide a sense of objectivity.
- When it's your turn to offer a tool during group spotting, keep it brief, and don't give advice on how you would handle the situation. If you are called on, but do not wish to comment, simply say "pass."
- We do not give examples concerning anyone else in the organization, whether they are in attendance or not.
- We honor confidentiality. Whatever is said in the group, stays in the group.

\*For Zoom, in-person and phone meetings, there may be additional guidelines specific to that format which you can obtain from the meeting leader.

## General Meeting Etiquette\*

- We are group-minded and treat each other with respect so we listen quietly, focus on the leader, and avoid crosstalk.
- We keep our attire neutral (for example, not political) to be welcoming to everyone who needs peer support.
- We do not offer advice, criticism, analysis, negative comments or offensive language.
- We avoid controversial topics such as politics, sex, religion or legal issues.
- We are people who practice the RI self-help techniques, not mental health experts or trained licensed professionals. Therefore, we are not qualified to diagnose or comment on treatment plans or medications.
- We encourage everyone to join the group and participate but if you find you are not ready, simply say “I pass” if called on, or let the Group Leader know ahead of time that you’d just like to listen.
- Drinking non-alcoholic beverages is permitted during a meeting, but eating is restricted to the Mutual Aid portion of the meeting (or off-camera/muted microphone if on Zoom). Smoking or vaping is not permitted.
- We only include concepts and materials from Recovery International during our meetings, not from other programs or philosophies.
- Informal discussions, questions and sharing of ideas and stories are encouraged during the mutual aid time, after the formal meeting is concluded.

\*For Zoom, in-person and phone meetings, there may be additional etiquette specific to that format which you can obtain from the meeting leader.

Additional educational and support resources are available on the Recovery International website:  
<https://recoveryinternational.org/resources/>

Recorded educational sessions may be found here: <https://recoveryinternational.org/recorded-sessions/>