

## two

# Understanding the Interplay between Relationships, Addiction, and Recovery Efforts

Truth is everybody is going to hurt you; you just gotta find the ones worth suffering for.

—BOB MARLEY

Before you can really start improving your relationships, you need to understand the ways that your relationships interact with your substance use, addiction, and recovery efforts. This chapter will help you explore how different people fit into your life and the ways your addiction and recovery efforts interact with your relationships in both positive and negative ways. Most people understand that relationships can be damaged by addiction, but we often don't think about the ways that relationship distress can lead to substance use and even get in the way of recovery efforts. This chapter will help you explore those complex patterns and learn about the process of improving relationships in the context of your addiction recovery.

## What Are Relationships?

All kinds of relationships are important in life, and all kinds of relationships are important to your recovery. Take a look at how you define relationships by completing Exercise 2A on the facing page.

## Broadening the Concept of Relationships and Relational Interactions

Most of us have a lot of different people in our lives. Some of these relationships can be helpful to us, some of them can be harmful to us, and some can be both. We tend to focus mostly on romantic and family relationships, but other types of relationships can have a big impact on your recovery efforts as well. Throughout this workbook, I'm going to challenge you to think *broadly* about the different types of relationships you have in your life and how they can affect your recovery efforts. Exercise 2B on page 24 helps you think about the wide variety of relationship types that you have in your life.

## EXERCISE 2A: *Defining Relationships*

What does the term *relationship* mean to you? When you say you have a relationship with somebody, what do you mean?

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### Who Is in Your Social Network?

The term *social network* refers to the different people who impact your life and the different types of connections you have with other people. Although this term has taken on new meaning as we have expanded our connections through social media, let's focus on the people you interact with in ways that are most meaningful to you.

Exercise 2C on page 26 asks you to map out your social network and identify the people in your life who have the greatest impact on you. You'll see that Exercise 2C has a center circle labeled "Me"—obviously you're the center of your social network. Each segment that connects to the "Me" circle represents a group of people in your world: family, friends, people related to your recovery and health, and people in your work and larger communities. On each of those segments are branches to represent specific people in those domains of social connections. The branches that are closest to the "Me" circle should include the people who are closest to you—the ones you see the most frequently *or* who have the most impact on you even if you don't see them frequently. The farther from the center a person's name, the less close that person is to you. You'll notice that no two branches on a segment are the exact same distance from the center, and you can put more than one name on a branch. And the closest branches on one segment aren't necessarily equivalent to the closest branches on another segment since you're likely to have closer bonds with people in the family segment than the work and community segment. So some of the closest branches may be empty for some segments if there aren't people who are very close or impactful in that domain. Consider completing Exercise 2C in pencil so you can easily make changes to it. Here are a few tips on how to make this exercise as accurate and helpful to you as possible:

- **Reflect carefully on the people in your life and write their names on the social network map branch that reflects which segment of your life they're in and how close they are to you right now.** You can use the information from Exercise 2B to make sure that you are including the wide range of relationships—not just the people you like and choose to be in relationships with but also those you may not want to be as close to (such as a friend who is unhealthy for you) and those you have forced relationships with (probation officers, work supervisors, or co-parents, for example).

## EXERCISE 2B: *Identifying Types of Personal Relationships*

Many types of relationships impact your addiction, recovery efforts, and quality of life. Review the list below, think about your own life, and circle whether or not you currently have each type of relationship.

- Relationship with God or spiritual being(s) YES / MAYBE / NO
- Romantic relationship(s) YES / MAYBE / NO
- Relationships with children, stepchildren, and/or foster children YES / MAYBE / NO
- Relationships with grandchildren YES / MAYBE / NO
- Nonromantic relationships with the other parent(s) of your children YES / MAYBE / NO
- Relationships with parents or stepparents YES / MAYBE / NO
- Relationships with grandparents YES / MAYBE / NO
- Relationships with brothers and/or sisters YES / MAYBE / NO
- Relationships with nieces and/or nephews YES / MAYBE / NO
- Relationships with aunts and/or uncles YES / MAYBE / NO
- Relationships with cousins YES / MAYBE / NO
- Friendships with people in addiction recovery YES / MAYBE / NO
- Friendships with people who are not in addiction recovery YES / MAYBE / NO
- Recovery-oriented mentor relationships (e.g., peer recovery coach, sponsor)  
YES / MAYBE / NO
- Relationships with doctors and/or therapists YES / MAYBE / NO
- Relationships with clergy or spiritual advisors YES / MAYBE / NO
- Relationships with current or former teachers and mentors YES / MAYBE / NO
- Relationships with neighbors YES / MAYBE / NO
- Relationships with other members of your community YES / MAYBE / NO
- Legal relationships (e.g., lawyers, probation officers, legal guardians) YES / MAYBE / NO
- Business and work-related relationships YES / MAYBE / NO
- Relationships with pets or animals YES / MAYBE / NO
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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- Also give careful thought to whether you're happy with the degree of closeness you have with each person listed and draw arrows toward or away from the "Me" circle to reflect any changes you'd like. Do you want to have more contact? Or less? Do you wish certain people would leave you alone? Do you see a lot of someone but wish you knew her better? Remember that one of the goals of this book is *reconnection*, so finding ways to deepen your emotional connections is important. Maybe you have a friend who is currently on an outer branch, but you would like to get to know him better (arrow pointing inward). Maybe you have an aunt who is on an inner branch because you have lots of contact with her, but you always leave those encounters feeling awful about yourself, so you want to protect yourself from her a bit more (arrow pointing outward).

Throughout this book, exercises will ask you to refer back to your social network map to help you explore how you can apply new knowledge and particular relationship skills to specific relationships in your life, so it will be helpful for your map to be as complete as possible. Come back to update it periodically as your relationships change. For Exercise 2D on page 27, reflect on what you've learned about the types of relationships you have in your life and the particular people included on your social network map.

## How Do Substance Use, Addiction, and Recovery Efforts Interact with Relationships?

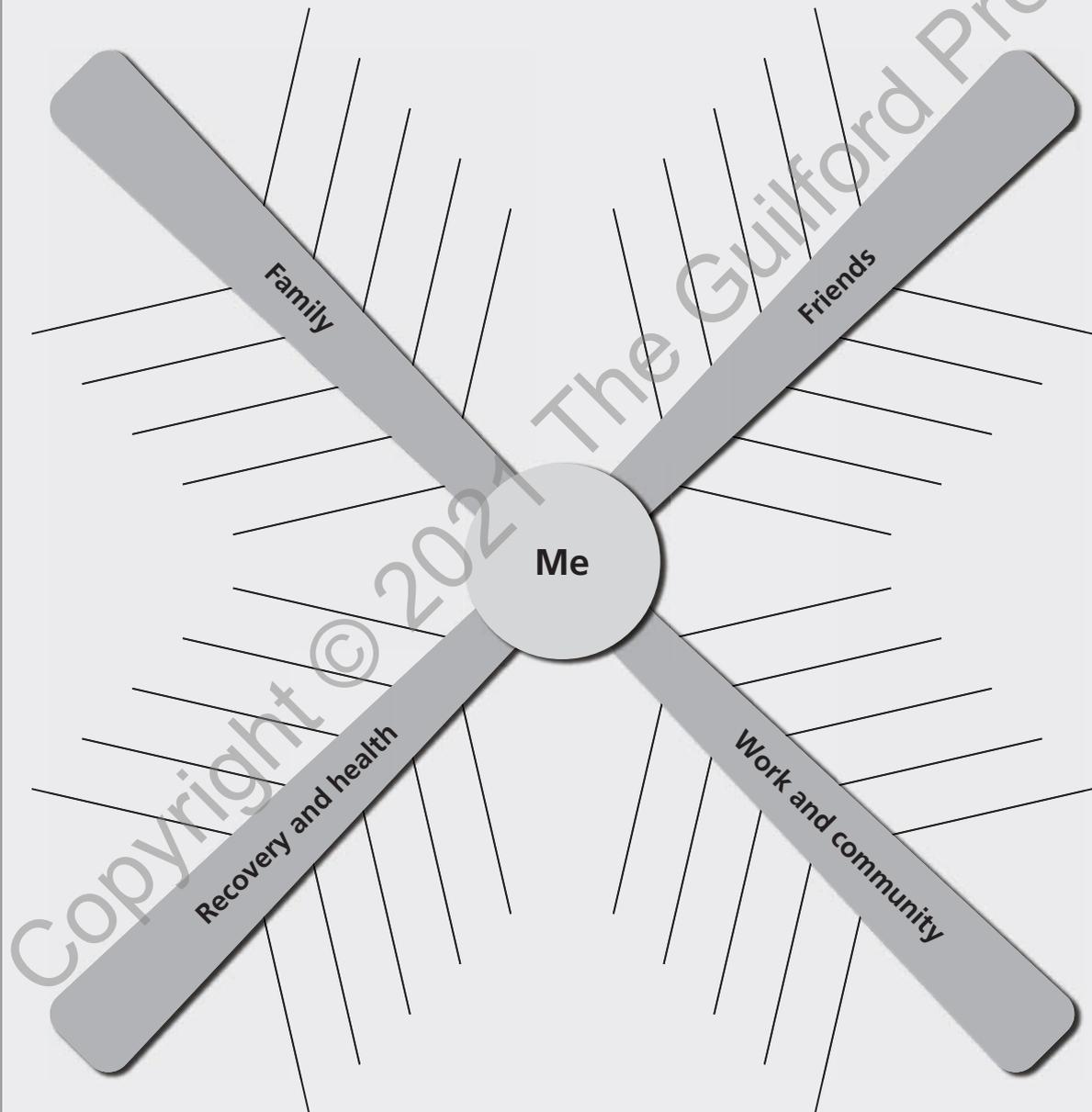
Most people in addiction recovery have some relationships that are supportive and helpful, some that are risky or harmful for their recovery in some way, and some that are a little bit of both. Even the relationships that are generally supportive can be stressful at times, which can create high risk for recovery setbacks. An essential skill for recovery is finding ways to minimize the harmful effects and maximize the helpful effects the relationships in your life have on your addiction recovery efforts.

Substance abuse, addiction, and recovery efforts interact with relationships in many ways, so it's important to understand the impact of your own struggles. Substance abuse and addiction can lead to misunderstandings, poor communication, personality changes, social detachment, emotional numbing, and dishonesty. These changes can shatter trust and create a lot of negative emotional experiences in your relationships. Struggling with addiction can also lower your motivation and cause depression, anxiety, and fatigue. These symptoms can make you seem unreliable, irresponsible, or uncaring. Substance abuse and addiction can lead to behaviors that are not helpful to relationships, such as increased self-focus or selfishness, avoidance, persistent irritability, or withdrawal. These changes can damage the sense of closeness in relationships. In many cases, substance abuse and addiction can lead people to act in ways that are actually against their own morals and values—people can end up lying, cheating, stealing, or becoming aggressive. Typically, if you find yourself acting that way, you experience additional guilt and shame, which can lead to further avoidance of loved ones, more dishonesty, and less emotional closeness.

There is a lot of evidence that your behaviors and emotional experiences while you're actively struggling with an addiction can be really damaging to your relationships. During times of active substance abuse, you're also less likely to have positive interactions with your loved ones. This magnifies the impact on relationships—you have more negative experiences and fewer positive

## EXERCISE 2C: *Map Your Social Network*

On the diagram below, write the names of people you interact with in your life. Within the domains of Family, Friends, Recovery and health, and Work and community, put names of specific people on branches closer to the center or farther from the center to reflect how close each person is to you at this point in your life. Once you have included each person in your social network, put an arrow next to the name of each person you would like to increase closeness with (arrow pointing inward) or distance yourself from (arrow pointing outward).



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## EXERCISE 2D: *Reflecting on Your Social Network*

What did you learn about yourself from completing Exercises 2B and 2C?

Are there specific types of relationships from Exercise 2B that you're lacking in your life but would like to build?

Are you content with the number of people and types of relationships represented in your social network map?

What kinds of changes to your social network could be helpful to your recovery efforts and quality of life?

Which people in your life do you most hope to reconnect or deepen your connection with?

## RECOVERY AND RECONNECTION JOURNEYS

Ruth has been prescribed stimulant medication for narcolepsy for many years but has been taking more than prescribed over the past couple of years. She has also started snorting the pills instead of taking them by mouth. She feels ashamed about her use, and hid it from her husband until recently. He has tried being supportive by managing her medications, but that strategy created a lot of resentment in their relationship and actually contributed to Ruth's having stronger cravings and less confidence in her recovery.

Tyrone and Naomi have been married for over 20 years, and for the last 2 years their relationship has been really troubled due to Tyrone's escalating alcohol use. Tyrone feels guilty about the ways that his drinking has hurt Naomi, and they have tried many different strategies to prevent his drinking. He has given up his credit cards and installed a breathalyzer in his car. Although those strategies have been helpful some of the time, Naomi has started resenting the added responsibility and being frustrated with Tyrone's recovery setbacks, and Tyrone has started to resent feeling controlled. They both feel like they are growing apart.

experiences with the people in your life. This cycle can spiral when loved ones react with anger, resentment, blame, or detachment. You might feel like you're not being understood, that you're being treated unfairly, that your loved ones are overreacting, or that your loved ones don't care about you. Your family and other loved ones might feel really confused, frustrated, helpless, sad, angry, and desperate for change. Does this sound familiar? I seriously doubt that you're unaware of the damage addiction has inflicted on your relationships. For many people, that relationship damage is a driving force to entering addiction recovery. But if you're thinking about ways to repair that damage, it's important to take another honest look at your past so that you can learn from it for the future. If you're a bit further along in your addiction recovery, or if you've had a recent recovery setback, you may notice more ways that your substance abuse and addiction have impacted your relationships. Although this section focuses on *substance abuse* and addiction, for people like you in addiction recovery it's also likely that even controlled nonproblematic *substance use* can cause relationship distress or unease in your loved ones since it's likely to trigger painful memories, fears, and anxieties about the substance use escalating.

One of the goals of this workbook is to help you explore the ways that your substance abuse and addiction may have impacted the lives of your loved ones. Part of the recovery process involves increasing your self-awareness about the ways you might have intentionally or unintentionally hurt the people in your life when you've been using and struggling with addiction. Exercise 2E on the facing page asks you to look at your social network map (Exercise 2C) and identify the particular people in your life who have been impacted by your substance abuse and addiction and rate how each relationship has been damaged. Exercise 2F on pages 30–31 asks you to think back on your addiction history to identify ways that you and your behaviors change due to your substance use or abuse. That will in turn help you complete Exercise 2G on page 32, which will help you identify the specific ways that your substance abuse and addiction have impacted your relationships. If you are honest with yourself on these exercises, you will gain better insight into the impact of your addiction on your relationships, which can help you repair

## EXERCISE 2E: *Identifying Damaged Relationships*

Look back at your social network map and identify particular people who have been impacted negatively by your substance abuse and addiction. Give each person a rating to reflect how much your substance abuse and addiction damaged that relationship.

Person	1—Very little damage 2—Minor damage 3—Moderate damage 4—Significant damage 5—Extreme damage

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those relationships and build new healthy relationships throughout the processes of recovery and reconnection.

## Myths about Addiction Recovery and Relationships

Now that you've spent some time exploring your social network and the ways that your substance abuse and addiction have impacted your relationships, let's consider some of the myths about relationship recovery. Hopefully you're starting to see the intricate ways that relationships interact with addiction and recovery. It's important to think about your goals and hopes for how your recovery will impact those relationships. Unfortunately, sometimes people in addiction recovery, and their loved ones, have unrealistic expectations about recovery, and there are many myths about recovery and relationships that can lead to disappointment.

## EXERCISE 2F: ***Reflecting on Your Substance Abuse and Addiction History***

How have your substance abuse and addiction impacted your relationships? How do your personality, behaviors, and emotional experiences change when you are using? Below is a list of common consequences of substance abuse and addiction that can impact relationships and loved ones. Reflect honestly on your addiction history and select *yes*, *no*, or *maybe* based on whether or not you recognize these substance-related issues in your own life.

- Having slips, relapses, or recovery setbacks YES / MAYBE / NO
- Misunderstandings with others YES / MAYBE / NO
- Poor communication YES / MAYBE / NO
- Picking fights, lashing out verbally, or being mean YES / MAYBE / NO
- Personality changes YES / MAYBE / NO
- Emotional numbing or being less emotionally available YES / MAYBE / NO
- Preoccupation with substance use or compulsive use YES / MAYBE / NO
- Spending too much money on alcohol or drugs YES / MAYBE / NO
- Being suspicious of others or not trusting for no good reason YES / MAYBE / NO
- Feeling anger, resentment, frustration, and other negative emotions YES / MAYBE / NO
- Low motivation or fatigue YES / MAYBE / NO
- Social anxiety or isolation YES / MAYBE / NO
- Unreliability or difficulty completing responsibilities at work or home YES / MAYBE / NO
- Not coming home or being late often YES / MAYBE / NO
- Missing work or being late often due to substance use or hangovers YES / MAYBE / NO
- Being less helpful than before or not taking care of responsibilities YES / MAYBE / NO
- Being unreachable by phone (ignoring calls, phone cut off, phone battery dead)  
YES / MAYBE / NO
- Changes in priorities YES / MAYBE / NO

(continued)

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**EXERCISE 2F: REFLECTING ON YOUR SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND ADDICTION HISTORY** *(continued)*

- Selfishness YES / MAYBE / NO
- Lying or being dishonest YES / MAYBE / NO
- Breaking promises, intentionally or unintentionally YES / MAYBE / NO
- Being easily distracted or having trouble focusing YES / MAYBE / NO
- Stealing or being financially irresponsible YES / MAYBE / NO
- Having angry outbursts or trouble controlling your temper YES / MAYBE / NO
- Blaming your substance use or unhappiness on others in your life YES / MAYBE / NO
- Invalidating or dismissing others' concerns about your substance use or addiction YES / MAYBE / NO
- Becoming aggressive or violent YES / MAYBE / NO
- Feeling guilty or ashamed YES / MAYBE / NO
- Hiding, isolating, withdrawing, or avoiding others YES / MAYBE / NO
- Fewer positive interactions with others YES / MAYBE / NO
- Low self-esteem or feeling worthless YES / MAYBE / NO
- Mood swings, irritability, and difficulty controlling emotions YES / MAYBE / NO
- Feeling disconnected and alone YES / MAYBE / NO
- Feeling sick or physically unwell YES / MAYBE / NO
- Cravings or intrusive thoughts about substances YES / MAYBE / NO
- Not following through with addiction treatment and recovery plans YES / MAYBE / NO
- Becoming manipulative or making threats to get your way YES / MAYBE / NO
- Claiming others overreact to your substance use YES / MAYBE / NO
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## EXERCISE 2G: **Identifying Ways Your Substance Abuse Has Impacted Your Relationships**

Based on the substance-related consequences and behaviors you identified in Exercise 2F, how have your relationships been impacted by your substance abuse? Below is a list of common ways relationships change due to substance abuse and addiction. Which of these apply to specific relationships in your life? It may be helpful to look back at your social network map (Exercise 2C) for this exercise.

- Worsening patterns of frequent arguments, fights, or misunderstandings  
YES / MAYBE / NO
- Growing emotional distance or detachment YES / MAYBE / NO
- Damage to trust or even a complete lack of trust YES / MAYBE / NO
- Increased anger, resentment, frustration YES / MAYBE / NO
- Increased threats, ultimatums, or bargaining attempts YES / MAYBE / NO
- Fewer positive interactions or emotions YES / MAYBE / NO
- Reduction in emotional or physical intimacy YES / MAYBE / NO
- Being expected to fail in recovery or disappoint loved ones YES / MAYBE / NO
- Not being included in social gatherings or important decisions YES / MAYBE / NO
- Difficulty working together toward mutual goals YES / MAYBE / NO
- Feeling like you're in a competition or battle instead of working together as a team  
YES / MAYBE / NO
- Less interest in spending time together YES / MAYBE / NO
- Unequal responsibilities or power in the relationship YES / MAYBE / NO
- Losing certain rights, responsibilities, or privileges because of your substance use  
YES / MAYBE / NO
- Increased aggression, hostility, or violence YES / MAYBE / NO
- Saying hurtful things that you later regret YES / MAYBE / NO
- Guilt and shame YES / MAYBE / NO
- Patterns of dishonesty or avoidance YES / MAYBE / NO
- Feeling disconnected from others even when you're with them YES / MAYBE / NO
- Repetitive cycles of apologies, commitments, and broken promises YES / MAYBE / NO
- Attempts by others to control your behavior or prevent your substance use  
YES / MAYBE / NO
- Relationship distress triggering cravings or increasing the risk of substance use  
YES / MAYBE / NO
- Substance use becoming a weapon in a relationship (e.g., being used to retaliate against  
the other person or as a way to assert your independence) YES / MAYBE / NO
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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### ***Myth 1: Relationships Automatically Improve When Recovery Begins***

It's a myth that relationships will start to improve as soon as someone gets sober or starts addressing their addiction. In reality, relationships often get worse in early recovery. Damaged relationships take a lot of time and effort to repair—the damage wasn't done overnight, and it can't be repaired overnight. Although your substance use might have stopped, and you may be committed to your addiction recovery, your relationships are not going to get better automatically. One reason that relationships often get more strained before improving is that entering recovery can create a power shift and, as a result, a change in relationship boundaries. When you get into recovery, you're likely to experience changes in your self-esteem and become more involved in aspects of your life that you may have neglected. You may start standing up for yourself more, voicing your opinion more, and taking care of your own responsibilities more. While these are fantastic parts of your recovery, it can be a bit challenging for those around you to adjust to your new assertiveness and reliability. While you were struggling with addiction, your loved ones learned ways to cope with the unpredictability and instability that go along with substance abuse, and they probably found some strategies that became comfortable for them and are now hard to give up. They might have started relying on different resources and people for support, and it can be difficult to start relying on you again. Maybe they were taking on more than their share of the responsibility, and it can be difficult for your loved ones to let go of that control. It also might be difficult for them to trust that you're going to be able to reliably take responsibility for some areas, which can lead to anxiety for them. It's important to acknowledge the mixed feelings that your loved ones may be having about your recovery. They are not going to trust your recovery overnight. This can be extremely frustrating for you, but it's an important part of the process, so you'll need to find ways to be patient, compassionate, and consistent as trust is rebuilt.

### ***Myth 2: Recovery Starts as Soon as You're Sober***

Related to the myth that relationships will start to get better as soon as you get sober is the myth that *you* will get totally better as soon as you get sober. Your loved ones might expect that, now that you're sober, you can manage a lot more responsibility than you're really ready to handle. Part of your recovery is being able to assert your boundaries, recognize when you're getting overwhelmed, and ask for help. There's a whole chapter in this workbook (Chapter 9) on establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries, and there are certain skills that you can learn to help you balance your recovery needs with the needs of the people in your life. In reality, early sobriety is really tough, and getting sober is only the beginning of a difficult recovery journey.

Just getting sober doesn't mean you can jump into heavy responsibilities or meet all the needs of those around you. Most people who struggle with addiction also struggle with other mental health problems, and those problems typically don't disappear with sobriety. If you used substances as a way to cope with your mental health problems or stress, you have to learn new ways to manage them in recovery, and that takes time and practice. Sometimes your mental health struggles, like depression or anxiety, may cause you to act in ways that make others suspicious that you have relapsed. That can be really frustrating, and it will take time and consistent sobriety for your loved ones to be able to trust that emotional distress or other disruptive behaviors aren't caused by substance use. So the myth that sobriety leads to immediate recovery can

lead to disappointments, broken promises, and further relationship damage. Your loved ones may need help in understanding what you're going through in recovery; see the Resources at the back of this book.

### ***Myth 3: Apologies Fix Relationships***

Another myth about recovery is that once you apologize for your past behaviors, or make amends as part of 12-step recovery, your relationships will be repaired. While it is true that part of recovery is taking responsibility for actions that impacted those around you, simply apologizing for those actions isn't enough. People in your life are going to need time to see that your behaviors have truly changed. The length of time that it takes to repair relationships is related to many factors such as how the relationship was damaged, how often you see the person, and how consistent you are in your recovery. Apologizing or making amends may be a critical part of your relationship recovery, but it won't be enough in and of itself.

### ***Myth 4: The Support of Loved Ones Is Always Helpful***

In theory, it's true that support is always helpful—who doesn't want to feel supported? But in reality, the specific ways that loved ones try to be supportive might actually add stress or complicate your recovery efforts. Sometimes their efforts to show support backfire, and sometimes these efforts are misguided. Sometimes loved ones will do things that they think are supportive but that actually overstep your boundaries and make you resentful. For example, maybe sometimes they check in on you in ways that make you feel uncomfortable or controlled. Or maybe they say they want you to focus on your recovery but then get mad when you spend so much time engaged in recovery-related activities. Maybe they try to give you time to focus on recovery by taking over some of your responsibilities, but that ends up making you feel like they don't trust you. Chapter 9 helps you learn ways to set and maintain healthy boundaries, one of which is to communicate with others about how they can be most supportive of your addiction recovery efforts. Exercise 2H on the facing page will help you explore ways that you've experienced the myths discussed in this chapter.

## **Navigating the Ups and Downs**

Throughout your relationship recovery it's important to learn ways to cope with frustration and disappointment toward yourself and the people in your life. Being able to stay focused on your recovery efforts and personal goals may be difficult at times, particularly when you don't see your relationships improving as quickly as you would like. A whole chapter in this book is devoted to the process of rebuilding trust, and it's important to recognize that your relationships are not going to improve easily or automatically. Expect some bumps in the road and learn how to navigate the ups and downs without losing your motivation for addiction recovery or relationship recovery. Chapter 3 will help you explore your motivation for relationship recovery efforts and will help you learn ways to stay committed to your relationship goals. Sometimes when people are in early recovery, they actually feel a little less supported than they did when they were actively using or struggling with their addiction. This can be surprising, but sometimes loved ones rally

**EXERCISE 2H: *Acknowledging Myths and Unexpected Distress***

How has your addiction recovery led to unexpected relationship difficulties?

How have you seen the myths discussed in this chapter play out in your life?

Have you been disappointed by the reactions of loved ones? Or have you noticed that some of their support efforts make your addiction recovery a bit harder? If so, how?

Have loved ones expressed disappointment in your recovery progress? Have they had unrealistic expectations about your recovery? If so, how?

around you when you're really struggling or when you're in some sort of crisis, and then they back off once you're doing a bit better. It can feel really good to get an intense level of support during the hard times, so it can be disappointing when it drops. That kind of shift in focus might leave you feeling a bit abandoned. If that happens, it's important to talk with your loved ones about how you miss that level of support and try to ask for specific changes that you think could help your recovery efforts. Remind yourself that the people in your life may need to focus on other parts of their lives that need attention and that this doesn't mean they aren't still rooting for you. Part of addiction recovery and relationship recovery is establishing new relationship patterns with the people in your life, and that can include becoming more assertive about the ways that loved ones can support your recovery efforts.

## The Importance of Patience, Consistency, Empathy, and Validation

As you may be starting to notice, repairing and rebuilding relationships takes *time*, *patience*, and *consistency*. Making amends, rebuilding trust, establishing new boundaries, and improving interaction patterns are all complex tasks that can't be completed as quickly as you would like. There can be challenges related to changes in caretaking patterns and reasserting your independence. If your loved ones got used to needing to take care of you when you were struggling with your addiction, it can take time and concerted effort for them to back off from this role. You may start to feel like they're being overly involved, and it can sometimes feel like nagging. Or you might feel like they're cold and detached, which can happen when loved ones fall into self-protection modes for fear of being hurt or disappointed. There might be a lot to discuss and apologize for, and forgiveness and healing take time. You might get impatient at times, and your loved ones might get impatient with you. As you start thinking about all the effort, time, and energy that it takes to repair relationships, you may start to feel discouraged. Facing that discouragement, being consistent in your healthy choices, and being patient with yourself and your loved ones are important skills that can help you recover and reconnect.

To demonstrate your patience and consistency, it can be helpful to practice skills like *empathy* and *validation*—toward yourself and your loved ones. Empathy toward others is the ability to understand another person's feelings or perspective. When directed at yourself, it is self-compassion—being compassionate toward your emotions and struggles. Validation is the ability to acknowledge that the feelings or perspectives are warranted. Validating your loved ones' reactions to your addiction and recovery and receiving validation from others for your progress and efforts are so important to recovery and reconnection that a whole chapter (Chapter 6) is dedicated to the subject. Throughout your relationship recovery, you'll be faced with opportunities to empathize with your loved ones and validate their emotional reactions. Those situations can be difficult since they often require you to take responsibility for past actions, become vulnerable in your attempts to make amends, and express compassion at times when you feel shame or anger. During these times it's important to keep your eye on the reasons you want to improve your relationships. The next chapter will help you explore your reasons for wanting to focus on relationship recovery, and it will help you keep going through the times when the process gets discouraging. For now, use Exercise 2I on the facing page to help you identify opportunities to practice patience, empathy, and consistency.

## EXERCISE 21: ***Practicing Patience, Empathy, and Consistency***

Think about some of the recent relationship challenges you've faced. Do you notice times when you have been impatient or inconsistent? When?

How could you cope with those feelings differently and demonstrate more patience and consistency in your relationships?

How can you express empathy for your loved ones at this point in your relationship recovery? Which parts of your relationship are they struggling with? How can you demonstrate your empathy or validate their experience?

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### Looking Ahead

Hopefully this chapter helped you explore the ways that you define relationships, the important people in your life, and the ways that your relationships interact with your addiction and recovery. The rest of this workbook will reference your social network map for exercises, and the interplay between your addiction, recovery, and relationships will continue to be the focus for ways that you apply new knowledge and skills. The next chapter will help you explore your motivation for the relationship recovery process and the goals of recovery and reconnection.

## CHAPTER REFLECTION

What are the **top three** most important things you learned from this chapter?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

How is your recovery going right now?

Very badly      Not so great      Okay      Pretty good      Great!

How are your relationships going right now?

Very badly      Not so great      Okay      Pretty good      Great!

What has been harder in your relationships than expected?

What is changing in a positive way with your relationships and your recovery?

How have you been applying the knowledge and relationship skills you're learning in this workbook?

Based on what you learned in this chapter, how are you going to use new relationship knowledge and skills to support your addiction and relationship recovery efforts?

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