

Treatment Goals in Alcohol Addiction

Alcoholism or Alcohol Use Disorder is progressive and can be classified in three stages: mild, moderate and severe.

Alcohol addiction does not necessarily progress quickly between the stages. It may take years for the disease to move from one stage to the next. But, progress in severity it will!!

Knowing the stage a heavy drinker is at helps them and others weigh-up the best treatment options (please refer to the factsheet 'Assessment and Diagnosis').

Unfortunately, individuals addicted to alcohol often do not seek treatment timeously, if at all. They will rarely stop drinking and stay sober without outside help. Further, they typically do not consider stopping in the absence of external pressure, be it from friends and family — or because of an alcohol-related disaster.

The problem is that in the early *mild stage*, the individual's tolerance to alcohol is increased, and they do not consider themselves at risk.

Then, in the *moderate stage*, the increasingly heavy drinker is often blinded to the fact that they are physically dependent on alcohol.

Once in the third and final *severe stage*, the alcoholic is often too sick and irrational to fully understand the situation.

Above all, anyone misusing alcohol is faced with a powerful characteristic of addiction: **denial**.

The affected individual invariably denies they have a problem. An inability to face the facts is a strong force driven by the disease.

What to do about it?

Penetrate Denial • Seek expert help in breaking through denial. Accepting and overcoming denial is a prerequisite for recovery.

Seek Treatment • Once the alcohol-addicted individual admits that they are ill and need help, they can consider the treatment options available. Although some do stop drinking on their own, this is rare and most need expert help. It is important to seek treatment earlier than later, before excessive damage is done. The chance of success is greatest when the alcoholic has something to fight for, such as family, employment and/or their health.

Stop Drinking • The goal of treatment is to bring the alcoholic to abstinence. Once an individual has Alcohol Use Disorder, cutting back is not enough — it is simply not achievable. They must stop drinking alcohol. Many treatment options are available, including both inpatient or outpatient programmes. A treatment plan might include visiting a physician; prescription

medication can assist with overcoming cravings and managing the symptoms of withdrawal.

The more resources and tools available to the alcoholic, the higher the chances of success.

Prevent Relapse • Recovery from alcohol addiction is a lifelong journey. The alcoholic will face temptation, even after achieving sobriety. It is not uncommon for people to slip in and out of sobriety as they work through their alcohol addiction. Certainly, some people beat the addiction at their first attempt, but most battle to keep sober early on in their recovery. To be effective, an intervention programme must include a focus on relapse prevention.

The more an alcoholic perseveres with abstinence, the higher the chances of success. Alcohol addiction can be overcome. The joy and peace that comes with sobriety is available to all.



Diana Southgate's Surely Sober is a unique and comprehensive recovery programme. It can be used for all stages of Alcohol Abuse Disorder, whether mild, moderate or severe.

Surely Sober changes thinking at the deepest subconscious level: addiction is reframed as sobriety.

Website: www.surelysober.com

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For a further information, assistance or assessment, contact us at: 035 792 3198 | 084 556 8357 | disouthgate@telkomsa.net

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