

# **GREATHEART RECOVERY**

7410 New LaGrange Road, Suite 302

Louisville, KY 40222

O: 502-465-3250 F: 502-426-0336

## **Healing the Hearts of Men**

### **Experiential Processes**

<b>Recovering Man Affirmation</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Communicating with Sponsor</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Feelings Bag</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Feelings Ball</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>The Importance of Connection</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The Truth is Freedom</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Spiritual Voice</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Addiction Hot Seat</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Sick as Our Secrets</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Higher Power Sized Hole</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Family Addiction Hot Seat</b>	<b>14</b>

# GREATHEART RECOVERY

7410 New LaGrange Road, Suite 302  
Louisville, KY 40222  
O: 502-465-3250 F: 502-426-0336

## Recovering Man Affirmation

### Time:

1-1.5 hours

### Materials:

White Board

Markers

Pen/Pencil and 3x5 for participants

Full Length Mirror

**Process Intention:** This process empowers it's participants through cognitive dissonance and getting to the core values the participants have been separated from due to substance use. This process is about the beginning stages of creating a healthy identity through ego deconstruction which allows space constructing a new sense of self through positive affirmation. The transformation occurs by allowing the client to see who they're not, who they are and who they are going to be through recovery.

### Instructions:

Have men sit in horse shoe

Write on Board

As a man (leave a little space here) I (am) \_\_\_\_\_

### Fill in the Blank

Take first volunteer, if none, point at someone. Go around the room from man to man until the whiteboard is full. You will get an "I don't know" – write it down. It usually comes early. Pause and reflect on the as a man, not knowing. What you are going here for is a "good" man, but don't use that phrase. You will get a lot of roles – good worker, father, son, husband, brother, etc. Everyone responds. No duplicates. If they can't think of anything, ask if they need help. They will resist. If they say yes that they do need help, have them pick a man for help. If the man they ask for help cannot help them, have them pick another man. Have them thank the other man for the help. Men have a lot of trouble asking for help from others, especially other men. Go around at least 4 times. You judge how it is going. Ask if

# GREATHEART RECOVERY

7410 New LaGrange Road, Suite 302  
Louisville, KY 40222  
O: 502-465-3250 F: 502-426-0336

## Recovering Man Affirmation (continued)

there are any missing and take voluntary answers. Add your own that you want to be sure are up there. If you can, note to yourself who says what. Many of these answers are diagnostic of the man that gives the answer. It may be a projection, it may be who they seek to be, there may be some shame, especially toxic shame around who they have been told that they are, or how their addiction has beaten them down. It may be a hope. It may be a delusion about them being a good man especially a good father during the lies and pain of their addiction. There is good meat in here for their treatment.

You may have to tease out during the session at some point emotions – hurt, lonely, etc. “Afraid or Fear” has to come up. Fear is an emotion that is not ok for men to have. You may have to process this some here. “Mad or Angry” often mask fear and sadness.

Now add the word “ADDICTED” (in red) to

As a Man ADDICTED I AM \_\_\_\_\_

Erase the words that do not apply. For example – good worker, father, husband, etc. Honest. Hard worker. Adequate. Etc.

You are left with the undesirable qualities of a man. Add other qualities of an addicted man. Maximize the list. Use the words that they give you. Quote them. Include profanity or abbreviations for profanity if they use it. You should have a list at least as long as the first, usually more, participation increases and they are more in touch with the addicted man.

Have them look at the list. Get their impressions.

Turn the lights out. SHADOWS – the place where we hide, addicts and alcoholics hide in the shadows along the walls in the darkness along with all the other creepy crawlies. Bats, rats, spiders, snakes, and other creatures of the night. Addicts and alcoholics stay up all night and sleep all day hiding in the shadows of night. They don’t want others seeing what they are doing and who they have become.

That is who you are when you come into treatment. Here is the problem. If the same man walks out of the door at the end of treatment, he is screwed. If you walk out of treatment unchanged, if you still think that you are a worthless POS, when you leave, then you are doomed. YOU HAVE WASTED YOUR TIME AND MONEY. We know too well the shame of addiction. Why do we use and hurt ourselves? Our families? Our friends? Our loved ones?

# GREATHEART RECOVERY

7410 New LaGrange Road, Suite 302  
Louisville, KY 40222  
O: 502-465-3250 F: 502-426-0336

## Recovering Man Affirmation (continued)

DO YOU WANT TO END HERE? Who or what do you want to be in recovery?

Erase "Addicted" add "Recovering" in green or blue

As a man RECOVERING I (am) \_\_\_\_\_

New List

Same Method

More realistic. More Personal. Add things that you want to emphasize. For example – go to meetings, work steps, call sponsor, be responsible, be accountable, etc.

Hand out 3x5 notecards and writing utensils. It is important to maintain silence and keep a firm edge with the men. They may try and laugh off the discomfort.

Write on the board: I am \_\_\_\_\_.

This time encourage men to create one or two words to describe the man they want to be. Make sure to keep the affirmation in present tense (i.e. I am going to be loving).

Examples: I am loving.

I am kind.

I am loyal.

Once the men are complete with writing their affirmations, and then grab the full length mirror. Have each man stand one at a time and speak their affirmation to the group and then to themselves through the mirror. Make sure they make good eye contact with themselves when stating affirmation. When the man is done encourage the group to cheer for his new way of being. When the man is complete, holds the mirror for the next man. After the men are done have them stand beside each other and hold the mirror horizontally so they can see each other, the support they have.

Remind the men to bring their affirmations, either memorized or the note card to group the following session so they can check in with their new sense of self.

# GREATHEART RECOVERY

7410 New LaGrange Road, Suite 302  
Louisville, KY 40222  
O: 502-465-3250 F: 502-426-0336

## **Communicating with Sponsor**

### **Time:**

30 minutes- 1 hour

### **Materials:**

Two chairs for clients to sit in

**Process Intention:** To facilitate healthy communication between two men involving asking for help and becoming vulnerable.

### **Instructions:**

This works well with men who have difficulty asking for help particularly from other men in 12-step recovery.

Ask the man struggling to pick another peer to role play a sponsor. After the man selects someone have them move their chairs back to back. Ask the man to call his sponsor (who is sitting behind him). This doesn't have to be serious and stern. Allow for some healthy level of playfulness if the man becomes playful. All the non-verbal signs of communication, tone and language are indicators of some resistance to ask for help. Highlighting the resistance will allow the man to see what prevents him from asking for help. Sometimes, if a man was abandoned by his father, then fear of abandonment may play a role in asking for help as the man's message may be, "What's the use anyhow? No one was ever there for me".

After getting to the root of the ambivalence, ask the men to take their chairs and face each other. Allow the client to breath and feel the discomfort. If you notice physical signs of resistance (face turning red, avoiding eye contact, sweating) call attention and talk the client through whatever the barrier is. After the man completes the process allow for quick process of events and encourage peers to give positive reinforcement.

# GREATHEART RECOVERY

7410 New LaGrange Road, Suite 302  
Louisville, KY 40222  
O: 502-465-3250 F: 502-426-0336

## Feelings Bag

### Time:

30 minutes – 1 hour

### Materials:

Decorative small bag

20-30 feelings words folded

**Process Intention:** To allow men to identify feelings with events and to teach where feelings are derived from.

**Instructions:** Find a small paper or plastic bag. Print 20-30 feelings words (i.e. disappointed, excited, rage, grateful) and cut words out. Fold feeling words and put into bag.

Set up the context for the group by talking about how men stuff their feelings and have difficulty identifying feelings. Talk about the consequences of avoiding feelings (relapse, domestic violence, arguments) and the importance of identifying feelings.

After setting the context, pass the bag to someone in the group. Ask the man to pick one feeling out of the bag. After he chooses feeling, have him talk about the most recent time he felt the feeling. Allow him to tell the story and events preceding the feeling. Coach him into breaking the feeling down to its simplest form. For example, a man draws frustration and tells the story about the feelings. If you notice the congruency between body language and feelings, then call attention to it. Ask him what are the primary feelings associated with frustration. He may state that he was frustrated that he didn't get the job he wanted and continue to tell the story of being treated unfairly or wrongfully. Ask probing questions such as, how did you feel when you heard that you didn't get the job? The client may respond, "I knew I wasn't going to get it anyways. I didn't deserve it". Ask questions related to dissecting the message or false belief that the man takes ownership of. For example, what feeling is related to you not deserving this wonderful job? The client can then identify shame or fear. This is a great opportunity to talk about the root feelings of shame led the client to frustration and/or some other form of anger which can be toxic.

# GREATHEART RECOVERY

7410 New LaGrange Road, Suite 302  
Louisville, KY 40222  
O: 502-465-3250 F: 502-426-0336

## **Feelings Ball**

### **Time:**

30 minutes- 1 hour

### **Materials:**

Beach ball

Markers

### **Process Intention:**

To allow men to identify feelings with events and to teach where feelings are derived from.

**Instructions:** Find a medium size beach ball and write, with permanent marker, a wide variety of feelings on the ball. The feeling words can be different fonts, colors, sizes. This activity is somewhat playful and can unconsciously simulate boyish interaction between the men which promotes vulnerability and authenticity.

Like the feelings bag process, set up similar context. When you are ready toss the beach ball to man. Whichever feeling his eyes first land on is the one he will begin to process. This process is done the same was as Feelings Bag.

# GREATHEART RECOVERY

7410 New LaGrange Road, Suite 302  
Louisville, KY 40222  
O: 502-465-3250 F: 502-426-0336

## Importance of Connection

### Time:

30 minutes – 1 hour

### Materials:

Large spool of yarn

**Process Intention:** To create basic understanding of building relationships through identifying and focusing similarities. Identification is the antidote for loneliness.

**Instructions:** Have the men sit in a circle (much like a therapy circle you're already using). Give some brief context about connection and relationship. Often time people in early recovery focus on the differences in others which creates separation between one another. Connection is about finding similarities in one another. I like to dim the lights and make this more intimate. Also, the dim lights unconsciously raise awareness to the seriousness of the process.

The therapist begins the process by choosing a man he relates to about any personal quality or bonding situation (i.e. courage, active court case, hard worker). Once identification has been made the counselor passes the spool of yarn and holds onto the beginning of the yarn. The first client chooses someone with whom he identifies with and passes the spool. No Client can go twice until everyone goes once.

After the process allow time for the clients to take in the "connectedness" of one another. There doesn't need to be much talking or laughter. After a few silent minutes offer some context around being interdependence and the natural desire we have to be connected to one another.

Feel free to process further after activity is complete.



# GREATHEART RECOVERY

7410 New LaGrange Road, Suite 302  
Louisville, KY 40222  
O: 502-465-3250 F: 502-426-0336

## **The Truth is Freedom**

### **Time:**

30 minutes – 1 hour

### **Materials:**

Stop watch

**Process Intention:** To allow safe place to become honest and vulnerable with peers which creates deeper connection and meaning between men and sets intention for future group work.

**Instructions:** Set some context for process and allow each man to introduce himself to group for 2 minutes. This is usually what I call elevator talk. The men will almost always keep their introduction on a service level and occasionally a man may state something deep and personal to the group. If the man reaches the 2 minute mark and continues to talk, respectfully move to next man. If the man doesn't have anything to say and has time to spare allow for the 2 minutes to expire. The awkward silence that is experienced is extremely therapeutic.

After every man introduces himself, ask the group "tell the group something that you don't want us to know about you". This works best if you choose a stronger client to lead. The leading client sets the tone for the rest of the group. Some men may share personal experience that they have never told anyone. Some men may continue to share on surface level and this is an opportunity to re-ask the original question. This is usually an emotional process and men will express trauma and pain that have been controlling them and their life. I have had men report eating disorders, cutting, abuse, guilt and shame related to sexual behaviors.

This activity creates a sacred bond between the men because they have shared their deeper truth with one another. After the process notice the energy in the room. It may feel negative or "stuffy" and that is because of the truth that they have released. At this point the facilitator has two options: dismiss activity and close group or talk some time to recall some positive affirmation within the individuals or the group.

# GREATHEART RECOVERY

7410 New LaGrange Road, Suite 302  
Louisville, KY 40222  
O: 502-465-3250 F: 502-426-0336

## Spiritual Voice

### Time:

1 hour

### Materials:

None

**Process Intention:** To offer safe environment for men to verbalize one attribute/principle they want from their Higher Power. This process allows men opportunity to engage in active listening and ability to be supportive of peers needs. The word Higher Power or God can cause men to shy away from 12-step recovery. This process can allow men to create a beginning conception of the principles of faith and believing.

**Instructions:** Have men count off 1's and 2's. Have 1's form circle standing shoulder to shoulder while facing outward. Ask 2's to stand in front of 1's. Notice the difficulty to maintain eye contact and the need for humor. Again, humor is good and can be therapeutic but this is a more serious process and laughter relieves the feeling of being uncomfortable. Have the men stand in front of each other while the instructions are given.

The facilitator instructs the 2's (men on the outside of the circle) to take a minute and think about one attribute/personality trait they want from a Higher Power. Once personal attribute is selected then the 2's whisper into 1's ear the attribute. Once finished 2's rotate counter clockwise to next man. This process continues until 2's have whispered their attribute. Once 2's are complete, then 1's form outside circle and repeat the process. Every man will have opportunity to whisper attribute and listen to peers attribute.

This process can also develop empathy and compassion personally and interpersonally. After process is complete, invite men to take a seat back in original group circle. This is great time to process feelings and thoughts about what they've experienced. What attributes did they hear? Did they relate to any other attributes? What will it take for you to become \_\_\_\_\_ (attribute—i.e. compassionate, purposeful)? Let the men direct the conversation.

# GREATHEART RECOVERY

7410 New LaGrange Road, Suite 302  
Louisville, KY 40222  
O: 502-465-3250 F: 502-426-0336

## Addiction Hot Seat

### Time:

1 hour

### Materials:

Empty chair

3x5 notecards

Writing utensils

**Process Intention:** Most men in early recovery are angry and express guilt to all the destruction in their lives caused by addiction. This process evokes assertiveness and serves as grounds for men to express their thoughts and feelings towards addiction. This is a great process to elicit grief which can allow the men to feel sadness and compassion.

**Instructions:** Have men sit in horseshoe and place empty chair at opening. Instruct the men to close their eyes and breathe. Some men may choose to keep their eyes open which can be appropriate. Invite the men to think and feel what it was like when addiction controls their life. Be sure to address the strained relationships and unsuccessful attempts to manage their life. It is imperative to bring up the pain and discomfort that addiction had caused.

After several minutes of guided imagery, invite the men to open their eyes. Notice their expressions and body language. Direct their attention to the empty chair. Let them know that their addiction is here. Instruct them to write on the notecard how they truly feel about their addiction. They can write whatever they want regardless the content. Remember, this process is about them expressing their anger/rage towards their addiction. After everyone writes their thoughts and feelings on the notecard, they can begin (one at a time) telling/expressing their feelings to their addiction. After everyone completes process, ask if any man was holding back or has more to say. Allow times for men to decide. The silence is good at allowing the men to feel the experience.

# GREATHEART RECOVERY

7410 New LaGrange Road, Suite 302  
Louisville, KY 40222  
O: 502-465-3250 F: 502-426-0336

## **Sick as Our Secrets**

### **Time:**

1 hour

### **Materials:**

Trash can, 3x5 notecards, writing utensils

Ball cap or bucket (to put “secrets” into)

### **Process Intention:**

“We are as sick as our secrets” is a hallmark slogan used in some 12-step recovery programs. Most people in early recovery have some form of secret that they are holding onto. Experience has proven that secrets prevents honesty, vulnerability, and multi-level growth. This process allows clients to express secrets anonymously and provides opportunity for feedback. Once secrets are expressed clients can develop trust with peers which as brevity and depth to group cohesion.

# GREATHEART RECOVERY

7410 New LaGrange Road, Suite 302  
Louisville, KY 40222  
O: 502-465-3250 F: 502-426-0336

## Higher Power Sized Hole

**Time:** 40 minutes

**Materials:** writing utensils, paper with circle in the middle, scissors

**Process Intention:** This process allows clients to identify qualities and characteristics of Higher Power while witnessing what Higher Power is not. The differences between what is and what isn't creates early stages of creating conception.

**Instructions:** Have clients sit in circle. Pass out writing utensils and sheet of paper with circle on it. (Clients should have had previous educational lecture on spirituality and recovery). With basic knowledge and understanding, begin to highlight qualities and characteristics of what a Higher Power is not. Have the clients begin to identify qualities and characteristics of what a Higher Power is not by writing on the outside of the circle. Allow for plenty of time. These descriptor words are endless and you may have to coach and motivate for clients to fill in the paper. The participants may chose words like: hate, disease, rape, war etc. Once they complete this, have them scan the words they've used. Next, have them fill in the circle in the center of the paper with what a Higher Power is. These words can include: love, surrender, community, peace, divinity etc. Remember, they are beginning to formulate their own concept of what a Higher Power is.

Once everyone is complete, then have them one-by-one symbolically cut circle out of paper. Encourage silence while each person cuts hole out of paper. After circle is cut out and loose paper thrown away, invite the group members to hold their God circles in the center of their chest. Encourage them to look at their peers and notice the qualities that they see. Have them share on the experience briefly. Ask them what the circle represents. This is a "God sized hole" that has been filled with what a Higher Power isn't (i.e. drugs, gambling, crime, hate). Ask them to imagine what life could be like if they live with these positive attributes. Allow time for some processing.

This activity highly stimulates the brain and clients will remember what is in their "God sized hole". Whenever a client gets confused, antsy, hateful etc, try and direct them back to this exercise.

# GREATHEART RECOVERY

7410 New LaGrange Road, Suite 302  
Louisville, KY 40222  
O: 502-465-3250 F: 502-426-0336

## **Family Addiction Hot Seat**

**Time:** 60 minutes

**Materials:** notecard, writing utensils, and empty chair

**Process Intention:** This process allows clients and their family members to anonymously voice their feelings towards addiction in a safe environment.

### **Instructions:**

This process is usually completed when clients and family members are present. This usually works well during family day programming event. Divide setting into two groups: family/loved ones and patients/clients. Once groups are divided, then have each group determine group spokesperson. Pass out notecards and writing utensils. People who use drugs and their families may have resentment, rage, frustration and shame (to name a few) and may never have the opportunity to express their feelings healthily. The addiction is only a part of the drug user. This process allows for addicts and loved to speak to that part, the addiction.

Place empty chair at center of room. Explain that addiction is sitting in the chair. Go through the long list of impacts addiction has on the addict and the family members. Once finished, encourage participants to write the things that they want to say to the addiction. Remind them that it is confidential and encourage brevity. Once done, have the notecards passed to the group spokesperson. Have the spokesperson read them off one-by-one while rotating between groups. Allow for silence and expression of emotion. Once all notecards are read create time for anything else that needs to be said. Continue to reinforce the idea that when we don't share our feelings and thoughts with others they are suppressed. When our feelings and thoughts are suppressed, they often get projected onto innocent bystanders. By actively participating in this process they can limit the number of innocent bystanders that are affected by projection of emotional pain.

It is important to acknowledge the participants for sharing their pain with group and normalize their feelings.