



*"It's not that some people have willpower and some don't. It's that some people are ready to change and others are not."*

– James Gordon, MD

*"They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself."*

– Andy Warhol

## How change relates to addiction remission.

The memories created or strengthened during the craving/reward cycle can also be triggered by environmental cues such as people, places and things. Such reminders recall the euphoria and trigger a craving to re-experience it. Breaking these connections by disassociating related memories with active addiction is the goal of recovery-focused change. Replacing behaviors and avoiding environmental cues can make triggering cravings less likely and long-term addiction remission possible.



*In basic terms, recovery can be thought of as the process of learning new behaviors that are less likely to trigger the memories which lead to cravings.*

and replaces the drug-seeking behavior. In time, the trigger-causing memories fade as they are replaced with new memory chains unrelated to active addiction.

## When things don't go as planned.

Not everyone succeeds on the first attempt. In the case of relapse, avoid repeating the behaviors which led to relapse. Instead, make changes to the process and situation. That might be as simple as keeping your treatment medication in a different place, changing brands or form factors of medication, and changing any rituals associated with taking the medication. The smell, feel, or taste of the treatment medication taken prior to a recent relapse, might be enough to trigger some of the same memories and cravings which prompted the relapse. By changing as many aspects associated with relapse as practicable, triggering cravings becomes less likely as does the prospect of future relapse.

## The power of change.

For years it was assumed that the constant cravings of addiction were a lifelong reality. But recently scientists have discovered that the brain is far more pliable than once thought. Scientists believe that many underlying brain structures responsible for the cravings of addiction can be changed - perhaps to the point where cravings are significantly diminished and no longer impact quality of life

## How to change.

Identifying and then making changes to those behavior associated with active addiction is the real work of recovery. A therapist, counselor or life coach can be very helpful in implementing these changes. Support from peers, family and friends can also help realize change and maintain motivation. Medication, such as buprenorphine, can suppress cravings that would otherwise interfere with making changes. As dealing with stress anxiety and depression in normal healthy ways is continually repeated, it becomes the reflex reaction

## The results of change.

In the 1970s servicemen returning from Vietnam, who had been addicted to heroin, had 1/10 the relapse rate of addicted people treated locally in the states. One clear difference was that by simply coming home, the Vets changed practically all aspects of their life, including environment and behavior; while locally treated patients likely returned to the same environment and situation as prior to treatment.



Meaningful change comes about by identifying triggers related to active addiction and then consciously working to change associated behaviors. By repeating healthy behaviors unrelated to addiction, the craving-causing brain structures diminish and have less influence, restoring control and quality of life. Eventually, craving-suppressing medication may no longer be necessary to maintain sustained addiction remission and can be discontinued.

*"Things do not change; we change."* – Henry David Thoreau

