

Addiction Recovery – What’s in a Label?  
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Addiction Recovery spans a broad arena of problems, many are identified as diseases or disorders. The American Psychiatric Association continuously tries to add more and more types of behavior into their little classifications. So what you are labeled may change its name in the near future.

“Big Changes Proposed In Psychiatric Diagnosis” is the news for today according to the Associated Press. The industry is attempting to change the “labels” of people’s problems into a variety of terms. When you look at the list of “disorders” at the following link, one can find their problem of choice. <http://www.dsm5.org/ProposedRevisions/Pages/Substance-RelatedDisorders.aspx>

But what’s really in a label? Do we need to use labels? Certainly, the medical and psychological industries are required to use them to gain clarity on exactly what a person’s problem is, and also to obtain insurance coverage for the treatment.

I remember when I was in the middle of my addiction. I’d go around from support group to support group, looking for answers as to why I did what I did. I wanted to fit it into a nice neat little name – a label. Also, in the back of my mind I thought that if I could uncover exactly what got me into my problem, then I would be able to get out of my problem.

We think that labels will provide us with insight and guidance. But they only provide us with more confusion. Because the criteria for individual labels is so broad, even a “normal” person can have a bad label placed upon them. Plus, they don’t help you get over your problem.

In fact, this introspective look at ourselves adds another problem to our addiction – a problem sometimes bigger than our addiction – of being so inward focused that it’s hard to break that focus in order to reach out to love and serve others.

And labels have negative impacts. Once you’ve got that label, whether you gave yourself that label or a doctor or some other person gave it to you, you’re stuck with it for life. Unless you stand up for yourself.

If you want to stand up for yourself and get out of recovery and into living your dreams, you’ve got to take a close look at several things. Let’s use an alcoholic for our example. First, how often do you verbalize to others that you’re an alcoholic? How often do you have thoughts that you’re an alcoholic and will never overcome it? Even if you haven’t had a drink in a year, do you still call yourself an alcoholic?

I am big on getting rid of labels and identifying specific behavior. Part of getting over your addiction is to understand what is keeping you trapped. Remember, the whole goal is to get you away from your addiction, stop thinking and talking about your addiction, and turn your focus onto building an awesome future.

You should even stop using the term “I’m in recovery.” It’s a label. And “recovery” even has bad connotations attached to it. For instance, that it’s a life-long battle. You have to attend recovery groups every week in order to not go back to your addiction. What kind of life is that? Let me ask you something – what other problem in life requires that the person attend a support group for the rest of their life? Lying? Cheating? Relationship problems? School problems? Work problems? You get the idea.

So if you stop using labels, will that cure you? No. It’s one of the first steps to uncovering exactly what behavior (or stinking thinking) you’re dealing with and need to confront. I have a section on labels in my ebook “Out of Recovery & Into Living Your Dreams.” If you would like more information on what immediate steps you can take, you can get my free mp3 of “8 Immediate Action Steps To Take.” [www.OvercomeAnyAddiction.org](http://www.OvercomeAnyAddiction.org) Also check out my ebook, membership program, and personal coaching program. Kathy Williamson, The Addictions Coach.