“We admit that by ourselves we are powerless over chemical substances, that our lives have become unmanageable”

**Memory verse:** Proverbs 14:12 – “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death”

**Lesson 1: Where did it begin?**

**Talk**

None of us sets out planning to become dependent on chemicals. Instead we are thinking about acceptance by our peers, or finding a way to fill an emptiness inside, or avoiding feelings we can’t manage.

“When we become hooked, the benefits we gained from our early drug use begin to fade as the years pass. Even though the early rewards are gone, our drug of choice becomes a reward for diligent work, a remedy for anger, a means of controlling other people, a boost for our energy level, an escape from pain (even when it is the cause of the pain), a substitute for companionship, a self-prescribed treatment for depression. The habit becomes a need. As the need grows, our lives begin to crumble. The drug of choice no longer will bring a sense of freedom. Instead, a sense of bondage, isolation, anxiety, fear and shame grows. We may experience broken relationships, the loss of a job, financial failure, declining health and deteriorating self-esteem. Sadly, we may be the last to see our addiction. Without help we probably will die.”

Q1. How many items did you check on the checklist? Pages 10-11 (If you checked two or three, you probably have a problem, over three you are probably an addict).

Q2. What conclusions did you come to regarding your substance use?

Q3. At what stage are you on the tolerance curve? (Page 12)

**Lesson 2: The Stages of Addiction**

**Talk**

Why do people become chemically dependent? No one is sure. Cultural, environmental and biological factors. Also, addict’s body can’t process alcohol or drugs normally. Crack is 100% addictive.
“Researchers estimate that one in every 10 persons becomes chemically dependent and that these people cannot stop drinking or using by themselves. While it does occur, it generally is a myth that the addict will have enough insight to see his or her condition and seek treatment for the problem. The idea that the addiction favors those on skid row is also a myth. In actuality only 5% of those who are chemically dependent, live on skid row.”

Our feelings or moods play a role in the way addiction develops. We sometimes feel up, sometimes depressed. But generally our normal range of mood is in the center between suicidally depressed, and ecstatic.

The stages of addiction go from 1) Experimenting and learning, 2) Seeking, 3) Obsessing, to 4) Consuming.

Q4. Describe the feelings associated with your chemical addiction. On a scale from 0 (suicidally depressed) to 10 (ecstatic), where would your “normal” have been, before you started using?

Q5. Where would you say your “normal” is now, after having used for a number of years? What does this tell you about the effect your addiction is having on you?

Q6. How many items did you check under Stage One: Experimenting and Learning? (Page 16). Write out the items you checked.

Q7. How many items did you check under Stage Two: Seeking? (Page 17). Write out the items you checked.

Q8. How many items did you check under Stage Three: Obsessing? (Page 17). Write out the items you checked.

Q9. How many items did you check under Stage Four: Consuming? (Page 18). Write out the items you checked.
Lesson 3: Powerlessness

Talk
Addiction wears many faces. It has no respect for a person’s age, race, sex, social standing, profession or religious beliefs. Some seem to be genetically susceptible to addiction and are hooked at once, others abuse substances for many years before becoming dependent.

“Powerlessness is the distinguishing mark of addiction. We have difficulty seeing our powerlessness because the feeling we gain from using is a feeling of control. We think we are in control when we are drinking or using. We likely feel out of control only when our drug of choice has been taken away, and we begin to feel discomfort. In reality, the sense of control we gain from using, is false.

Two types of addicts exist. Some addicts know they are powerless over chemicals but cannot stop drinking or using. Others cannot yet see their powerlessness. The nature of drugs themselves is one reason addicts cannot see the truth. Mood-altering chemicals act on the central nervous system to produce feelings of euphoria, a lack of inhibitions, and a sense of well-being. Some of these substances are accurately labeled “pain-killers” – they deaden emotional pain as well as physical pain. More often than not, the person suffering from addiction is also suffering from emotional pain.

Part of the emotional pain results from our drug use. Because of our using, our lives become unmanageable. In an effort to block pain and maintain the illusion that we are in control, we build defense mechanisms that hide the truth from us. Denial combines with the numbing effects of the drug and makes it very difficult to see reality as it is”.

Q11. From the timeline on page 20, list the dates important events in your addiction life happened (e.g. parents divorced age 9, started smoking marijuana age 13, etc).

Q12. Having studied this lesson, write the answer you wrote in the box on page 22.

Lesson 4: Unmanageable

Talk
“By definition, chemical dependency is the compulsion to use a mood-altering chemical to achieve a desired effect, despite the experience of negative consequences. Codependency is the condition occurring when a person’s God-given needs for love and security have been blocked in a situation with a dysfunctional-dependent-person. Codependents often help people continue
their addictive behavior by rescuing the dependent person from the consequences of their behavior. Many people exhibit both codependent and chemical dependent behavior.”

Q13. Describe what you consider an unmanageable life (page 23)

Q14. Looking at your answers to the questions at the bottom of page 23, how has your addiction affected you?

Q15. Which five ways have chemicals led you to compromise your values? (page 24)

Q16. Which five ways has your addiction contributed to financial, occupational or legal problems in your life? (page 24)

Q17. What crisis brought you to consider getting help at this time? (page 25)

Q18. How many of the symptoms of chemical dependency on page 25, did you check? Write out the symptoms you checked.

Q19. Does the evidence indicate that you can run your own life, and control both your life and your addiction? Why? (page 26)

Lesson 5: Reality

Talk
“A strange fact is true about addiction. Remember that addictions are romances. Even though we may have hated some parts of the addiction, we had, and to some degree may always have, a passionate love affair with our drug of choice. We thought about it, we planned to be with it, we savored it and we felt pain when separated from it. When we finally accept the fact that our lover is no good for us, a grief process begins.
This grief process is just as real and powerful as if our closest friend or lover died or rejected us. Despite the negative consequences, we will probably experience profound feelings of loss as we begin our sobriety. The feelings will eventually decline in frequency and intensity, but they may last from several weeks to several years.

The grief process includes the following stages: Denial, Bargaining, Anger, Grief, Acceptance’

Q20. In the past, would you have been able to admit to having an addiction? How do you feel about that now?

Q21. List the top 5 objects of anger in your life, and rank them, with 1 being the object of greatest anger. (page 28)

Q22. What are you going to miss most by stopping using? Express your feelings about this. (page 29)

Summary

Q23. What are the major lessons you have learned as you progressed through this step? (half page)