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Season 04. Episode 01

## Podcast Title: The Art of Waking Up and Staying Up

Hello again, dear listener, Bruno J at your service.

You are joining a small but growing community of people who love someone who is currently in the grip of an addiction, or who might be but you aren't sure, and you might also be someone who is experiencing addiction and are looking for some answers.

As some of you may know, I will have a young man named Tony Z accompany me on some episode recordings. He has not only been clean and sober for 4 solid years, he is a young 30 years old, works an exceptional sobriety program and has shared his insights with me so that I can carry the message to you.

What follows is Tony's advice on what a newly recovering person needs to think about and go on to do if they want to improve the odds of staying clean and sober after treatment.

We simply must recognize that treatment of however length is just the *start of a life-long practice* that will serve two ends:

1. Prevention of relapse. The sad truth is that some people never make it back once they "go back out there". Relapse could lead to death, and I can tell you I personally

know of three men who ended their lives in the grip of a relapse. On the other hand, I know of many more who have relapsed time and again and have finally stayed for the fun.

What I say to families who have seen their loved one relapse - there are many thousands of us who didn't get it the first few times - is to get your loved one back into recovery as soon as possible. I also say that there is no shame in having this disease; it is our firm belief that the job of the addict is to use all the many tools that have been developed by practitioners (like me), medical science, and also written into 12-step programs.

2. The second major point is the notion of spiritual development. Do not be scared off by this idea. You have heard of emotional intelligence. And you believe, I'm quite sure, of the idea of personal growth as a human being. What some may call becoming a mature, well-integrated and responsible person is what we call spiritual development, or spiritual growth.

The surprising insight that comes for many who become acquainted with a 12-step program is this: *the very things we do that keep us clean and sober are the very same things that make us better people, and vice-versa.*

What follows are Tony Z's conclusions, all aligned with Best Practices in recovery. So, you will not find any weird claims in here like sleeping with an onion under your pillow or wearing copper-fit socks.

If you are new to recovery and are in or just out of treatment here are things you will notice as you heal, and here are the things that you should be doing, or at least become willing to do:

1. Most important, *get yourself a sponsor* to help you through the recovery process. This is unfamiliar and uncomfortable territory in the beginning, and you need a guide with a firm but gentle hand. He or she should have years of experience to lean on, so you don't have to experience the flip side of recovery, also known as relapse.

2. Get your new schedule written down, day by day and hour by hour so that you can *develop the discipline* it requires to stay on the right path. This sounds too obvious, but the fact is that when we were out there using and boozing, we had zero discipline, so now is time to learn what that means.

3. You will come to the realization that *your brain is clearing up*, and you will notice things long overlooked yet there all the time you were out there. Things like noticing

that it is a beautiful, sunny, and bright day and taking a walk outside as opposed to hooking up with your dealer in the darkness of a city night.

4. You will start enjoying the benefits of a strong self-care program. *Physical fitness is not a nice-to-have; it's a critical, integral part of the recovery process.* It's about getting healthy and regenerating your body's depleted reserves, and it's about getting a natural endorphin high that replaces the one you got by other means.

5. *Feeling better about yourself is a victory* you can savour and put to good use, as in helping other newcomers to recover. Recovery takes many forms, including a recovery of self-respect that you abandoned somewhere along the using way. You will start to want more of makes you feel good about life and feel better about yourself.

6. One of the Promises of my program is "We will intuitively know how to handle situations that used to baffle us". As you come to your senses, you will be able to use your now-clear mind to solve problems that use to elude you; you will make better, logical decisions; you will feel incredibly grateful for having arrested the disorder.

7. Your creativity will soar. You will find that once your mind is no longer enslaved by your endless obsession, you will arrive at new and startling ideas that you could never have imagined before. Mindfulness, developed by meditation, will help unleash your creative potential.

8. You will start helping others which will shift your focus from thinking about your problem to the caring for others, especially other recovering people. Your capacity for empathy will grow and grow, and you begin to realize that the path of freedom is paved with unselfishness.

9. You will appreciate that your family has always loved you, and that as long as you were out there, you were incapable of loving them back. Now that you are on the right path - the path of compassion and honesty - you can begin making your amends.

Of course, Tony Z has more to say, so stay tuned for more insights from him, all intended to help the families of addicts and alcoholics better understand addictive disorder, and what if anything, they can do about it.

What we learned today:

1. Treatment is but a start to recovery as a lifelong endeavour. It is, nonetheless, less achieved one day, one action at a time.

2. It will come as no surprise to veterans of the 12-step program that the things that keep us sober are the same things that make us better people. It is about spiritual development aka as becoming mature, responsible people.
3. A loving discipline is at the heart of recovery. We will be liberated from the deadly grip of this disorder when we practice the rituals of our 12-step program, aided by a sponsor who knows his or her way around.
4. As your mind clears, you will rediscover long-forgotten pursuits that you once enjoyed; you will be able to think logically and make better decisions; fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave you.
5. You will enjoy being alive again and will become grateful for the progress you have made, for the people who have always loved you, and for the courage it took to surrender your old ways of thinking.