

STEPHANIE S. COVINGTON

A Woman's Journal

HELPING WOMEN RECOVER

A Program for Treating Addiction

THIRD EDITION



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WHAT WOMEN SAY ABOUT *HELPING WOMEN RECOVER*

Here are some of the responses of women who have completed the *Helping Women Recover* program.

It was a really great experience. I got to share things that I thought I wouldn't tell another person. —*Yvette S.*

I feel it helped me open up and see a lot of inner feelings I had hidden deep within me. It also showed me that I'm not the only one with bad past experiences and now they don't seem so bad. —*Lisa*

Great. I feel like I've really learned a lot about myself and my past and that it can't hold me back if I don't let it. —*Anonymous*

I feel this is a very uplifting experience. I haven't ever experienced anything like this. This is a great opportunity to learn more about being a woman in recovery. Thank you. —*Anonymous*

I had an entertaining journey. It made me understand myself better, like where I'm at in my program of N.A. and how I see myself not only on the outside but deep within on the inside. There are things I need to work on but I know I'm going to be okay because I can and will recover. Making recovery a part of my life—one day at time. —*Anonymous*

My experience has been incredible. I feel whole again. *Helping Women Recover* helped me so much and it gave me a better understanding of myself. —*Z. M.*

This program helped me to transfer the changes I am making and experiencing from the hands-on to writing them down so I could look at them on paper, reflect on them and share them with other women. —*Amy*

My experience with this book and this group has been very painful. It brought a lot of anger and pain, perhaps even grief. But it has been worth it. I've never valued myself as a woman. But now I can—truly awesome discovery. —*Anonymous*

I discovered that I had issues that I need to address that I left behind and wanted to just ignore them, and so I did, because I was in fear of walking through them. It was brought to my attention that I have a grand opportunity to deal with my issues here in a safe place with people to help me. I never looked at it that way. —*Joann W.*

I found it very helpful in my journey of recovery. I also became a lot closer with the other women in my group. I came to believe that I am a kind and beautiful woman. I know now that I have the power of choice. —*Londa H.*

Although some of the discussions were a little bit uncomfortable for me, it was very helpful and gave me a lot of insight about myself. I enjoyed groups and the homework. I think the book is great and plan to keep it forever. —*Anonymous*

A Woman's Journal

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A PROGRAM FOR TREATING ADDICTION

Stephanie S. Covington



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This edition first published 2019

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Jossey-Bass

A Wiley Imprint

535 Mission St, 14th Floor; San Francisco CA 94105-3253—www.josseybass.com

Edition History

Stephanie S. Covington (1e, 1999), Stephanie S. Covington (2e, 2008)

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Registered Office

John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA

Editorial Office

111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data is available for this book.

9781119523499 (paperback)

Cover Design: Wiley

Image on cover and title page: © De-V/Shutterstock

Set in 11/16pt PalatinoLTStd by Aptara Inc., New Delhi, India

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephanie S. Covington, Ph.D., LCSW, is an internationally recognized clinician, author, organizational consultant, and lecturer and a pioneer in the field of women's issues, trauma, addiction, and recovery. With more than thirty years of experience, she has developed an innovative, gender-responsive, and trauma-informed approach that results in effective services in public, private, and institutional settings. Her clients include the Betty Ford Treatment Center, the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment in Washington, D.C., the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the Correctional Service of Canada, the Ministries of Justice in England, Scotland and Switzerland, and numerous other treatment and correctional settings. She is the featured therapist on the Oprah Winfrey Network TV show *Breaking Down the Bars* and the co-author of a three-year research project, *Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders*, for the National Institute of Corrections. She also has served as a consultant to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and was selected for the federal Advisory Committee for Women's Services.

Educated at Columbia University and the Union Institute, Dr. Covington has conducted seminars for behavioral health professionals, community organizations, criminal justice professionals, and recovery groups in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Europe, Africa, Iceland, Brazil, and New Zealand. She has served on the faculties of the University of Southern California, San Diego State University, and the California School of Professional Psychology. She has published extensively, including ten gender-responsive, trauma-informed treatment curricula. Dr. Covington is a board-certified Diplomate of the National Association of Social Workers and the American Board of Sexology and is a member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy and the American Psychological Association. She is based in La Jolla, California, where she is co-director of both the Institute for Relational Development and the Center for Gender & Justice.

Books and Programs by Stephanie S. Covington

Awakening Your Sexuality: A Guide for Recovering Women

Beyond Anger and Violence: A Program for Women (facilitator guide, participant workbook, and DVD)

Beyond Trauma: A Healing Journey for Women (facilitator guide, participant workbook, and DVDs)

Beyond Violence: A Prevention Program for Criminal Justice–Involved Women (facilitator guide, participant workbook, and DVD)

Exploring Trauma: A Brief Intervention for Men with Roberto A. Rodriguez (facilitator guide, participant workbook, and CD ROM)

Healing Trauma: A Brief Intervention for Women with Eileen Russo (facilitator guide, participant workbook, and CD Rom)

Helping Men Recover: A Program for Treating Addiction with Dan Griffin and Rick Dauer (facilitator guide and participant workbook)

Helping Men Recover: A Program for Treating Addiction, Special Edition for Use in the Criminal Justice System, with Dan Griffin and Rick Dauer (facilitator guide and participant workbook)

Helping Women Recover: A Program for Treating Addiction (facilitator guide and participant journal)

Helping Women Recover: A Program for Treating Addiction, Special Edition for Use in the Criminal Justice System (facilitator guide and participant journal)

Leaving the Enchanted Forest: The Path from Relationship Addiction to Intimacy with Liana Beckett

Moving from Trauma-Informed to Gender-Responsive: A Training Program for Organizational Change with Sandra L. Bloom (facilitator guide, video, and USB drive with handouts)

Voices: A Program of Self-Discovery and Empowerment for Girls with Kimberley Covington and Madeline Covington (facilitator guide and interactive journal)

A Woman's Way through the Twelve Steps (published in Spanish as *La mujer y su practica de los Doce Pasos*)

A Woman's Way through the Twelve Steps Program DVD

A Woman's Way through the Twelve Steps Facilitator Guide

A Woman's Way through the Twelve Steps Workbook (published in Spanish as *La mujer y su practica de los Doce Pasos: Libro de ejercicios*)

Women and Addiction: A Gender-Responsive Approach (manual, DVD, and CE test)

Women in Recovery: Understanding Addiction (published in Spanish as *Mujeres en recuperación: Entendiendo la adicción*)

For more information on Dr. Covington's work, visit: www.stephaniecovington.com and www.centerforgenderandjustice.org.

ABOUT THE COVER

I chose a lotus flower for the cover of *Helping Women Recover* because the lotus can be a meaningful symbol for women's recovery. Although it grows with its roots deep in the mud, the lotus rises from the muddy waters and emerges pure and unblemished. It unfolds gradually, one petal at a time, to blossom in the sunlight. The mud can symbolize murky beginnings or the darkness of addiction. The water can symbolize experience and a transition to healing and recovery. The lotus can symbolize the purity of the soul, rebirth, spiritual awakening, and enlightenment. For thousands of years, the lotus has been associated with profound change.

I see the lotus as the symbol of a woman's healing and recovery. Making the shift from addiction to recovery is a transformational experience. When a woman makes this shift, she is able to say, "Who I am today is not who I was." The elegant and beautiful lotus flower that emerges from the mud is the beautiful woman within.

INTRODUCTION

About This Program

For over thirty years, I have been helping women who are trying to recover from addiction. In that time, we have learned a great deal about how women grow and develop and about the unique needs of women in recovery. I have incorporated that knowledge into this program. Although the program is designed for women with harmful use of alcohol and other drugs, much of the material can be helpful to any woman. This program is now being used in mental health clinics, eating disorder programs, and domestic violence shelters, as well as in substance use disorder treatment programs in many jails and prisons.

Helping Women Recover addresses issues that many women struggle with, especially if they are addicted to alcohol or other drugs. Each woman's path of healing is unique, but most of us find that it involves discovering our true selves, connecting in healthy relationships with others, understanding our sexuality, and gaining some spiritual connection. Recovery is like a spiral upward, away from a life that revolves around the objects of addiction (alcohol or other drugs, food, sex, and so forth) and outward into ever-widening circles of freedom, self-knowledge, and connection with others.

Although you may use this program by yourself or one-on-one with a counselor, in most cases you will be meeting with a group of other recovering women who will be traveling companions on your journey. You will attend twenty meetings with the other members of your group. With them, you will have new experiences and learn new ways of looking at the world. Your group will be led by a group facilitator, a woman who has experience with the journey of recovery. She will serve as your tour guide. She will offer you insights and suggestions about the thoughts and feelings that you may experience on your journey.

The program is organized into four modules, or sections: Self, Relationships, Sexuality, and Spirituality. These are the four areas that women identify as the triggers for relapse and the areas of greatest change in their recoveries. Within the four modules,

specific topics are covered, including: addiction, self-esteem, sexism and power, family roles, relationships, interpersonal violence and abuse, trauma, recovery, sexuality, and spirituality.

Awareness is the first step toward change. When you become aware of your addiction, you can decide to begin recovery. When you become more aware of yourself and your relationships, you can make changes in your life. So the journey is about discovery as well as recovery. Healing takes place when you think and act differently, connecting with all parts of yourself—your inner self, your outer self, your sexual self, and your spiritual self.

This Journal

A journal is a book for recording the experiences of a journey. Using this journal will help you to reflect on and record what you learn, think, and feel as you travel the road to recovery with a group or on your own. This journal contains:

- Some of the activities and exercises you will do during the group sessions
- Summaries of information that you will receive in the group sessions
- Questions for you to respond to and activities for you to do after each session

Space is provided in this journal for you to make notes about what you are thinking and feeling and what you discover about yourself and life as you go through this program. Recording your insights will help you to become aware and stay aware of them. Sometimes you will use this journal to make notes during group sessions. In addition, this journal contains illustrations and diagrams that will be discussed during the sessions. It also includes a summary of the material covered in each session. The summaries and your notes will help you to remember what you discussed. If you cannot remember what a diagram or something in the summary means, you can ask about it at the next group session.

Finally, this journal contains questions for you to answer and activities for you to complete at the end of each session or, if possible, between sessions. You will spend some time individually recording your thoughts and completing the brief activities. These activities are not work that you have to do in order to pass a class. There are no right or wrong answers, no “shoulds” or “oughts,” and your reflections and responses will not be checked or graded. You do not need to worry about your handwriting or spelling. This journal is for you—a tool to help you with your own growth and recovery.

Many women have completed this program more than once, and they use different colored ink to do the activities each time. They find that they can see their own progress and development this way. The journal then becomes a record of their recovery. So even

if you have used your journal in a group setting, you may want to go back through later on your own.

You probably can do any of the between-sessions activities or exercises in a half hour, but it is fine if you also want to make notes or just review your progress. You probably will have insights into areas you haven't thought much about before. If you like to draw, feel free to draw your responses instead of, or in addition to, using words.

There will be opportunities during some group sessions for you to share things you have written in your journal. You can share what you want and keep the rest private. These times of sharing are chances to connect with the other members of your group.

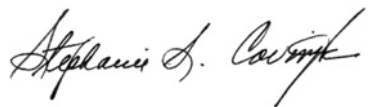
The group meeting is a safe place, but you may be concerned about keeping your journal private. If you live with other people and are not certain that they will respect your privacy, you can hide your journal or lock it up. Or you can ask the facilitator or another counselor to help you find ways to keep your journal safe between group sessions.

Your Journey

I hope that this journal becomes a personal record of *your* recovery, one that you will treasure years from now, when you can look back to your time in the group and be proud of what you have accomplished. The reason for the creation of this program is my desire to see women like you recover and heal in a nurturing and supportive environment.

This program is a beginning for you—the beginning of your healing and recovery. It will take time for you to deal with the trauma of your past and to integrate what you are learning. It takes time to learn, to recover, to change, and to move on. When you have completed this program, you will see that it is just the beginning of a new life, one that includes ongoing recovery and ongoing learning about who you are, what you want, and what you can do.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Stephanie S. Covington".

La Jolla, California

May 2019

Opening Session: Introduction to the Program

Your facilitator's name is: _____

After today's session, your group will be meeting for nineteen more sessions on
_____ [day of week] at _____ [time].

Introducing Yourself

Here are some things to include in your introduction:

1. My name: _____
2. When and where I was born: _____

3. How I identify myself (including culture, ethnicity, race, and my preferred pronoun): _____

4. The people in my family (can include a husband or live-in partner, children, mother, father, brothers, sisters, or whomever you consider your immediate family): _____

5. One thing I like about myself or a special gift that I have: _____

The Sessions in this Program

The twenty sessions in this *Helping Women Recover* program are:

Opening Session: Introduction to the Program

Module A: Self

Session 2. Defining Self

Session 3. Sense of Self

Session 4. Self-Esteem

Session 5. Sexism, Stereotyping, and Power

Module B: Relationships

Session 6. Family of Origin

Session 7. Mothers

Session 8. Mother Myths

Session 9. Fathers

Session 10. Understanding Abuse and Trauma

Session 11. Interpersonal Violence

Session 12. Creating Supportive and Loving Relationships

Module C: Sexuality

Session 13. Sexuality and Addiction

Session 14. Body Image

Session 15. Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

Session 16. Challenges to Healthy Sexuality

Session 17. Healthy Sexuality

Module D: Spirituality

Session 18. What Is Spirituality?

Session 19. Mindfulness, Prayer, and Meditation

Session 20. Creating a Vision

Group Agreements

At the beginning of this first session, your group discussed agreements that will be maintained during the group's meetings. When everyone agrees to them, the sessions will have the most benefit for all group members.

The most typical group agreements are listed here. You can add any additional agreements that your group makes.

1. *Timing.* Our sessions will start on time and end on time.
2. *Attendance.* Regular group attendance is important. We all agree to show up at all the sessions. If there is an emergency, and you cannot attend, please contact the facilitator ahead of time.
3. *Confidentiality.* Group members need to honor one another's confidentiality. What is said in this room stays in this room. No personal information revealed in this room may be repeated outside this room.
4. *Sobriety.* No one may attend a group session while under the influence of alcohol or another drug.
5. *Safety.* There will be no physical or emotional abuse. Part of safety is showing respect for one another and for the uniqueness of every person's thoughts, feelings, experiences, and responses. Respect is essential. We will let people express themselves in their own ways. Being rude or abusive to another group member is *not* okay.
6. *Eating or drinking.* There will be no eating or drinking during the group sessions [except, perhaps, for bottled water].
7. *Cellular phones.* All cell phones will be turned off and placed in the basket. No ringing, checking for texts or messages, calling, or texting.
8. *Sharing.* Everyone in the group should have the time to contribute and share the experience. We will try to let everyone have a chance to talk. We will not interrupt other group members but will let them finish before we respond or add something.
9. *Respect.* When you tell the truth about what you think, please do so in a way that respects others in the group. That means no criticizing, dissing, judging, or talking down to anyone.
10. *Participation.* We will try to assist one another in feeling safe enough to share and participate. We will ask questions to help us learn and grow. However, everyone is entitled to "pass" when asked a question or when asked to do an activity that requires participation.
11. *Socialization.* Contact with other group members outside the regular group session is permitted.

What has your group decided will happen if someone breaks one of the group agreements?

What Is Addiction?

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM, 2011) defines addiction as a chronic disease involving the circuits of the brain that deal with reward, motivation, and memory. When there is a problem with these circuits, there are biological, psychological, social, and spiritual difficulties. A person with an addiction pursues reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors. Like other chronic diseases, addiction often involves cycles of relapse and remission. ASAM says, "Without treatment or engagement in recovery activities, addiction is progressive and can result in disability or premature death."

Basically this means what are called the ABCDEs of addiction:

- A. The person is not able to *abstain*;
- B. The person has reduced *behavioral* control;
- C. The person has a *craving* or increased "hunger" for drugs or addictive experiences;
- D. The person has *diminished* recognition of significant problems with her behaviors and interpersonal relationships; and
- E. The person has a problematic *emotional* response.

A person can be addicted to a substance, such as alcohol, heroin, opiates or opioids, caffeine, tobacco, and sugar. A person also can be addicted to a behavior, such as shopping, exercising, gambling, having sex, viewing pornography, and using social media.

The author of this program calls addiction "The chronic neglect of self in favor of something or someone else."

What Is Trauma?

Many women who have addictions also are survivors of trauma. The American Psychiatric Association (2013, pp. 271–280) defines trauma as: "exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one or more of four ways:

- 1. directly experiencing the event;
- 2. witnessing, in person, the event occurring to others;
- 3. learning that such an event happened to a close family member or friend;
- 4. experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of such events, such as with first responders."

Trauma also is defined as a *reaction* to an event that overwhelms people physically and psychologically.

There are many forms of violence and other trauma, including:

- Natural disasters, such as hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, fires, floods, and volcanoes
- The oppression of an entire group of people, such as economic and religious persecution and genocide
- Immigration, which often can be traumatic
- Discrimination based on race, poverty, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or age
- Child abuse, whether it is emotional, physical, and/or sexual
- Elder abuse
- Domestic violence, such as physical abuse and rape
- Abandonment (especially for children)
- Witnessing violence, such as a parent harming another parent, and witnessing murder
- Being the victim of a crime such as burglary, robbery, mugging, assault, and rape
- Street and gang violence
- Automobile accidents
- Catastrophic injuries and illnesses
- Extremely painful and frightening medical procedures
- The loss of a loved one, including a pet
- Kidnapping
- War and combat
- Terrorism and torture

Intergenerational or cultural trauma is the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, spanning generations, that emanates from a massive group trauma.

Helping Women Recover is designed for women with addictive disorders and for those who may have experienced threatening events that have overwhelmed their psychological and/or physiological coping mechanisms—especially suffering inflicted by others. It is very common for women who have been abused to use alcohol or other drugs to numb their pain.

The Spiral of Addiction and Recovery

There is a model for what happens in addiction and then learning to recover from addiction. This is the basis for this program. It is called the Spiral of Addiction and Recovery.