My Autobiography and Assessment of my First Step

Name	e:		
Date:			

TIPS FOR WRITING YOUR AUTOBIOGRAPHY

- When and where were you born?
- Who are/were your parents? Where were they from? What did they do to earn a living? What were they like as people? How did they influence your life?
- Do you have any siblings? When were they born? What did you think of each one of them as a child? As an adult?
- What was it like growing up? Do you remember your childhood as happy or unhappy? Why? Give specific recollections: About how you felt you were treated by others. About family relationships. Friends. Important people in your life.
- How did/do you feel about school? Were there any teachers who had a particularly strong influence on you?
- Did/do you have any pets? If so, what part in your life did/do they play?
- Were you ever abused as a child, emotionally, physically, or sexually?
- How many years of school did you complete? Did you go as far as you would have liked?
- What do you remember about the first time you noticed alcohol/drugs being used in your home? Outside of it? How did you feel about this? What did you think when you saw your first drunk? What can you recall about your parents use of drugs and/or alcohol? Siblings? How did alcohol/drugs affect your life when you were growing up?
- Did your use of drugs/alcohol get you into trouble? Give specific examples (DUII, MIP, fights, school/work problems, overdoses, stealing, lying, etc...)
- How did your substance use affect your relationships? (Family, friends, significant others)

- What about your social life? Who did you spend most of your time with? Where did you spend your time?
- Have you ever done something you were ashamed of while under the influence?
- What type of work do you do? Do you enjoy it? How was it affected by your use of substances?
- Have you ever tried to become clean and sober and then experienced a relapse? Describe the experience and what triggered the relapse.
 Describe any previous treatment experiences.

Step one

I: POWERLESSNESS

Powerlessness over alcohol and/or drugs is defined as the inability to consistently control our drinking or drug use. This powerlessness is shown in many different ways, such as those outlined below. To gain a better understanding of powerlessness, you are asked to write specific examples of how the following symptoms are shown in your life. If you cannot fully answer the questions in the space provided, please use extra sheets of paper to complete your answer and attach it to this packet. In all cases, be specific. This means giving examples that include who, what, when and where. Give at least two examples for each question when at all possible.

To begin, please write a brief outline of your life that pertains to your drug and alcohol use. This may be easier to write in a time-line format beginning with

how old you were the first time you used and what you used. Please discuss how your substance use progressed as you got older (including both frequency and amount), what other substances you've used and how that use progressed, and the reasons why you changed or added substances of abuse. Also include the environment in which you used (alone, with friends, with family), if that changed at any point, why that change happened, and if and why you ever experienced a period of abstinence since you began using.

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A.	How has my substance use affected my education? What consequences of use have I experienced related to my school? Skipping class, suspensions, expulsions, having to change schools due to use, behavioral problems, trouble concentrating in class or completing homework, etc? Have I ever been removed from a sports team or other after-school activity (by either my school or my parents) because of my use? Be specific: give examples of who, what, when and where.
В.	How has my substance use affected my family life? What is it about my behavior that my parents, siblings, other family, friends, girlfriend or boyfriend object to most? Please include neglect, lateness, abuse (physical, emotional, mental, verbal, sexual), failure to keep promises, missed appointment, etc. Please include ways in which you ignored or were indifferent to the important needs of others. Provide specific examples of how you have lied, cheated, or manipulated others in order to continue using. What relationships have you lost due to your use? Be specific.
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C.	In what ways have I lost self-respect due to my substance use? What do I think of know my reputation is amongst my family and friends? What would I guess (based on my behavior) that they would say about me when I'm not around? Be specific.				
D.	In what ways have I tried to hide or conceal my chemical use from others? Include hiding bottles and drugs, stealing from your parents, using away from home, sneaking drugs and alcohol (sneaking extra alcohol into my drink when I'm mixing, drinking/using before a social gathering), or just plain old denying my having been drinking or using when I had. Be specific.				

E.	How has my use affected my health (i.e. hangovers, alcohol poisoning, or drug overdose, frequent illnesses, STDs)? How has my use put my life or the lives of others in danger of harm or death (i.e. physical injuries resulting from being drunk/high, drinking and driving, being argumentative or violent/physically abusive, etc.)? Has my use affected my mental health? How has my use made my symptoms worse (i.e. drinking or using marijuana, knowing that I have depression, or using a stimulant drug when I know I have a problem with anger or anxiety)?
F.	Loss of control over my use is a critical issue in understanding powerlessness. In what ways have I tried to control the amount and/or frequency of my substance use? Has it worked? For how long? When have I planned seriously to drink or use a certain "controllable" amount and then, after starting, drank/used more than I planned to? How about
	morning use? When? How about past attempts to stop totally? Be specific

•	Have I ever experienced a "blackout?" When did I first start having them? How many or how often since the first one? Give examples of blackouts, i.e., "I was told I did," or, "My friends said I did," etc. What about withdrawal signs such as depression, the shakes, seizures, mood swings, problems sleeping? Again, please be specific.
[.	How do I feel when others talk to me about my drinking or drug use? Who has confronted me or expressed concern over my substance use? How did I react when my use is brought up to me? How do I react now?_

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comn crime	nitted these acts in ord s you committed thou	gal activities while I was under the influer ler to obtain drugs or alcohol? Please included Igh you were not caught by the authorities be specific, please do not include any
infor	nation that could link	you to a crime that you have not been
-	cuted for.) Generally, hink my behavior had	who were the people that I hurt? What e on them?
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use? regre unde for m	This includes being se tting sex (or sexual act the influence, cheatir y own sexual gratifica	exual problems related to my drinking or dexual with someone when I didn't want to civities) that I had with someone when I wang on my boyfriend or girlfriend, using other ition, pressuring someone to have sex with sexual behaviors, contracting and/or pass
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1	How much has my drinking/using cost me or my parents in financial terms? Daily costs or amount per use, money spent on alcohol/drugs for myself and for others, cost of drug paraphernalia, buying things I don't need or can't afford when I was high/drunk. Be specific.				
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]	How much have my drug-related legal fees financially cost myself/my parents? Include legal fees you paid for crimes you committed while you were high/drunk or committed in order to get the money for drugs or alcohol.				
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	How much have I or my parents paid for treatment, including transportation costs? Include the financial cost of any treatment fees for past substance abuse treatment you've received.				
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L.	How has my use affected my work? Have you ever lost a job due to use for giving a dirty UA or refusing to give a UA, being fired because you were high at work, being let go because you called in "sick" too many times because you were hung over. Has your use ever affected your employment potential, like not taking a job you wanted because of required UAs or having drug convictions or being on
	supervision/probation? List all the jobs you've lost due to your direct and/or indirect substance use. Give reasons.
	ana/or marreet substance use. Give reasons.

II: UNMANAGABILITY

Unmanageability has something to do with how we are coping with our life's problems as well as how we are coping with and facing the problems or consequences related to our substance use. It must be remembered that life's problems and coping abilities don't just take care of themselves simply because we stop drinking and using.

Consciously or unconsciously, frequently we decide to use drugs and/or alcohol when we are engaged in thinking habits or are experiencing certain feelings. This section is designed to shed some light on the thinking habits you most commonly use, as well as the feelings that you typically use over, in order to self-medicate. It is important to look closely at your thinking habits and emotions because not only will knowing about them help you learn about your reasons for past use, but will help you with preventing future relapses. Thinking habits are unconscious means of protecting yourself from the anxiety of confronting painful fears or problems. They keep you stuck in addiction or addict behaviors.

A: Thinking habits:

- 1) LYING: Three types...
 - a. By Omission: A lie that is told when you only tell part of the truth and intentionally leave out important details.
 - b. By Commission: A lie that is told when you completely make something up.
 - c. By Assent: A lie that is told when you attempt to make someone believe one way about what you think or feel, when you really feel something completely different.
- 2) BLAMING: When you want someone to believe that it was not you who "caused" whatever to happen.
- 3) JUSTIFYING: When you are trying to explain the reasons for your actions to avoid accountability.
- 4) ASSUMING: When you take something for granted or believe what someone tells you without checking to see if it's true or not.
- 5) MINIMIZING: When you want things to sound smaller, less significant, or less serious than what they really are. Key words to listen for are "just," "hardly," "ever," and "only."
- 6) CHANGING THE SUBJECT: When you intentionally steer the conversation away from what you are being confronted about so that you can avoid being questioned or consequences.

- 7) UNIQUENESS: A thought you might have when you believe that you are better than others, believing that you are not responsible for following the same rules as everyone else, and/or believing that you can make up your own rules as you go along.
- 8) VAGUENESS: When you are intentionally trying to avoid giving a specific answer to someone's question. Your goal is to be unclear and to confuse others, perhaps hoping that whoever is questioning you will let it go at that. Key phrases to listen for are "I'm not sure," "It might have...," "I can't remember," and "I don't know."
- 9) PUTDOWNS: When you think you have to be better than someone else. They're used to build yourself up in front of other people at someone else's expense. Mimicking, bragging, or name calling are also forms of putdowns. For whatever reason putdowns are used, there is an intentional attempt to be cruel.
- 10) REDEFINING: Changing the meaning of events or situations so that they seem different than they really are. This is a great way to avoid responsibility.
- 11) LACK OF EMPATHY: When you say or do something to someone regardless of how it may hurt or upset them. You do not stop to think of how your behavior or attitude may affect others, or that you don't really care.
- 12) INGRATIATING: When you are trying to make people think that they are different from the way they really are. It is also a useful way for people to hide their motives. Other terms for ingratiating are "brownnosing" and "sucking up."
- 13) SUGGESTIBILITY: Allowing yourself to be easily misled into doing something that you know you shouldn't do and at the same time, not putting much effort into trying to talk yourself out of doing whatever you're going to do.
- 14) ENTITLEMENT: Believing that you have the right to have something just because you want it. Though stealing is a typical example of entitlement, those who use others to get what they want are also using the entitlement thinking habit.
- 15) VICTIM STANCE: This is a way to get people to feel sorry for you instead of them holding you responsible for your decisions or actions.
- 16) POWER PLAY: This is a way to get others on your side for you to get your way. Often people will manipulate others as a form of power play, or use aggression to intimidate others.

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- 17) CLOSED CHANNEL: This is used when you use the following techniques: tuning out your surroundings, not answering when spoken to, turning up your music, plugging your ears, etc. This is used when you intentionally do not want to be confronted about your attitude or behavior, or when you are not receptive to feedback and you do not express that in a courteous way.
- 18) BLACK AND WHITE THINKING: This is a way of seeing things as one extreme or another. You can also take a singular incident and globalize it into a general rule. Listen for words like "always," "never," "totally," and "completely."
- 19) DENIAL: This is used when you refuse to believe or accept something that is true.
- 20) RESCUING: Used when you "rescue" others from their difficult feelings, and don't allow them to deal with their own problems.
- 21) INTELLECTUALIZATION: When you use excessive reason as an unconscious means of protecting yourself from the anxiety of confronting painful fears or problems.

After reviewing this list, you may have realized that you have used these thought patterns while you were using drugs and alcohol. You may have also realized that you still continue to use these thinking habits though you are in recovery. This is important because once you are able to identify which thinking habits you use, and how you use them, you will be able to address each one and repair that lapse in logic. In the following section, please list 10 or your most frequently used thinking habits and include at least one example of how you have used it.

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think y	nat you are able to identify some of your thinking habits, what do you rou need to do in order to stop using them? What help do you need to be stop using them?

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B: Emotions/Feelings

It is also important to be able to learn how to identify your feelings. For many of us, we began using drugs and alcohol because we became uncomfortable with some of the emotions we experienced and we wanted to "numb out." For others, we used because we are happy and wanted to either reward ourselves or have fun. Because our feelings influence our thoughts, it is imperative that we be able to identify which of the feelings we experience lead us to either consciously or unconsciously engage in thinking habits.

Here are some examples of feelings. Circle the ones that you can remember that because you felt that way, you used drugs and/or alcohol.

Exhausted	Confused	Ecstatic	Guilty	Suspicious	Angry
Hysterical	Frustrated	Нарру	Confident	Embarrasse	d
Sad	Mischievou	s	Disgusted	Scared	Enraged
Ashamed	Cautious	Smug	Depressed	Overwhelm	ed
Hopeful	Lonely	Jealous	Bored	Surprised	Anxious
Shocked	Shy	Resentful	Criticized	Hurt	Silly

		different colored pen, go back and include the feelings that you have a coping with now that you are clean and sober.		
Do you notice any similarities? What are they?				
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you hav	ve s. I	lations! By completing the unmanageability section of your 1 st Step, begun the important work of identifying your internal relapse internal relapse triggers are those thoughts and feelings that we every day that make us feel like we want to use. By knowing what		
some o	f y	our internal relapse triggers are, you are better equipped to cope with		
the urg	eτ	o use.		
III: RE	FL	ECTIONS		
A. 1	Wł	nat have been the most significant consequences to you regarding your		
		ostance use?		
-	1.	Physical consequences:		
,)	Mental consequences:		
•		Mental consequences.		
3	3.	Emotional consequences:		
4	1 .	Spiritual consequences:		

su	bstance use
Эe	escribe the person you really, deep inside, want to be

D.	What do you think you could gain from giving up drug and alcohol use?_
Ε.	What do you think some of the cons would be to giving up future drug and alcohol use?
F.	Describe the fears you have when you consider permanently giving up using drugs and alcohol.

G.	Are there ways that you are currently sabotaging your treatment experience (i.e.: still hanging out with using friends, not attending recovery meetings, not being honest in your recovery)? What do you need to do in order to stop doing this? What help do you need in order to be able to do that?
H.	What are some of your "high risk" situations: people, places and things that you know if you come in contact with it/them, you will be triggered to use AND that you'll have a difficult time coping with the urge to use? These people, places, and things are called external relapse triggers .
[.	Which do you think will be harder to cope with: internal relapse triggers or external relapse triggers? Why?

J.	In order to best help you, what is the most important thin we need to know about your addiction/use history or pattern?				
K.	What feelings and/or thoughts are you having as a result of completing this 1st step?				