

The Addictions We Don't Name

A reflection on recovery beyond substances

I once heard Richard Rohr, author and spiritual teacher, say that everyone could benefit from a 12-step program*—not only those struggling with drugs or alcohol, but because all of us are addicted to something: our thoughts, our patterns, our judgments, our need to be right. Another author and spiritual leader, Marianne Williamson echoes this idea when she says that “addiction is the maladaptive way we seek escape from pain.” By that definition, who among us isn't in recovery from something?

When I think about the “addiction to judgment,” I recognize how deeply it runs. Judgment of others, yes—but even more so, judgment of self. It can feel automatic, like a reflex: assessing, comparing, labeling. The mind seeks control through interpretation, mistaking perception for truth. We cling to our own perceptions as if they are the final word, when often they are just old stories replaying themselves.

The 12 steps, at their heart, invite humility and surrender—an acknowledgment that our best thinking sometimes got us here. It's practice in letting go of certainty and opening to grace. Whether we call it recovery, awakening, or transformation, the process is the same: becoming willing to see differently.

When I apply that lens to everyday life, I notice small recoveries happening all the time. Each time I pause before judging, or choose curiosity over control, I take one more step toward freedom.

Perhaps that's what Rohr and Williamson meant: that we are all in some form of recovery—from illusion, from ego, from the belief that we are separate from love.

The 12 steps, then, become not just a framework for sobriety, but a spiritual map for living awake—one day, one choice, one surrender at a time.

If this reflection brings awareness to subtle or unnamed patterns in your own life, you may wish to explore the 10th Step Inventory Workbook in the “My Journey” tab, within the “Gifts for You” section.

*For more information about 12-step programs, click here: <https://recovery.org/addiction/12-step-programs/>”

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