



BACK2BASICS

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE RECOVERY

**Integrating the best research evidence with
clinical expertise, education and social values
for a healthy lifestyle free of substance abuse.**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Back2Basics is widely recognized in the medical and recovery industries for its unique and effective approach to treating young men between the ages of 18 to 30 with substance and alcohol addiction. Research indicates the addicted brain and body are multi-dimensional — highly dysfunctional, toxic and irrational — the very catalyst behind the program's design specifically intended to rewire the mind, body and soul. This evidence-based, hybrid-residential treatment plan incorporates therapeutic counseling through individual, group and family therapy; outdoor adventures; healthy lifestyle habits; 12-step participation; community service; social connection; and after-care living plans.

A dying young addict in search of a path to long-term recovery himself, Roy DuPrez, M.Ed., established this Flagstaff based residential service in 2010. With his own experiences and recovery as a guide and a carefully selected staff of skilled rehabilitation professionals, this cutting-edge program for young men was born, evolved and flourished. "Most of these young men began abusing substances in their teens and failed to get clean and restart their lives," explains DuPrez, "despite seeking help through other programs."

Back2Basics is dedicated to providing personal and professional treatment that establishes a foundation for their residents to not only become healthy but stay healthy. The program makes this goal attainable through its focus on breaking the cycle of revolving door treatment, along with the criminal behavior and social stigma that so often accompanies that lifestyle. "This is not a stop-gap," emphasizes DuPrez, "it is a long-term solution that prepares these young men to lead sober, healthy, independent lives as responsible, productive adults."

ADDICTION IS A BRAIN DISEASE

The mere fact relapse is more common than uncommon sheds light on how difficult it truly is to break addiction. No one enters rehabilitation with the intention to fail, rather they enter a treatment program hoping in their heart they can stop using for good. The problem with this approach according to DuPrez, "Addiction doesn't happen in the heart... ***it happens in the brain.***"

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) defines addiction as a chronic, underlying, largely genetic brain disease, making it a medical issue rather than a behavioral issue or moral failing and can be a root cause behind other behavioral, social and psychological problems like depression, cognitive distortions, social isolation and anxiety. Addiction is created when a person seeks the help of drugs and alcohol to stimulate the senses once ignited by life itself. Drugs are powerful because they are immediate, and they are dangerous because they, quite literally, hijack the reward centers of the brain causing it to no longer seek other methods of feeling good. The brain learns the easiest and fastest way to feeling good is the drugs and, as a result, creates neural pathways specific to the use of the drug.

In other words, the brain stops using the neural pathways once used for such things as communication, interaction, creative-thinking, self-love and self-improvement and creates a straight line of communication with drugs and alcohol and any methods of communication necessary to attain them. The brain seeks to dispose of any behavior or activity not deemed useful in getting drugs and alcohol and creates and supports behaviors and beliefs that are conducive to getting drugs and alcohol which are often illegal and antisocial. Those behaviors and beliefs create an alternative cycle of behaviors and

beliefs that support unhealthy characteristics such as isolation, mistrust, anger, depression, self-hate and poor physical health.

Alcoholism is approximately 60 percent genetic and biological which is approximately the same percentage as asthma, or high blood pressure, yet no one would consider treating those conditions with psychological methods alone. A whole person, a mind/body approach, is required and that is why the approach taken by Back2Basics applies therapeutic lifestyle changes, in addition to medical and psychological treatment; a calculated approach to reducing the risk of relapse. Research has shown a lifestyle equipped with supportive relationships, a healthy diet, regular exercise, service to others, relaxation and an open mindset “can be life changing, if not lifesaving,” asserts DuPrez.

CRITICAL AGE

We know through research individuals who begin using addictive substances before the age of 15 are nearly seven times more likely to develop a long-term, substance problem than those who delay first use until the age of 21 and beyond. Columbia University’s National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) reports a person who begins drug or alcohol dependency after the age of 21 has a one in 25 chance of life-long dependency, but those whose addiction begins before the age of 18 fair even worse with a staggering one in four chance they will be addicts for life.

HYBRID APPROACH

Back2Basics is built on the mind/body connection — a hybrid program combining proven traditional treatment approaches with the latest advances in neuroscience, psychology, physiology, medicine and wellness. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), integrated treatment models coordinating care in a single setting are considered ideal for rehabilitation.

Research shows integrated treatment models are more effective and produce better long-term outcomes than addiction treatment alone. The Back2Basics comprehensive, residential program combines various therapy treatments with an outdoor adventure program focusing on the appreciation of nature, a 12-step program and a therapeutic community. “This powerful and synergistic combination of rehabilitative elements helps these young men respond to treatment sooner and,” asserts DuPrez, “experience longer remission of symptoms.”

A person in recovery is prone to boredom and irritability - a “cabin fever” mentality. The hybrid approach of Back2Basics is systematically designed to combat this tendency allowing for breaks from scheduled classes and meetings to help them stay engaged. Advances in neuroscience indicate the brain is not fixed, rather it is flexible with the innate ability to adapt, grow and learn new habits and “our residential program stimulates that growth twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, on all levels of healthy living, on all fronts,” DuPrez explains.

MALE-FOCUSED TREATMENT

The Back2Basics program is specifically designed to meet the biological, psychological and social needs of male substance abusers who face social pressures and challenges different from those of their female counterparts. The expectations and stereotypes society assigns to them oftentimes act as destructive barriers to recovery for these struggling and confused young men who then take those adverse cues portraying them as incompetent, immature, or self-absorbed, as excuses to evade responsibility and never grow up. “This underlying message, often perpetuated by the media,” DuPrez adds, “can have devastating repercussions on how young men view themselves and their place in society.”

In direct response to this issue Back2Basics provides a male-only, recovery environment to reduce the reluctance these young men may have to discussing abuse and other sensitive topics in a mixed-gender, group setting. “The homogeneous, gender dynamic generates a brotherhood that aids in healing and sustained recovery,” claims DuPrez. “Furthermore, our program motivates these young men by creating tangible experiences relating to real life,” he continues, “meeting that most basic and fundamental need for challenge and achievement.”

The men accepted into the program have often struggled to make that transition from adolescence to responsible adulthood Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, PhD, identifies as the five stages of emerging adulthood he labels the Age of: Identity Exploration, Instability, Self-focus, In-between and Possibilities. Back2Basics effectively addresses each of these stages and the issues that accompany them enabling the residents to navigate the transition into society, career, service and family.

6-MONTH RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

The live-in program moves well beyond the temporary absence of temptation into a prolonged actionable plan building the foundation for a healthy sense of self, participation in society and sobriety. The 6-month program immerses the individual in treatment experiences that help manage and treat addiction effectively through seven major steps:

1. detoxification from alcohol and drugs;
2. behavioral and therapeutic counseling;
3. medication;
4. evaluation and treatment for co-occurring mental health issues;
5. competency, conscience and contribution;
6. life planning;
7. and patient follow-up to assess and support their well-being.

Back2Basics is a program for young men who have hit bottom and are ready to commit to achieving a fulfilling life without substance abuse. To accomplish life-changing thoughts, habits and actions it is critical these men stay in treatment for an adequate period of time with a minimum commitment of six months. “Back2Basics is more than rehabilitation,” clarifies DuPrez, “it’s a total life reboot.”

Identifying and changing dysfunctional thinking requires adequate time for developing patterns that work for the individual with the goal of restoring the ability of the mind and body to reliably make better decisions long-term. The most addicted individuals need at least three months in treatment to significantly reduce, or end, their drug use; the National Institutes of Health, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, recommend a minimum of 90 days. Studies indicate those who remain in a rehabilitation program longer than three months boast higher overall recovery success rates. An important component is working through the complex dynamics of relationships while learning to develop trustworthiness, the ability to set boundaries, honesty, communication skills and appropriate behaviors.

Back2Basics addresses drug addiction with the understanding the neural network of the addict can take months to stabilize due to the chronic, often relapsing, brain disease it truly is; fraught with obsessive thinking and compulsive drug seeking and use. Long-term treatment provides that extended time for the brain and body to normalize so when the individual leaves residential treatment they are less likely to fall victim to drug cravings, or co-occurring mood disorders related to the recent changes in the brain.

Back2Basics comprehensive Life Skills Program focuses on the following:

- getting and keeping a healthy body;
- restoring relationships with family and friends;
- maintaining a support team for sustained recovery;
- developing coping strategies;
- working on methods of reducing stress;
- addressing the emotions related to unhealthy thinking and behaviors;
- balancing brain chemistry to reduce cravings and temptation;
- and embracing life and enjoying the moment.

Additionally, Back2Basics offers a six-month transitional program, Beyond the Basics, designed to reinforce the initial six-month program. This extended program provides residents with support in pursuing various endeavors such as attaining employment and furthering their education and, when combined with the initial program, enhances the success rate of the graduate. “Beyond the Basics takes that graduate to the next level,” DuPrez affirms, “guiding them through embracing their feels and managing their emotions so they continue to experience consistent, positive and reliable outcomes when out in the real world.”

While the programs are sequential, the Beyond the Basics program is not a requirement but a choice for the Back2Basics graduate who wants to continue their treatment and, DuPrez adds, “truly take ownership of the success of their sobriety.” Additionally, the alumni resource program provides job placement assistance, 12-Step meeting lists, resume building workshops, money management workshops and more. “It is a source of pride for the staff of Back2Basics and the families of these young men,” advises DuPrez with a smile, “most graduates choose to participate in Beyond the Basics.”

12 -STEP FRAMEWORK

Millions of people attained sobriety by attending 12-step meetings such as Alcoholics Anonymous, or Narcotics Anonymous, and Back2Basics supports that science but, like everything else in treatment, it is an individualized approach. “There is no doubt a solid routine of recovery-related activities revolving around meetings, or volunteering, as well as access to assistance from addiction professionals,” stresses DuPrez, “helps people maintain sobriety.” Though there may seem a disconnect between the scientific, biologically based addiction definition and the spiritually based 12-step programs, the research of the America Society of Addiction Medicine scientifically supports the activities recovering addicts undertake in 12-step recovery programs as effective ways to maintain sobriety.

Back2Basics incorporates a 12-step framework and the community it creates as a source of hope and connectedness with others, because it lends itself to a willingness to ask for help, accountability, spirituality and personal responsibility; residents attend Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and/or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings in Flagstaff, as well as on wilderness adventures. “Working the steps helps these young men find serenity,” DuPrez contends, “it helps them cope with life events in a way that causes less inward turmoil and outward drama.”

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

The prescriptive use of adventure experiences by health professionals has shown to result in significant improvements in the regulation of emotions and behavior. Numerous studies point to the many benefits of outdoor experiences including self-disclosure and awareness and enhanced attention span and problem-solving skills, as well as many brain functions important in the acquisition of a balanced life. Invigorated by the beauty of nature and the challenges it presents, many develop a lifelong interest in hiking, fishing, bird watching and other outdoor-oriented hobbies. The weekly outdoor adventures of Back2Basics serve the purpose of keeping the men engaged while testing and challenging them to work as a team in the majesty of varying natural settings, building their curiosity about the world around them and stimulating problem-solving and confidence as they master new skills.

As these young men open up to the new experiences around them they, in turn, begin to open up to those around them. And, when they are able to share their experiences and issues and hear those experiences and issues mirrored by the group, they begin to feel less self-conscious about joining in the discussion; freed by the realization they are surrounded by others who relate to them. As time passes, this new-found freedom to express themselves develops into trust and they begin to thrive on the positive feedback that results from their willingness to share the intimate details of their experiences; the depth of their disclosures available now to be explored in their individual therapy sessions.

During these outings, participants are always observed by trained staff creating opportunities for in-the-moment therapy as the professionals continually assess how the young men are managing their experiences and intervening when appropriate. With the opportunity to talk through issues in real-time they develop strategies for problem-solving and learn how to rely more on themselves, as well as seek out appropriate help from peers and staff when necessary. “The experiences are not always easy, and progress is not always linear,” reminds DuPrez, “much like life.”

In 2014, TIME magazine named nature #1 in a top ten list of things to do daily to improve life citing its many benefits including fitness, spending time with others, physical and mental challenge, as well as feelings of awe and gratitude. Furthermore, moving closer to nature through outdoor adventure enhances mental, emotional and physical well-being in several ways:

- by easing brain fatigue and daily stress;
- boosting cognition and creativity;
- improving mental health;
- and bolstering safety and security.

Additionally, researchers indicate participation in nature programs help build success-oriented identities through the process of overcoming fears, facing new challenges, mastering new skills, and improving social skills thereby creating a pathway to greater self-concept and actualization.

Back2Basics is located in breathtaking surroundings offering space to connect with nature – in the real world, in real-time – through adventure and exploration. “Our location provides the opportunity for connectedness to all the great outdoors has to offer,” acknowledges DuPrez, “through all seasons, year-round.” Nature awakens all the senses preventing boredom, depression, loneliness, isolation and overall unhealthiness further highlighting why individuals recovering from addiction truly need to spend as much time as possible outdoors improving their mental health, promoting healing, increasing mental alertness, reducing stress and increasing their mental and physical strength.

Back2Basics incorporates a whole host of outings, from mountain climbing and kayaking to river rafting and surfing, all designed to increase personal growth and confidence through discipline, survival skills, teamwork and skill mastery.

Participants learn the importance of conditioning, preparation, planning, taking responsibility for accomplishing assigned tasks, self-reliance, cooperating with others to accomplish a common goal in a timely manner, how their words and deeds affect others, as well as an appreciation for the power and beauty of nature. "Lifelong lessons," advises DuPrez, "and a pastime to enjoy."

Most forms of real knowledge, including self-knowledge, comes from the effort of mastering new skills. Mastering mental and physical activities requires knowledge both about the outside world, and reality, as well as an understanding of one's self and the limitations of that self. Interacting with nature is the perfect platform to initiate skill mastery because it requires that very same intuitive knowledge that can only come from effort and experience and repeated encounters with challenge and failure. “Growth,” adds DuPrez, “gives human beings agency over their lives.”

TYPES OF THERAPY

The diverse treatment team of Back2Basics possesses the combined education, training, credentials and experience to provide cross-discipline therapy and counseling services, many of which conduct private practices in the area, and are capable of treating PTSD, depression, anxiety and co-occurring disorders; additionally, a psychiatrist is on call and the Flagstaff Medical Center is nearby. Albeit clinicians are

equipped to treat dual diagnosis, men with serious mental health conditions are not an ideal fit for this program.

Individual Therapy

One-on-one weekly meetings with an assigned counselor provide a safe, confidential space to process emotions and experiences and to receive guidance and support from a qualified professional. During weekly sessions, the client and therapist work together to understand what the individual's issues are and develop new strategies for tackling those issues. Through these sessions residents get in touch with their feelings and learn how to self-regulate, as well as distinguish between reality and fantasy to aid them in facing their fears and moving forward from a traumatic past.

Group Therapy

Residents participate in group therapy taking inspiration and solace in the recovery of others as they explore emotional and interpersonal conflicts, denial and harmful behaviors, and responsibilities and limitations together. This group dynamic encourages honest feedback and facilitates bonding between individuals as they open up with one another. Furthermore, instead of having designated topics planned in advance, remarks DuPrez, "group therapy is real-time and reactive," the staff meeting daily to review the events and needs of the residents to create tailored plans in response to current group needs.

Family Workshops

Addiction is an illness affecting everyone in the life of the individual, as a result, the workshops designed for the family are an integral component in the healing process. Often the family dynamics are altered to accommodate the addict resulting in family members taking on unhealthy roles that are most likely co-dependent or enabling. Involving the family in the treatment and recovery process allows those unhealthy roles and patterns to be identified and addressed so amends can begin. "More often than not, these families have been operating in complete isolation for extended periods of time," elaborates DuPrez, "interacting with other families facing similar challenges is both therapeutic and healing."

Therapists communicate with parents on a weekly basis to discuss treatment progress and weekend family workshops typically begin and occur twice during the residential program when the client has been at the treatment center approximately three months. This is a time in the healing process these young men are mentally and physically in a better position to participate in open dialogue rather than merely engaging in fruitless finger-pointing. "We focus on taking that first, difficult step in discussing the family relationships, the broken trusts and lost connections," DuPrez reveals, "so everyone can learn to move forward and heal as a unit... *as a family.*"

The weekends typically involve three families who participate in a series of individual sessions along with the family group sessions involving a primary clinician who teaches the members and clients about the biological roots of addiction and the well-documented affects the disease has on the family unit. "Learning about the disease model is empowering for these families who have often reached a point of both helplessness and hopelessness with their loved one," DuPrez adds.

Much of what is accomplished is a direct result of the families interacting with others facing similar issues in an environment they feel safe to speak openly about taboo topics and deeply held family secrets finding it easier to face the shame and guilt associated with addiction and their role in that process together. Speaking honestly about addiction so family members can let go of the past, heal wounds and develop and nurture healthy family relationships in a respectful way is a significant component of healing. “Additionally,” DuPrez affirms, “the men receive training and therapeutic counseling on how to readjust to their families, maintain the mended relationships and improve happiness and satisfaction once they complete the program.”

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

This goal-oriented treatment takes a hands-on, practical approach to dealing with emotional problems. There is a close link between addiction and emotional maturity - *the inability to effectively deal with one's feelings*.

CBT alters the attitude of the individual by focusing on how their cognitive processes – thoughts, images, closely held beliefs – affect their personal behaviors. While alcohol and drugs may provide temporary relief for the emotional disconnect, substances ultimately lead to bigger problems for the individual; learned helplessness, lack of motivation, moodiness, poor relationships, low self-esteem, depression and chronic disappointment or resentment from unrealistically high expectations for others, yet low expectations of self, are a few of the by-products of the stunted emotional growth of substance abuse.

During weekly sessions, the client and therapist work together to identify and understand the issues and develop new strategies for tackling them. “It’s not just about breaking old patterns but arming them with a new set of principles they can apply to not only the issues of today and tomorrow,” asserts DuPrez with confidence, “but those they will encounter throughout a lifetime.”

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

Patient engagement in addiction treatment plays a significant role in recovery outcomes. That is why Back2Basics incorporates a variety of therapeutic techniques requiring a high level of engagement throughout every step of the process; each member of the staff taking an active role in working directly with the client to generate greater levels of commitment to their individual recovery.

Additionally, controlled and randomized trials supported by grants from the National Institute of Drug Abuse and the National Institute of Mental Health show DBT is more effective in a dual diagnosis setting than traditional treatment alone. “This is of great importance because addiction so often goes hand-in-hand with other issues,” DuPrez clarifies, “depression, generalized anxiety disorders and PTSD to name just a few.”

DBT is designed to help the patient feel more comfortable and accepted serving to break down barriers and resistance to treatment. This approach allows for greater partnering and connectedness with their therapist sharing goals for recovery and wellness and practicing strategies for living in the moment, coping with stress, regulating emotions and improving relationships with others. “These sessions

identify the strengths of these young men creating a stronger foundation for recovery, so they feel better about themselves and their lives,” DuPrez adds.

Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET)

Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET) is used as a method of building trusting relationship between the clients and the therapist and is fundamental in the progression of addiction treatment throughout the recovery process. MET focuses on the identification of patterns and the resulting behaviors the client seeks to change. “These are necessary changes if sustained sobriety is to be achieved,” reminds DuPrez.

The goal of this therapy is to stress the importance of change and its role in achieving sobriety. The client’s motivation for change is intensified as the therapist works diligently with them to develop a viable plan of action based upon their strengths which, in turn, become the stepping stones for their personalized path to recovery. “The very act of building on their strengths serves to increase their confidence as they execute the next step of the plan,” DuPrez clarifies, “stoking their readiness for further change and bringing them closer to their recovery goals.”

Experiential Therapy

Several hands-on activities are part of the way Back2Basics encourages residents to express themselves, connect with their emotions and address issues from alternative perspectives. The skills and feelings experienced while listening to music, drawing, writing, or meditating can aid in calming the mind and sharpening their thought processes for greater clarity. For example, keeping a journal is a way for a recovering addict to gain insights about themselves, vent inner feelings without any barriers or inhibitions and track their progress through the recovery process.

Neuroscientists are beginning to understand how mindfulness, meditation and experiencing what psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes as “flow” impacts the brain. Research shows these practices improve depression, anxiety, coping style in the face of adversity, improve quality of life and significantly reduce stress vital for maintaining brain health and well-being, not to mention,” adds DuPrez, “encouraging creativity, pride in achievement and patience.”

Behavioral Feedback

The Back2Basics recovery program is about more than merely telling an addict what to do and how to do it, it is about getting to know each client personally by asking questions, listening, learning from the answers and adapting to their individual needs to ensure the very best and lasting outcome. “Each resident is a puzzle and it is our job, our mission, to solve that puzzle day by day, week by week,” informs DuPrez, “determine their strengths, determine their challenges... **determine their right path to sustained sobriety.**”

The daily schedule is purposefully designed to create moments of psychodrama and resistance that challenge the residents — a critical piece of recovery; teachable moments in which the staff can give feedback on individual behavior and interaction with others. Behavioral feedback focuses on teaching

residents not only how to accept feedback from others, but how to give appropriate feedback in return. “This is an important step in recovery because in life, it is not only essential one is able to express their own feelings,” contends DuPrez, “but listen to others express their feelings as well.”

Individualize treatment is infused into every aspect of the Back2Basics program – Weekly Check-Ins, Outdoor Review, End of Week Review and Sharing is Caring. “Each task generating opportunities to address issues on the individual level revealing ways these men can most benefit one another and sow the seeds of a brotherhood,” says DuPrez, “*the seeds of a functioning family.*”

A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO LIVING

People who demonstrate a sense of well-being possess 9 essential characteristics: balance, resilience, contentment, goal setting, flexibility, self-confidence, support, gratitude and connection. Back2Basics views addiction as a whole person crisis building those characteristics into every aspect of the experience to strengthen the well-being and enhance the overall sense of self of every resident. “This whole person approach of addressing the mind and body as one is purposefully embedded in the fibers, the fabric, of each day because,” explains DuPrez, “we are acutely aware the effects reach well beyond our front door.”

The daily residential schedule provides a holistic approach to recovery to both rehabilitate and habilitate the addicted brain. This schedule begins with an early rise, getting the body acclimated to waking consistently and efficiently every day, followed by time in the gym, supporting physical stimulation and strength, and nutritional recovery, building a healthy body and fueling the mind. “This method provides a consistent pattern for both mind and body,” advises DuPrez, “work followed by nourishment.”

In fact, Back2Basics views food, its preparation and consumption, as an opportunity to teach independence, cooperation and interaction with others on the road to well-being. Back2Basics understands nourishing the body is a powerful recovery tool and emphasizes this with culinary classes that teach these young men how to choose the right foods, understand their nutritional content and prepare meals on their own.

All meals are followed by another essential part of the Back2Basic program — clean up. “This is a basic skill lost in addiction,” claims DuPrez. The program sets high expectations when it comes to residents keeping their bodies and environment clean; learning to maintain an orderly and clean-living space. In addition, residents are tasked with and scheduled time for a job that benefits the living environment of the group as a whole and given instructions and support to ensure they are able to complete the task properly. “This may seem insignificant to some,” remarks DuPrez, “but I assure you as a method of recovery it is not. Through the successful completion of everyday tasks that contribute to the greater good of the group,” he continues, “the residents reap the emotional and psychological rewards of building identity, connectedness and trust, as well as an overall confidence they can contribute successfully in the outside world.”

Beyond learning simple life skills, Back2Basics creates opportunities for higher education, apprenticeships or internships, and service activities as volunteers; activities that create a renewed sense of self and accomplishment. A primary focus of the program is to help the residents develop a growth mindset because learning, critical thinking and decision-making inspire a renewed sense of self.

“It is about strengthening the resilience of these young men,” advises DuPrez, “so they can overcome setbacks and increase their competence in handling whatever may come their way without the need for substances.”

Back2Basics is able to accomplish this because it is a small, close-knit organization of professional staff that know and understand one another. The staff is confident in each other’s skills, knowledge and experience and that level of connectedness among the staff lends itself to a connectedness among our residents and their ability to provide meaningful guidance to these young men searching for effective treatment. “Back2Basics is unique, it is the intangibles,” DuPrez states with pride, “that make our residential treatment facilities feel like home.”

Mindfulness

In the first few months of recovery clients often experience a kind of mental fuzziness and struggle as their minds adjust to life without drugs or alcohol. “The roller coaster of emotions,” informs DuPrez, “creates a level of stress that can easily tempt these young men to quit their efforts to change their lives.” The residents of Back2Basics are taught how to be aware of their thoughts and feelings so they can remain mentally alert and focused on their personal transformation to create and attain the life they desire.

Achieving this level of mindfulness takes purposeful, consistent practice; the benefits from the journey alone for the recovering addict are far-reaching. Drawing upon all the senses, residents learn traditional meditation through breathing exercises; moving meditation through practices such as Tai Chi and yoga; walking meditation where one gives full attention to the actual process of walking itself and, even, mindful eating. “Sober living presents many challenges and practicing mindfulness and gratitude helps graduates embrace every experience by being fully present and open and vulnerable to change and challenge,” explains DuPrez, “so they may develop the mental and physical muscles needed to persevere in the face of uncertainty.”

Relationships

Life is complex and, as human beings, we rely on others to learn, build our confidence and capacity to cope with changing situations. As a result, it stands to reason, the challenges of life are best faced when these men surround themselves with others who demonstrate healthy behaviors. “This means inviting into their lives friends, family and mentors who will encourage, motivate and inspire the recovering addict to be the very best version of themselves,” emphasizes DuPrez.

All types of relations—family, friends, casual, professional or romantic—remain healthy with respect, commitment, trust, honesty and communication with each type of interaction having its own level of time, energy and information sharing. As humans, the relationships we form with other people are vital to our mental and emotional wellbeing and survival; the residents learn what behavior is appropriate for the circumstances and how to nourish those relationships. In order for these men to evolve past addiction they need to remove themselves from the negative forces in their lives. “This is not easy,” DuPrez adds, “but absolutely necessary to break bad habits and influences.”

The tendency for addicts to blame others for their problems is driven by an inability to foresee a better way of dealing with interpersonal relationships. Back2Basics helps these young men broaden their perspective by teaching them to take responsibility for every aspect of their lives and transition from blaming other's wrongdoings or actions for their mistakes. "It comes down to taking responsibility and empowering their internal forces because," contends DuPrez, "the quality of a man's relationships with others begins with the quality of his relationship with himself."

Exercise & Fitness

Physical activity gets participants out of their heads and into the outside world where they can experience feeling good naturally rather than chemically. Studies show activating healthy levels of testosterone through exercise and physical activities affect a man's cognitive performance and can improve focus, motivation and memory; intensive physical activity is a good outlet and substitution for their need for physical stimulation. Back2Basics provides classes that instruct the residents in balance, discipline, strength and focus through outdoor activities, training in the gym and martial arts helping them develop an action-oriented mindset that counteracts the procrastination and laziness that comes with addiction. "These men come into the facility feeling mentally and physically weak," advises DuPrez, "they leave feeling strong."

Challenging activities get the men in the habit of making simple decisions which, in turn, reduces their fear of failure and provides opportunities to draw upon courage when discouraged. As a result of working past limiting beliefs and negative memories, their confidence grows, and they begin to enjoy the rewards of listening to others, putting into action what they've learned, exercising discipline and displaying self-control.

Nutrition & Culinary

Substance abuse generally leads to a lack of proper nutrition, either as a result of not eating enough throughout the day or eating foods that are low in nutrients. Back2Basics addresses the significant role nutrition plays in improving sobriety success rates. Individualized nutrition counseling and comprehensive nutrition education shows how healthy choices nourish the body and address medical conditions resulting from past abuse. Knowing what to eat and when and how to select nutritious meals and snacks helps reduce cravings, stabilize moods and reduce stress.

The program takes nutrition one step further focusing on mindful food preparation which is an essential life skill often overlooked in treatment. Through our Culinary Program, residents learn the self-sufficiency and team-building skills that an addiction lifestyle ignores; menu planning, shopping and budgeting, and food preparation. "So much joy can be found in stopping to focus on food selection, consumption and sharing meals with others," proposes DuPrez, "learning to appreciate the look, feel and taste of a delicious meal can enliven the senses and enrich life as a whole."

Healthy Habit Formation.

Most of these men come into treatment because their lives have become unmanageable and are in dire need of structure. The carefully designed schedule of Back2Basics mirrors that of a balanced lifestyle focusing on the discipline required to accomplish the tasks needed to maintain a healthy existence.

“Creating and adhering to a personal, daily routine that includes getting enough sleep, eating nutritious foods, interacting positively with others and moving the body,” DuPrez suggests, “is the path to freedom.” The program successfully begins the process of training its residence to do this by reducing the number of decisions they make each day, so they can focus on the tasks they need to restore and maintain their health. Diverse activities become standardized and they become more efficient in staying in the present, taking care of themselves, working with others and meeting new challenges; there is no room for forgetfulness or neglect. DuPrez explains, “The process gives them the opportunity to experience the flow and pleasure of a day without addictive substances.”

William McRaven, a retired four-star admiral in the United States Navy, draws on his extraordinary experiences to offer insights into accomplishment in life in *“Make Your Bed: Little Things That Can Change Your Life...and Maybe The World”*. McRaven presents the learned can-do attitude necessary for overcoming challenges and reaching deep inside to live a life of personal choice. The former Navy SEAL discusses how daily rituals are the key to embedding tasks into the mind to the extent they are eventually accomplished with little, to no, thought. Even the simplest of daily rituals like brushing your teeth, making your bed, eating breakfast every day, or cleaning up after yourself builds self-sufficiency and feelings of accomplishment. In other words, today’s progress is compounded by yesterday’s effort, no matter how small, and all comes down to the power of self-discipline... taking one step at a time.

According to a study conducted by University College London, it takes at least 66 days to make a habit stick. The daily schedule at Back2Basics is set up so residents are consistently engaging in the replacement of poor habits for daily routines that benefit their health and maturity such as eating nutritious meals or exercising 30 minutes a day and, “over time,” asserts DuPrez, “the new behavior is no longer questioned, it becomes second nature, a new habit.”

Additionally, the staff works diligently to help the young men devise and adhere to routines that foster their particular goals and aspirations. “Settling into these positive routines continuously shines a light on what is truly important in life,” adds DuPrez, “it shines a light on the path to a productive, sober life.”

Goal Setting

Through the variety of programs offered, residents learn to take dynamic action on the most important things in their life. They learn how to prioritize their time and effort to improving their body, mind and spirit by establishing SMART goals for each and being accountable for results that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Bound. Residents learn the benefit of overcoming hesitation and natural fear of making mistakes; they either succeed in an endeavor or learn something new. “The mere act of working towards something with intention and trying new things,” adds DuPrez, “helps these men experience the thrill of discovery and the satisfaction of achievement.”

Financial Responsibility

Gaining practical life skills that contribute to a more balanced life are important in all self-improvement efforts. Alcoholics, drug abusers, compulsive gamblers, and other addicts are notoriously bad with money. “The addicted brain tells them they want something, and they want it now,” clarifies DuPrez.

As a result, men recovering from addiction benefit from learning financial management skills regardless of how good or bad they were at earning and spending money before entering recovery. Financial skills are important in staying out of debt and financial distress which could easily trigger a relapse. For those in recovery, learning how to budget, separate needs from wants, and bank and save money reduces reckless spending and, in turn, reduces stress. Graduates take pride in developing intrinsic over extrinsic motivation,” explains DuPrez, “making choices that feel good and right, rather than those motivated by external pressure and influence.”

COMMUNITY SERVICE

In his book, *Boys Adrift*, Dr. Leonard Sax explains men need to be responsible because if men are not needed, they do not flourish. Furthermore, according to organizational psychologist Benjamin P. Hardy, men actually step down if they are not needed. For example, when expectations are low, you will find young men demonstrating behaviors like remaining in their parent’s homes longer and into adulthood and failing to thrive overall.

“Back2Basics believes addiction takes and recovery gives back and makes amends,” reveals DuPrez. Apologizing through one’s actions ignites an essential process of introspection, the settling of past debts that were unhealthy and harmful. This is the work that gets a resident to be in their frontal cortex, where higher forms of neurological activity exist. “Giving back to others is ultimately a gift to one’s self and that process begins with a very important and necessary step in the recovery process,” DuPrez clarifies, “being remorseful.”

Part of gaining the perspective needed to begin this process and reintegration into society is service work. Young men are encouraged to heal their addiction by successfully engaging in the world around them regularly investing their time into a significant community project, such as volunteering at a local food bank, or a wilderness cleanup. “Doing something positive for the community helps change the chemistry of the brain,” DuPrez emphasizes, “it gets them outside of themselves where valuable perspective can be gained.”

Volunteering to help others is a component of preparing for lifelong sobriety because developing inner resources and emotional maturity are key in preventing depression, anxiety and a regression to substance abuse. People who experience successful recovery have many things in common,” DuPrez points out, “they never forget what they’ve been through and wisely bolster what they’ve learned with after-care programs, support groups, continuing therapy, healthy habits and coping skill application to maintain their resilience, achievement and long-term sobriety.”

RECOVERY PROFESSIONALS

Roy DuPrez, M.Ed., founded Back2Basics Outdoor Adventure Therapy after working with at-risk youth through multiple community organizations. Fifteen years of treatment during early adolescence and young adulthood and a Master of Education in Counseling, his personal and professional experience led him to create a treatment program addressing the problems of addiction and providing dynamic and engaging solutions. Throughout his academic and professional career, he has worked with a multitude of young adults and at-risk youth and has co-founded and developed various community programs, including The Indigo Movement Inc. and Juntos Podemos, focusing on life skills and personal development, community cultural awareness, as well as drug abuse prevention and alcohol abuse prevention and rehabilitation. During this time, he learned most programs for young people lacked the exposure to activities and specific life skill training tailored for building young men's self-esteem.

The Back2Basics treatment team encompasses individuals who are diverse, creative and recovery-focused with the education, training, credentials and experience to provide dual-diagnosis therapy. The team brings to the table both professional and personal experience to help young men addicted to drugs and/or alcohol; they are licensed and credentialed professionals, the majority of whom actively participate in 12-step recovery supported by team members who have a heart to help those in need of recovery.

The Back2Basics team knows how to bring optimism, joy and reconnection to a seemingly hopeless situation, committed to successful addiction recovery for each individual. These thoughtful, reflective practitioners contribute to improving the lives of young men and their families not only during their stay, but through after-care outreach programs as well.

A NEW BEGINNING

Sober living does not occur in a world absent of chaos, anxiety, troubles, or hard realities. "Any life, no matter how healthy or good, is lived in the midst of uncertainties," stresses DuPrez. "The key is making balanced choices in spite of those uncertainties."

The National Institute on Drug Abuse identifies addiction as a disease because it affects multiple areas of the brain including those that support reward and motivation, learning and memory, and inhibitory control over behavior. A truly effective treatment program incorporates multiple components directly addressing each aspect of the illness and its devastating consequences. The immersive and unique treatment experience at Back2Basics provides effective addiction treatment to adolescent boys and young men with a combination of evidence-based therapies and the 12-step framework. The physical and emotional benefits of outdoor adventure therapy play a major role in helping residents develop their personal recovery through growth opportunities and lifestyle choices. "I cannot stress enough how important a treatment program address all the needs of the individual," says DuPrez, "not just the drug abuse."

Still, whether or not a rehabilitation program is nationally certified or statistically successful it is the individual, not the program, which creates lasting recovery points out DuPrez. The staff and residents are there to provide expertise and support, he adds, but the responsibility lies with the individual to accept the help and use it to attain and maintain a sober life. "Tools do not build a home without the

skillful use of the operator... *of the man,*” DuPrez emphasizes. “Each of these men must take ownership of their own recovery,” he continues, “in the end it’s incumbent upon them to build a healthy life.”

As a chronic disease, addiction requires a continuum of care to stay asymptomatic, or in remission; Back2Basics teaches these young men how to make lifestyle and behavior changes to avoid substance abuse and attain health. Residents bond with staff and cohorts develop a life-long brotherhood of respect and, as graduates, enjoy a committed, caring, community of support for sustained sobriety and well-being.

“Back2Basics works because, without question, every person here cares,” concludes DuPrez with a smile. “That’s what makes our program, our residents, our graduates successful... ***that is what makes these young men successful.***”

RESOURCES

- Addiction Science & Clinical Practice
- America Society of Addiction Medicine
- American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry
- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
- American Psychiatric Association
- American Psychological Association
- American Society of Addiction Medicine
- Behavior Therapy
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Charter For Compassion
- Child & Adolescent Mental Health
- Child & Youth Care Forum
- Journal of Therapeutic Schools and Programs
- Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry
- Association for Experiential Education
- Journal of Child and Family Studies
- The Open Psychology Journal
- Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy
- Clinical Psychology Review
- Frontiers In Psychology
- Harvard School of Public Health
- Institute for Behavior and Health
- Addiction Treatment Outcomes Working Group
- University Of California Berkeley
- International Journal of Advancements in Research & Technology
- Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, 34 (1), 123-138
- Mental Health America
- Mindfulness in Recovery

- National Alliance on Mental Illness
- National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
- National Institute on Drug Abuse
- New York Times
- NIDA's Drug Pubs Research Dissemination Center
- NIDA's National Drug Abuse Treatment Clinical Trials Network
- Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare Industry Council
- Psych Central
- Psychology Today
- Psychosomatic Medicine
- Science Daily
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).
- Substance Use & Misuse
- Task force of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
- The Behavior Analyst Today
- United States Census Bureau