

# CRUSH

Recovery Community Center



## Why Dating Early in Early Recovery Can Be Risky

Submitted by Chelsea Howell

Addiction recovery experts often caution against entering romantic relationships during the first year of sobriety, emphasizing that early recovery is a time that requires focus, healing, and personal growth. Many individuals face emotional adjustments, triggers, and the challenge of building healthy coping strategies without substances. Adding the emotional intensity of a new relationship can sometimes increase vulnerability and raise the risk of relapse.

My personal journey highlights these risks. For seven years, I unintentionally replaced one addiction with another. After battling meth addiction, I found myself trading substance dependence for what I would describe as a relationship addiction. Each time I relied on a relationship for fulfillment or stability, it eventually led me back to meth use.

Now, I can report a different outcome. I have remained sober and free from romantic relationships for three years. During that time, I have learned how to build self-worth, independence, and genuine self-love...foundations I believe are essential to my recovery. Recovery professionals often refer to the "one-year rule," which encourages individuals to wait at least 12 months before pursuing serious romantic relationships. While not mandatory, experts say the guideline allows individuals to strengthen their recovery, understand their emotional needs, and develop healthier boundaries before adding the complexities of dating. I hope my experience serves as encouragement for others in recovery. By prioritizing self-growth and healing, individuals may build stronger, more stable futures and reduce the risk of returning to substance use. The right person will come along, at the right time. We just got to trust the process and not rush into things.



XOXOXO



### SPREAD THE LOVE RESOURCE FAIR

Join us for a Community Resource Fair focused on connection, healing, and hope. Local organizations and vendors will be on site sharing support, resources, and encouragement. Enjoy food, fun, and community as we come together to celebrate recovery and wellness—everyone is welcome.

The Japanese proverb "Nana korobi, ya oki" means "Fall down seven times, get up eight" Recovery, growth, and healing aren't linear, but persistence is where hope lives.

## Respectful Considerations for Ethical Recovery Housing

This article is offered in the spirit of collaboration, mutual respect, and shared commitment to supporting individuals in recovery—particularly those who are already marginalized or housing-insecure. It is not intended as criticism of any single program or philosophy, including 12-Step recovery, which has helped millions of people achieve and sustain recovery. Rather, it outlines nationally recognized best practices and legal considerations relevant to recovery housing today.

SAMHSA defines recovery as a person-driven process supported by multiple pathways and community resources. Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC) emphasize autonomy, peer support, cultural responsiveness, and access to a continuum of services. Ethical recovery housing aligned with ROSC supports resident choice while maintaining clear expectations around safety and conduct.

### What Ethical Recovery Housing Looks Like:

Housing access based on behavior, safety, and mutual respect rather than ideological compliance.

Support for multiple recovery pathways, including—but not limited to—12-Step recovery.

Encouragement of engagement with external recovery supports and community resources.

Trauma-informed practices that recognize the impact of past institutional or housing-related trauma.

Clear rules, transparency, and fair processes for addressing concerns or violations.

Focus on building recovery capital and pathways to independent living.

Recovery housing plays a vital role in helping individuals stabilize, build community, and sustain recovery. Across models, there is broad agreement on several shared goals: safety, accountability, wellness, personal growth, and long-term independence.

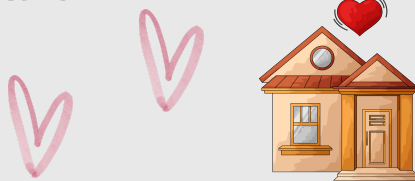


Many recovery housing programs successfully balance structure with autonomy. Periodic policy review and alignment with SAMHSA, ROSC, and fair-housing guidance can help ensure ethical and sustainable practices.

This paper is shared in good faith, with respect for the work of recovery housing providers. It intends to foster understanding, reduce unintended harm, and support long-term recovery and housing stability.

Single-path recovery models can be effective for many individuals. Challenges may arise, however, when participation becomes mandatory rather than invitational—particularly when housing stability is at stake. Rigid models may unintentionally discourage honesty or limit recovery capital.

Under the federal Fair Housing Act, as applied in Iowa, individuals in recovery are considered a protected class. Housing access should not be conditioned on religious belief, ideological conformity, or participation in a specific recovery modality. Policies restricting access to external recovery supports may raise compliance concerns.



## All Recoveries Meeting

**Every path. Every person. One community.**

All Recoveries Meetings are inclusive, peer-led gatherings for anyone seeking recovery from substance use, mental health challenges, or life disruptions. There is no single recovery model promoted. Whether your path includes 12-step programs, SMART Recovery, faith-based recovery, medication, therapy, harm reduction, peer support, or self-directed recovery, you are welcome here.

### What to Expect:

- \*A safe, respectful space
  - \*Peer-led conversation and shared lived experience
  - \*Voluntary sharing- listening is just as valued
  - \*No labels, no pressure, no judgment
  - \*Confidentiality and mutual respect
- ### Who This Meeting Is For:
- \*People in any stage of recovery
  - \*Those exploring or combining different recovery paths
  - \*Individuals who don't fit into one specific program
  - \*Anyone looking for connection, understanding, and support

### What This Meeting Is Not:

- \*Not treatment or therapy
- \*Not a debate about recovery methods
- \*Not recruitment for any program
- \*Not about being "fixed".

**This is a space for belonging, dignity, and hope.**

**Recovery is not one road- it is many roads.**

**All paths that support healing deserve respect.**

**All are welcome.**

**Join us every Friday at 1:30 pm!**

# Veterans Helping Veterans

## Recovery, Mental Health, and Hope

At CRUSH, we believe every veteran deserves support, respect, and a real sense of belonging.

The Veterans Community Alliance (VCA) brings together veterans, families, and community partners to promote healing, connection, and opportunity—through peer-led, non-clinical, trauma-informed support for substance use disorders, mental health challenges, and recovery.



Led by Staff Sergeant Neuleib (Ret.), VCA helps with:

- veteran-to-veteran peer recovery support
- support for substance use and mental health recovery
- navigating VA and community-based services
- connections to housing, employment, and supportive resources
- coordinated help through monthly partner collaboration

We're building a united community where no veteran is left behind.

COMING SOON: A Recovery Podcast!!!!

Real people. Real stories.  
Real connection rooted in lived experience.

Because none of us recover alone.



Valentine's Day is a day dedicated to showering our loved ones with affection and gifts—a national celebration of love. We go above and beyond to show others just how much they mean to us. This Valentine's Day, while you're spreading love to those around you, don't forget to show yourself some love too. You deserve it



## Art, Healing, and Heart: Valentines for Our Veterans

At CRUSH, love and service go hand in hand. This Valentine's season, our volunteers spent time in Art Therapy creating handmade Valentine's cards for local Veterans. What began as a space for self-expression, connection, and healing quickly turned into something even bigger.

Art Therapy offers a powerful way to process emotions, build confidence, and find peace in creativity. As our volunteers poured intention and care into each card, the healing didn't stay on the page—it grew. Every message, color, and design carried gratitude, hope, and respect for those who have served.

To complete the circle, CRUSH staff visited the Freedom Foundation to personally deliver the Valentines to Veterans. What started as an inward, healing practice became an outward act of love. Smiles were shared, stories were exchanged, and the energy in the room reminded us that recovery and community are deeply connected.

This experience showed us that healing doesn't stop with ourselves. When we nurture it within, it has a way of spreading outward—touching lives, strengthening community, and reminding us all that we are not alone.



"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us." –Ralph Waldo Emerson

# Honoring the Twelve Steps

## Through a Peer & Multiple Pathways Lens

### Preface: Intent and Respect for Alcoholics Anonymous

This article is offered with deep respect for Alcoholics Anonymous and the Twelve Steps, which have supported the recovery of millions of people for nearly a century.

The purpose of this comparison is not to replace, revise, or diminish the 12-Step model, but to demonstrate how its core principles can be expressed within a peer-led, multiple-pathways framework that emphasizes choice, trauma-informed care, and inclusivity. Many individuals continue to find meaning and healing through spiritually centered recovery, including AA, while others benefit from different or complementary approaches. This reflection is intended to build understanding across recovery communities and to highlight shared values such as honesty, accountability, service, and personal growth

- 1 Alcoholics Anonymous:** We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.  
**Peer / Multiple Pathways:** We recognized that our relationship with substances or behaviors was causing harm or distress, and we acknowledged the need for change while honoring personal agency, lived experience, and resilience.

- 2 Alcoholics Anonymous:** Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

**Peer / Multiple Pathways:** We explored sources of safety, hope, meaning, and support—spiritual, relational, cultural, community-based, or personal—that could help restore balance and well-being.

- 3 Alcoholics Anonymous:** Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

**Peer / Multiple Pathways:** We chose recovery supports that aligned with our values, beliefs, culture, and identity, which may include spirituality, faith, community, or self-directed responsibility, while maintaining autonomy.

- 4 Alcoholics Anonymous:** Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

**Peer / Multiple Pathways:** We engaged in self-reflection at a pace that felt safe, focusing on understanding experiences, patterns, strengths, and challenges without shame or moral judgment.

- 5 Alcoholics Anonymous:** Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

**Peer / Multiple Pathways:** We shared our story with trusted people of our choosing in way that supported accountability, healing, boundaries, and emotional safety.

- 6 Alcoholics Anonymous:** Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

**Peer / Multiple Pathways:** We became open to growth and change, recognizing that many behaviors developed as survival responses and that healing can involve learning, support, and self-compassion.

- 7 Alcoholics Anonymous:** Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

**Peer / Multiple Pathways:** We sought continued growth using supports we trust—spiritual, relational, therapeutic, cultural, or community-based—while honoring readiness and consent.

- 8 Alcoholics Anonymous:** Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

**Peer / Multiple Pathways:** We reflected on the impact of our actions on others while also acknowledging harm done to us, balancing responsibility with self-protection and healing.

- 9 Alcoholics Anonymous:** Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

**Peer / Multiple Pathways:** We chose if, when, and how to repair relationships in ways that prioritized safety, consent, boundaries, and wellbeing for all involved.

- 10 Alcoholics Anonymous:** Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

**Peer / Multiple Pathways:** We practiced ongoing self-awareness with kindness, accountability, and flexibility.

- 11 Alcoholics Anonymous:** Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

**Peer / Multiple Pathways:** We engaged in reflective or grounding practices—such as prayer, meditation, mindfulness, movement, or cultural rituals—that aligned with our beliefs and supported connection and meaning.

- 12 Alcoholics Anonymous:** Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

**Peer / Multiple Pathways:** Having experienced growth and healing—spiritual or otherwise—we shared our lived experience to support others, while respecting diversity, choice, and multiple pathways to recovery.

