

Revised Edition

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HELPING WOMEN RECOVER

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# A Woman's Journal

A PROGRAM FOR TREATING ADDICTION

Stephanie S. Covington



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*A Woman's  
Journal*

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# A Woman's Journal



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# INTRODUCTION

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## About This Program

I have been treating addicted women for almost thirty years. 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.

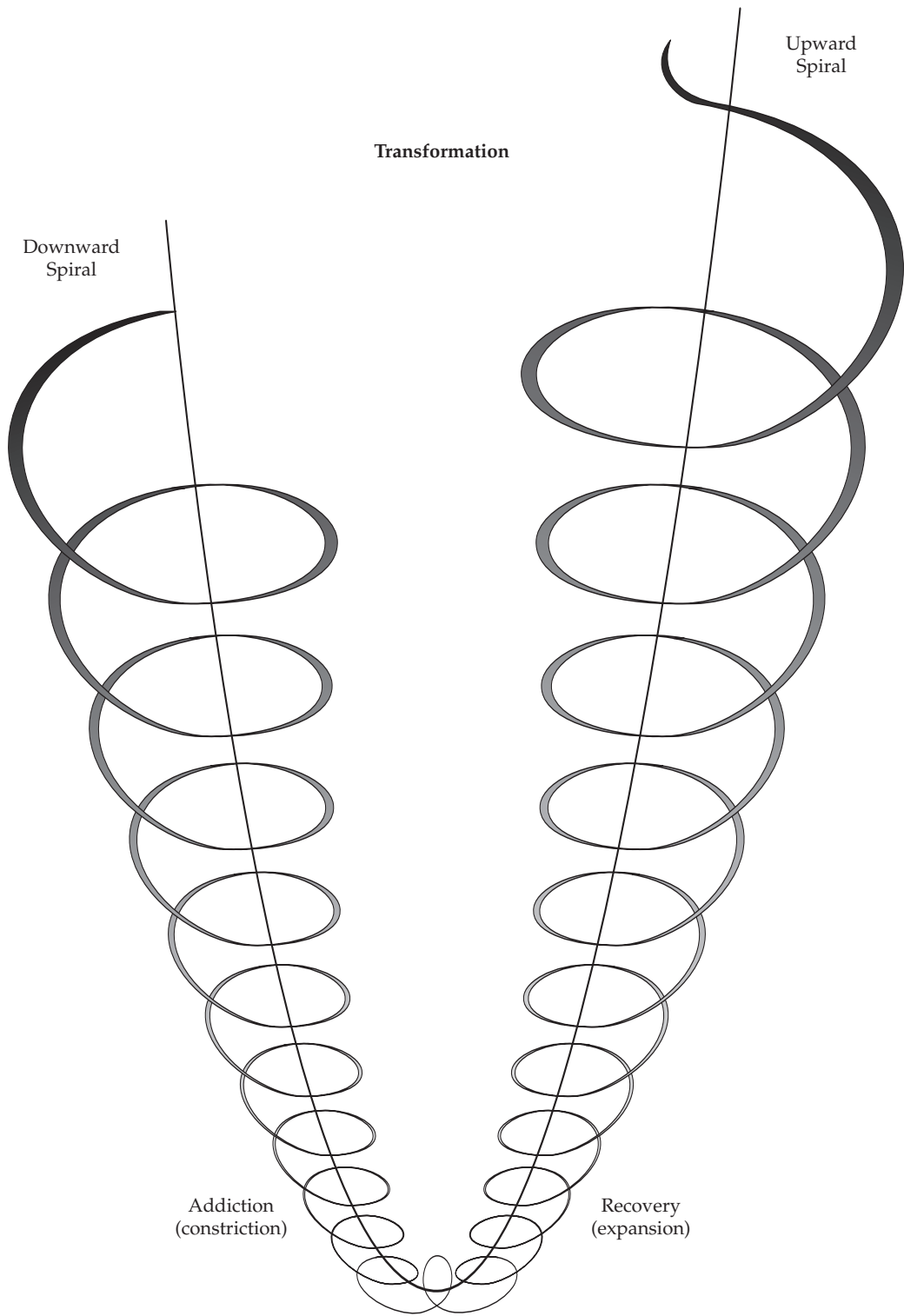
Although the program is designed for women who abuse alcohol and other drugs, much of the material can be helpful to any woman. This program is now being used in mental health clinics, eating-disorder programs, and domestic-violence shelters, as well as in substance-abuse treatment programs in many jails and prisons.

*Helping Women Recover* addresses issues that many women struggle with, especially if they are abusing 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 seventeen 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

# The Spiral of Addiction and Recovery



relapse and the areas of greatest change in their recoveries. Within the four modules, specific topics are covered, including

- Self-esteem
- Sexism
- Family of origin
- Relationships
- Interpersonal violence
- Sexuality and abuse
- Meditation and relaxation

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 and activities for you to do as reflection 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 meeting.

Finally, this journal contains questions 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 and exercises 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 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 meetings 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. And 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.

I wish you the best.

*La Jolla, California*  
*May 2008*

Stephanie S. Covington

# Responses to the *Helping Women Recover* Feedback Form

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.*

Very grateful and beautiful experience. It helped me grow so much. I've gained trust, courage and love. I feel free and I feel alive. I've learned how to let go of my past, focus on my present to prepare for my future.—*Chanthalay*

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 have been able to deal with some issues that held me captive for a very long time. I'm relieved from a lot of stress and I found some peace.—*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*