

SMART RECOVERY

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Alcohol-related problems are among the most significant public health issues in the United States. Each year, more than [88,000 people](#) die from alcohol-related causes, making it the third leading preventable cause of death in the country. In 2018, approximately [139.8 million people](#) ages 12 or older were current alcohol users, and of these, an estimated 14.8 million had an alcohol use disorder. That same year, [10,511 people](#) were killed in motor vehicle crashes in which at least one driver was legally impaired with a blood alcohol content of .08 or higher.

Excessive drinking takes a serious [toll on your body](#), including your brain, heart, liver, pancreas, and immune system, and may even increase your risk for certain types of cancer. It can also negatively impact your work life, family relationships, and/or financial security. Alcohol use disorder can range in severity and may lead to compulsive alcohol use and dependency, or alcoholism.

SMART stands for Self-Management and Recovery Training. SMART Recovery is an alternative to traditional 12-Step programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. It's one of the largest alcohol addiction support groups of its kind, but the mutual support group also helps people overcome drug addictions and a wide range of addictive behaviors.

I. The Basics of SMART Recovery

Rehab in Dallas

Rehab in El Paso

Rehab in Fort Worth

Rehab in Galveston

This guide covers basic information on how SMART Recovery was used to treat various substance and activity addictions, especially alcohol and drug addiction. Details are also provided on how SMART Recovery is administered, the cost associated with the program, and other considerations of using this type of addiction recovery program.

[SMART Recovery](#) is a global community of mutual support groups and offers an alternative to predominant 12-Step approaches. Participants at group support meetings help each other resolve problems stemming from alcohol addiction, drug addictions, and other harmful addictive behaviors, such as gambling, eating disorders, and overspending. Its 4-Point Program takes a science-based approach — instead of a spiritual one — to help participants overcome self-destructive behaviors and lead more fulfilling lives.

Generic Treatment Name	SMART Recovery
Other Names	Self-Management and Recovery Training
Conditions Commonly Treated	Alcohol addiction, drug addiction, smoking addiction, and addictions to harmful behaviors, such as gambling, eating disorders, sexual behavior, and excessive shopping
How to Get Treatment	Free self-help program, no referral required All face-to-face and online meetings are open to anyone at no cost
Availability	Face-to-face weekly meetings available in 25 countries, daily online meetings, message board, and 24/7 chat room available by registering for a free, confidential account
Facilitator Criteria	Meetings are led by facilitators who have completed a rigorous 30-hour training course or by hosts with less rigorous training who lead simpler meetings
Participation Commitment	Self-determined, no lifetime commitment required, attend when you choose for as long as you choose
Four Points of the Program	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Build and Maintain Motivation2. Cope with Urges3. Manage Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviors4. Lead a Balanced Life
Programs Available For	Individuals, family and friends, treatment professionals, and inmates and parolees
How Used	Stand-alone program or combined with other recovery paths

For decades, spiritually based 12-Step programs have been the primary self-help groups available for those seeking recovery from alcoholism and other addictions. People uncomfortable with the use of spiritual principles weren't always open to these types of groups, so Rational Recovery was founded in 1985. This group was a for-profit endeavor that avoided a spiritual focus, basing the program on scientific principles and self-empowerment instead. A non-profit was later established, which separated from the for-profit group, and SMART Recovery was officially [founded in 1994](#).

Since its inception, SMART Recovery has grown to include [3,500 weekly meetings in 25 countries](#), with more than 2,200 meetings in the United States alone. The group also holds more than 40 online meetings weekly and offers online message boards, 24/7 chat rooms, and a recovery handbook available in 13 languages.

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II. How SMART Recovery Works and What It's Used For

SMART Recovery is a mental health and educational program that focuses on changing human behavior and learning coping skills. The program uses principles and tools from scientific disciplines that have been proven [effective in the treatment of addictive behavior](#), including cognitive behavioral therapy and motivational interviewing. Behavioral and lifestyle changes are built around its 4-Point Program with motivation, goals, beliefs, emotions, commitment, and follow-through being essential elements of the addiction recovery process.

Unlike 12-Step programs that often focus on one specific addiction, SMART Recovery targets a wide range of harmful behaviors within each mutual support group, using key principles of [therapeutic approaches](#). SMART Recovery can be used as a stand-alone program or combined with other recovery paths to help you overcome addiction to alcohol and/or drugs, as well as harmful addictions to gambling, eating disorders, sex, shopping, internet use, or any activity that has become addictive in nature.

SMART Recovery does not require a lifetime commitment, so you decide when you're ready and able to move on. Programs are available for individuals, family and friends of individuals struggling with addiction, inmates and parolees, and addiction treatment professionals.

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III. How SMART Recovery Is Administered

Some of the world's leading addictive behavior scientists take part in SMART Recovery's International Advisory Council. SMART Recovery's science-based approach emphasizes self-empowerment and self-reliance and helps you personalize your plan to successfully change destructive behaviors. Program participants are encouraged to apply various SMART tools and techniques, such as cost-benefit analysis, urge logs, and ABC exercises to further their recovery.

SMART Recovery's approach to behavioral changes is primarily based on its 4-Point Program, which includes:

1. Building and maintaining motivation to change harmful behaviors and remain addiction-free
2. Coping with urges to use alcohol and/or drugs or pursue harmful activities by identifying and overcoming triggers
3. Managing behaviors, feelings, and thoughts in effective ways to promote change, including replacing negative ones with positive alternatives
4. Leading a balanced life that's positive and healthy through commitment and a positive mindset

Other key elements include motivation and goals to help you learn that short-term motivations surrounding your addiction are impairing your ability to meet healthy long-term goals. During mutual-support groups, facilitators also help you identify, examine, and modify negative beliefs about yourself and your problems so you can change behaviors for the better.

SMART Recovery also teaches you how to reduce emotional disturbances and increase self-acceptance and self-esteem, so you have more motivation and a greater ability to change. Finally, the program focuses on commitment and follow-through to change thinking, emotions, and behaviors to encourage you to replace harmful addictive behaviors with activities you enjoy.

You can attend local mutual support group meetings that gather weekly, and/or attend online weekly meetings from anywhere with an internet connection. Weekly meetings are led by facilitators who've completed a rigorous 30-hour training course. Meeting formats are organized, simple to follow, and serious but often fun. Simpler meetings may be led by hosts with less rigorous training.

Group support meetings aren't intended to dredge up past mistakes but to focus on how you can change your present and future to lead a more productive, healthy, and happy life. Further support can be found through 24/7 message boards and chat rooms available online.

IV. Costs and Other Considerations of SMART Recovery

SMART Recovery is operated by a non-profit organization, so mutual support group meetings are free of charge to everyone. Donations are encouraged at the end of each meeting, but they aren't required. Further funding for the program comes from sales of publications, grants, and corporate contributions.

Mental health professionals and psychological scientists around the world [support SMART Recovery](#) through ongoing help in keeping the program current with relevant treatment and scientific innovations. SMART Recovery is recommended by leading medical institutions worldwide and widely recognized as a pathway for behavioral change and recovery support.

SMART Recovery is a good alternative for people who've tried other recovery programs, including 12-Step programs, and found them unhelpful. Research suggests that SMART Recovery meetings are as effective as other mutual support meetings for resolving addictive behavior; however, SMART Recovery doesn't work for everyone.

V. How to Get Help & Additional Resources

- [SMART Recovery](#) provides details on the program and how it works.
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) [👍] offers in-depth information about the drug overdose epidemic in the United States and how to prevent it.
- [National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism](#) [👍] has details to understand alcohol's impact on your health.
- Psychology Today offers insight into patterns of addictive behavior.

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VI. FAQs

How is SMART Recovery different from traditional 12-Step programs?

One of the biggest differences is 12-Step programs have a spiritual foundation, and SMART Recovery has a scientific one. SMART Recovery discourages using labels like “addict” or “alcoholic” and teaches increasing self-reliance and self-empowerment, instead of powerlessness. Also, sponsors aren’t used in SMART Recovery, but you can seek 24/7 support online through chat rooms and message boards.

What is considered addictive behavior?

Any substance or activity you become overly involved with can be considered [addictive behavior](#). Substances can include alcohol and/or illicit/prescription drugs but can also include caffeine, food, energy drinks, and more. Activities can include gambling, spending, exercising, sexual behavior, eating, and others. Basically, any substance or activity that has become so important to you that it’s hurting you or others physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and/or financially could be considered addictive behavior. Some people have multiple addictions.

What is the SMART Recovery Toolbox?

The [SMART Recovery Toolbox](#) provides a varied collection of worksheets, exercises, and methods to help you self-manage your addiction recovery and your life in general. Tools were developed based on cognitive thinking skills and include interactive tools and homework assignments. Some of these include activities assessments, change-plan worksheets, cost-benefit analysis, hierarchy of values worksheets, urge logs, and ABC problem-solving exercises.

How do you find local SMART Recovery meetings?

The quickest, easiest way to find local SMART Recovery meetings is to type your location into the group's [online locator tool](#). Most meetings are open to the public with no cost to attend, and, generally, you can just show up without registering in advance. If face-to-face meetings aren't available in your area, you can still attend online meetings.

How do you request verification for attending meetings?

If you need [written verification](#) for participating in addiction recovery meetings, face-to-face meeting facilitators have verification forms that can be used as documentation. Verification may be required as part of your court sentence, for the fulfillment of probation requirements, or to satisfy stipulations from an employer or other entities. If you're attending online meetings, the online facilitator provides a link to an online verification request form, which you must fill out to receive a verification letter via email.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this guide is for informational purposes and only intended to educate the public on how this therapy is used. It is not recommending a specific treatment or giving medical advice. Always consult with your doctor or other qualified medical, addiction, and mental health professionals before beginning any type of treatment.

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