

## **“In The Mix” With AOD**

### **“In The Mix” With AOD Episode Seven- Let’s Talk About Recovery**

[Thinking of starting the episode with a small sneak peak of the interview with Bonnie- like 30 seconds of a really impactful quote then transitioning into the episode]

Hey, I’m Bethann Long and this is another episode of “In The Mix” with AOD, a podcast provided by the Alcohol and Other Drugs Services here at Grand Valley’s Counseling Center. Wow this semester has flown by! Can you believe that we are just days away from winter break? The only thing between us and a much needed break is finals week, and I believe in you all- we can do this! With 2022 just weeks away from coming to a close, now is a time to reflect on the semester and the year as a whole. This can be a time when people are thinking about their habits and whether or not they want or need to make a change. Substance use recovery can be on the minds of many. In this episode, we will be discussing the stages of change that occur during the journey of recovery, a reminder that relapse is a normal part of this journey, when it may be time to reach out for recovery support, and that there are a variety of recovery support options, with and without religious roots. But first we will be sitting down with Bonnie Dykstra, the Assistant Director of Grand Valley State University’s Alcohol and other Drugs Services to discuss recovery and the options that the AOD office provides to all students.

Thank you for sitting down with me today Bonnie, how are you doing today?

- What is the difference between use, misuse, abuse, and addiction?
- What are the signs that someone is surpassing misuse and heading into abuse?
- What would you say to someone who was wanting to seek support but wasn’t there yet?
- What are the options for recovery?
- What does recovery look like if a student were to come to the AOD office?

While talking about recovery, it’s important to understand that you don’t have to hit rock bottom to get help. This is one of the most damaging ideologies surrounding addictive behaviors, and is completely false. It’s true that many people with addiction and addictive behaviors wait until they reach a time of desperation. However, the sooner you begin to seek out help, the sooner you can get back to a healthier and happier you. When waiting to hit rock bottom to reach out for help, individuals are at risk of losing relationships, financial security, and mental health risks that can develop more severely the longer recovery is pushed back. Some mental health risks include mood swings, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, violent behaviors, and cognitive impairment. Some physical health risks include damaging major organs, stress on the heart, and malnutrition. Some benefits from reaching out for help include maintaining mental health or preventing it from becoming worse, having less severe symptoms of withdrawal during detox, and helping to prevent the development of physical health conditions.

Now, let’s dive into the stages of change and understand what occurs in each of these stages. Precontemplation is the first stage in the stages of change model of addiction and behavior change. In this stage, you usually don’t consider your behavior to be a problem. You possibly haven’t experienced any negative consequences of your behavior or could be experiencing denial about the severity of any consequences you have experienced. When in this stage, you are not very interested in hearing about the negative consequences of your addiction or advice on quitting. You find your addictive behavior to be pleasant, however, negative consequences eventually begin to affect you.

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Next is the contemplation stage when you begin to think about changing, cutting down, or quitting these addictive behaviors. There’s an openness to learning about different strategies for controlling or quitting these behaviors, without technically committing to a specific recovery approach or promising to change. While contemplating, you usually benefit from non-judgmental information along with motivational approaches to encourage change. You can spend years in the contemplation stage and will either move forward to the preparation stage or fall back to the precontemplation stage.

The preparation stage is the next step in the stages of change, where you have moved forward in planning and preparing for carrying out the changes that you learned in the contemplation stage. This stage can be really important to success when it comes to substance addictions. Some things that you may do in the preparation stages include: Plan out the kind of change you are wanting to make, determine how to make the change, and obtain the necessary resources. Next would be getting rid of any triggers which are the reminders of your addiction that can cause cravings and make it hard to avoid addictive behaviors. Letting go of these triggers can be challenging, but the process can help solidify overcoming your addiction. Lastly, would be to put support in place which can include informing friends and family who want to see you overcome your addiction, reaching out to a treatment center or finding a support group, and even asking those who you have indulged in these addictive behaviors with to respect your process.

Following the preparation stage is the action stage when you begin to focus on attempting to overcome addiction, and where the real change in behavior starts happening. This can be a stressful time as there may be urges to go back to old habits, but with good preparation this can also be an exciting time with multiple new opportunities. The biggest task in this stage is developing effective ways of coping with your stress, so that you can move forward with ease. It takes a lot of time to get used to life without an addiction, and it may feel strange or empty to be living your addiction as a fall back.

Once the preparation stage has been established, the maintenance stage follows to ensure that you are continuing to achieve the progress that occurred in the action stage. This is where you will be upholding the intentions initially made in the preparation stage and the behaviors that were picked up on in the action stage. This stage can be the most challenging after a period of time and reaching your goal has lost its intensity. This is when you may start believing that a small lapse will make no difference for them. Maintenance can also become difficult to stick with when life stressors begin to intensify and the addictive behaviors used to cope are resurfacing. This is where the new ways of coping with stress learning in the action stage will need to come into play.

In most models of the stages of change, the relapse stage is included to represent that people may have some, or even many, small lapses or relapses before maintenance is fully achieved. Sometimes it takes several relapses for you to discover what recovery from addiction or addictive behaviors means for you. Something that is really important to remember is that relapsing is a normal part of recovery. Relapsing while in recovery does not mean that treatment was a failure, it just means that you need supportive services and a modified treatment plan. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, statistics show that 40-60% of people relapse after completing treatment. Relapse can also be a sign that it’s time to make a change to your treatment. Developing a plan that includes relapse prevention strategies can help reduce the risk of future relapses. Researchers have found that a successful relapse prevention plan will help people to identify the early signs of relapses as well as develop coping skills for dealing with stressors.

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Now when in search of recovery programs, it may look like the only options are religion based services; however, there are programs out there that aren't religion based. There are many types of recovery available and many choose to focus on religion or a “higher power”, but it is possible to find non-religious addiction treatment programs. One program out there is SMART Recovery which is a non-profit, abstinence-focused organization that provides free mutual support meetings to people with addiction and addictive behaviors. SMART Recovery uses scientifically based methods to encourage people to change their behaviors and learn coping skills. Here are a few behavioral treatment methods that are used by this recovery program: Cognitive behavioral therapy which is a goal-oriented approach that aims to modify negative thought patterns and behaviors to improve emotions and promote positive change. Dialectical behavior therapy that educates individuals on coping skills including emotional regulation, pain tolerance, and mindfulness. Motivational interviewing which increases an individual's motivation to change as well as encourage the continuation of treatment. This will help individuals to overcome their uncertainty about their behaviors that are preventing change.

Recovery can be a difficult decision to make and choosing when the best time for you to start this journey can be an even more difficult decision. It's important to remember that recovery is not something that you need to go through alone; family and friends along with other support programs such as AOD services here at Grand Valley are here to support you throughout this process of recovery. Wow guys, it's been such an amazing semester providing episodes on a variety of topics to you all, I hope you all have an amazing winter break and enjoy the holidays! This has been the seventh episode of “In The Mix” with AOD and I can't wait to bring more episodes to you all next semester!