

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTION TO GET THE RIGHT ANSWER

The First 30 Days: A Simple Thinking Tool for Early Recovery

Alcohol and drug dependence can trap people in a destructive loop: doing the same thing over and over again expecting a different result—or worse, doing it again while knowing exactly what the result will be. In early recovery, one of the most common ways we stay stuck is by asking the wrong question.

“Why me?”

“Why am I like this?”

“Why can other people drink—and I can’t?”

The problem is not that these questions are understandable. The problem is that **“why” questions rarely change anything**. They often invite blame, self-pity, and helplessness—exactly the mindset that keeps addiction alive.

Borrowing a tool from Bill O’Hanlon’s *Do One Thing Different* (<https://amzn.to/4bbpAx1>), this worksheet helps you shift from **problem questions** to **solution questions**—so your thinking leads to action.

Ask Different Questions:

The quality of your questions determines the quality of your results. If the questions you ask aren’t helping, change the questions.

Problem Questions (keep you stuck)

- Ask for explanations
- Invite blame
- Increase victim thinking
- Lead to frustration without action

Solution Questions (move you forward)

- Require action
- Create options
- Build responsibility
- Lead to next steps you can actually take



(CHANGE PROBLEM QUESTIONS TO SOLUTION QUESTIONS)

As a general rule, **“Why” questions tend to lead to self-pity—not self-actualization.**

- Why did this happen to me?
- Why did the courts send me to treatment?
- Why did my spouse leave me?
- Why am I an addict/alcoholic?

As a general rule, **“How” questions tend to be solution-oriented.**

- How can I turn this into a positive experience?
- How can I use treatment to my best advantage?
- How can I become someone I respect?
- How can I stop the addiction cycle—today?

Excerpt from the book, *The First 30 Days Off Alcohol & Drugs*. Inspired by the Old-timers of AA
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