IT WASN’T EASY GETTING HERE.

You’ve accepted that you may have a problem. You’re still reading, so maybe you know there’s no two ways about it: you have a problem. Maybe it was the stress of not making enough money to keep your family comfortable, despite working too many hours at a job with too few benefits; maybe you’ve suffered terrible pain and loss; maybe the state of the world has you looking for an escape. There may be any number of legitimate reasons why you started drinking or using, but now you know that you’re going to cause harm to yourself and to others if you don’t stop. You need to get sober.

It wasn’t easy getting here. It won’t be easy going forward. Your beautiful, complex, easily manipulated, meat-brain has been hijacked by chemical substances which cradle you in euphoric fog even as they destroy your body and your life. Your drug of choice is a tool with which to alter or confuse the chemicals in your brain, thereby altering your state of mind. You got into this mess using tools. You will need tools to get and stay out.

In some cases that may mean other drugs, prescribed by your doctor and consistently taken in the dosages prescribed; psychotherapy; or a combination of both. A chunk of your day devoted to a physical activity or sport, some natural means of dosing your brain with the same neurotransmitters you’re flooded with when you used. Other useful tools include phrases and strategies for getting out of situations that present a high risk of ending your sobriety; meditation; keeping a journal; a running list of reasons not to use; and using a habit tracking app—my favorite is Habitica, because it turns habit tracking into a game that can be played with friends, combining fun and accountability to encourage adopting good habits and quitting bad habits.

THERE ARE MANY TOOLS YOU CAN FIND AND USE IN YOUR BATTLE AGAINST ADDICTION, BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT TOOL YOU CAN EMPLOY IS SOCIAL SUPPORT.

Connections with friends and family strengthened through meaningful conversations and quality bonding experiences can fill the void your addiction has been occupying, and those connections can become reason enough to stay sober. A friend who is also fighting to stay sober, or a friend who has struggled with addiction in the past can help you navigate the rough waters of recovery while holding you accountable for your efforts to get and stay sober. A group of friends like this is even better. A different app, Sober Grid, can help you find these kinds of friends.

We live in a time when more Americans are covered by health insurance than ever before in our nation’s history; a time when information and resources are at our fingertips—whether a keystroke, a mouse click, or a tap away; a time when we know more about addiction and more effective methods of combating addiction than ever before in history. It wasn’t easy getting here. It won’t be easy going forward. But if you want it, you can find a way to overcome your addiction, and to stay sober.

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