



DIALECTICAL MATERIALIST RECOVERY

The Essential Meeting Readings of DMR

A compact packet for mutual-aid meetings

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Essential Reading I

DMR Preamble and Statement of Purpose

Dialectical Materialist Recovery is a peer-led mutual-aid self-help group for persons seeking recovery from addiction, compulsion, dysregulation, alienation, and the destructive patterns that prevent a life worth living.

Our purpose is to train practical recovery skills within a broader dialectical materialist understanding of human life.

We believe that people are not isolated moral failures, defective souls, or merely private psychological cases. We are living organisms shaped by social relations, material conditions, histories of reinforcement, trauma, labor, technology, class, family, culture, and the institutions that organize daily existence.

Because human suffering is materially produced, recovery must be materially practiced.

DMR draws from Dialectical Behavior Therapy because DBT offers concrete skills for changing behavior, regulating emotion, tolerating distress, practicing mindfulness, and acting effectively in relationships.

We use these skills not as clinical branding, but as practical tools. We train them together, repeat them together, and apply them to the real situations in which our lives are made difficult.

Our work is organized around four DBT skill areas: core mindfulness, emotion regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and distress tolerance.

These are not merely therapeutic categories. They are forms of human capacity. They help us observe reality, influence our states, survive crisis, repair relationships, communicate needs, set boundaries, and act with greater freedom.

DMR understands addiction and recovery as political. We live in a society that profits from compulsion, distraction, despair, alienation, and dependence. Platform capitalism, consumer culture, poverty, trauma, algorithmic reinforcement, unstable work, isolation,

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and commodified attention all shape the nervous system.

Recovery therefore cannot be reduced to private willpower or individual insight. Recovery requires skill, solidarity, analysis, discipline, and transformation of conditions wherever possible.

We practice dialectical abstinence.

We do not reduce recovery to sober dates, clean time, abstinence metrics, or moral purity. We recognize that abstinence may be necessary and life-saving. We also recognize that the deeper work of recovery is the reconstruction of our capacity to live.

We focus on present behavior, concrete skills, honest analysis, repair, and the production of a life worth living.

Our meetings exist to provide a space where people can study their patterns without shame, learn skills without humiliation, speak honestly without performance, and support one another without domination.

We are not professionals treating patients. We are peers practicing recovery together.

We do not replace therapy, medicine, emergency care, or clinical treatment. We offer mutual aid, practical training, and collective support.

We believe recovery is mature, deliberate, skilled regulation.

It is not simply the absence of drugs or alcohol. It is the development of capacities that allow us to move toward the lives we can imagine when we are thriving and at our best.

We are here to become more skillful.

We are here to build lives worth living.

We are here to recover together.



Essential Reading II

Who We Are

We are persons in recovery, persons seeking recovery, and persons committed to the practical transformation of our lives.

We are here because many of us have found existing recovery models incomplete. Some of us have been helped by 12-step traditions. Some of us have been helped by therapy, treatment centers, medication, churches, mutual-aid groups, and clinical programs. We do not deny the value of what has helped people survive.

But we also know that survival is not enough.

We are dissatisfied with any model of addiction that reduces a complex human process to a single cause, a single defect, a single diagnosis, or a single spiritual failure.

Addiction is not one thing.

It is biological, psychological, social, historical, economic, technological, relational, and political. It is shaped by trauma, reinforcement, habit, class position, isolation, desire, despair, opportunity, and the material organization of everyday life.

Because addiction is complex, recovery must be complex enough to meet it.

We reject explanations that place the entire burden of addiction inside the isolated individual. We reject moralism disguised as treatment. We reject shame disguised as accountability. We reject empty slogans where practical skills are required. We reject recovery theater and systems that measure transformation only by dates, labels, or performances of compliance.

We are people who want practical, evidence-based results.

We want skills that work under pressure. We want concepts that clarify reality. We want practices that can be trained, repeated, tested, revised, and shared. We want to become more capable of regulating our behavior, surviving difficult states, repairing relationships, pursuing goals, and building lives worth living.

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We also believe that technology should serve human development rather than capture human attention.

We want to use tools, media, systems, data, and communication technologies to improve our lives and the lives of those around us. We refuse to let platforms, algorithms, commodities, substances, and coercive institutions organize our nervous systems for us.

We are not here to become obedient patients, perfect abstinent subjects, or passive consumers of treatment.

We are here to become skillful participants in our own recovery and in the recovery of our communities.

We are here to study reality, train our capacities, support one another, and transform the conditions that keep us stuck.

We are Dialectical Materialist Recovery.



Essential Reading III

Why Are We Here?

We are here because addiction, compulsion, despair, and disconnection have shaped our lives in ways we can no longer ignore.

We are here because willpower alone has not been enough.

We are here because shame, punishment, moralism, and isolation have not produced freedom.

We are here because we need skills, solidarity, discipline, and a living practice of recovery.

Dialectical Materialist Recovery is a peer-led mutual-aid self-help group. We gather to train ourselves and one another in the practical skills required to regulate our lives, our emotions, our relationships, and our behavior.

We draw from Dialectical Behavior Therapy because it offers concrete tools for surviving crisis, tolerating distress, regulating emotion, practicing mindfulness, and acting effectively with others. We study and practice these skills not as abstract ideas, but as habits to be repeated, strengthened, and incorporated into daily life.

We train in four core areas: mindfulness, emotion regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and distress tolerance.

Mindfulness helps us observe reality without immediately fleeing from it.

Emotion regulation helps us understand and influence the forces moving through our bodies and minds.

Interpersonal effectiveness helps us ask, refuse, repair, cooperate, and struggle with dignity.

Distress tolerance helps us endure pain without making suffering worse.

At DMR, we practice dialectical abstinence. We do not fetishize sober dates, clean time, or purity. We honor abstinence when abstinence is necessary for life, stability, and

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growth. But we refuse to reduce recovery to a number, a badge, or a moral status.

We focus on present behavior: what we are doing, what our actions are producing, what skills are needed, and what must be changed.

We understand addiction and recovery as political. Addiction is not merely an individual defect. It is also produced and intensified by social conditions: poverty, alienation, trauma, exploitation, isolation, despair, and the engineered compulsions of platform capitalism.

Our nervous systems are constantly targeted by technologies, commodities, substances, images, algorithms, and reinforcement schedules designed to capture attention, desire, and behavior.

For this reason, recovery is not simply the refusal of drugs or alcohol. Recovery is the deliberate reconstruction of our capacity to live. It is the practice of mature regulation under real conditions.

Recovery means learning how to interrupt destructive sequences, survive unbearable states, build trustworthy relationships, and act in accordance with chosen values rather than immediate impulses.

We are not here to become pure.

We are here to become skillful.

We are not here to confess our defects endlessly.

We are here to study the conditions that shape us and to transform what can be transformed.

We are not here to worship suffering.

We are here to build lives worth living.

At our best, we can imagine more than survival. We can imagine discipline without cruelty, responsibility without shame, solidarity without domination, and freedom rooted in practice.

Recovery is the developmental process by which we move toward that life.

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We are here to practice that process together.



Essential Reading IV

Dialectical Abstinence

Dialectical abstinence means that recovery is not measured only by clean time, sober dates, abstinence metrics, or visible compliance. These things may matter. They may matter deeply. For many of us, abstinence from particular substances or behaviors is necessary for survival, sanity, freedom, and stability.

But abstinence alone is not the whole of recovery.

At DMR, abstinence is not treated as purity. Abstinence is treated as a living practice of regulation, honesty, skill, repair, and transformation. We are not interested in turning recovery into a moral scoreboard. We are interested in whether our lives are becoming more stable, more deliberate, more connected, more capable, and more free.

Dialectical abstinence begins from a simple truth: two things can be true at the same time.

It can be true that substance use has harmed us and others. It can also be true that substances once served a function. They may have helped us survive pain, loneliness, trauma, boredom, alienation, exhaustion, shame, or unbearable emotional states.

It can be true that relapse is serious. It can also be true that relapse does not erase all growth. A return to use is not a metaphysical collapse of the person. It is a behavioral event in a chain of causes and conditions. It must be studied, interrupted, repaired, and learned from.

It can be true that we are responsible for our behavior. It can also be true that our behavior is shaped by material conditions: sleep, housing, money, work, class, trauma, policing, family, social isolation, technology, treatment access, and the organization of everyday life.

Dialectical abstinence refuses both moralism and excuse-making. We do not shame ourselves into recovery, and we do not explain away the consequences of our actions. We look directly at reality. We ask: What happened? What conditions made it more likely? What did the behavior produce? What skills were missing? What supports were absent?

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What must be changed now?

In dialectical abstinence, the central question is not, “Am I clean or dirty?”

The central question is, “Am I becoming more skillful at producing a life worth living?”

This means we focus on present behavior. We practice mindfulness so we can notice what is happening. We practice emotion regulation so we can influence our states. We practice distress tolerance so we can survive pain without making it worse. We practice interpersonal effectiveness so we can build relationships based on dignity, clarity, and mutual respect.

Dialectical abstinence is not passive moderation, vague harm reduction, or permissive self-deception. It is rigorous, concrete, and demanding. It asks us to become honest about what actually helps us live and what actually destroys us.

For some of us, dialectical abstinence will mean total abstinence from drugs and alcohol. For some of us, it will mean abstinence from particular substances, behaviors, environments, technologies, or relationships. For all of us, it means training ourselves to understand our patterns and intervene before they become destructive.

We do not worship clean time. We do not dismiss clean time. We put clean time in its proper place: as one possible measure of stability, not as the total meaning of recovery.

Recovery is not purity.

Recovery is skilled regulation under real conditions.

Recovery is the ongoing practice of becoming capable.



Essential Reading V

Meeting Agreements

Dialectical Materialist Recovery is a peer-led mutual-aid self-help group. We are not professionals treating patients. We are peers practicing recovery together.

This meeting does not replace therapy, medication, detox, emergency care, medical treatment, or professional support. We honor those resources when they are needed. We also honor the practical power of people gathering together to study reality, train skills, and support one another without shame.

To make this space useful, serious, and safe enough for honest work, we observe the following agreements.

We practice confidentiality. What is shared here should remain here. We also recognize that confidentiality has limits when someone is at immediate risk of serious harm to themselves or others.

We respect the right to pass. No one is required to speak, explain, confess, disclose, or perform recovery for the group. Silence can be a skillful form of participation.

We speak from our own experience. We do not dominate, diagnose, interrogate, humiliate, or attempt to control one another. We avoid giving unsolicited advice. When we respond, we respond with respect, curiosity, and solidarity.

We do not glorify substance use, tell war stories for entertainment, or turn suffering into spectacle. We can speak honestly about relapse, craving, compulsion, harm, and despair without making them glamorous, competitive, or theatrical.

We focus on concrete behavior. We ask: What happened? What conditions made it more likely? What did the behavior produce? What skills were missing? What supports were needed? What can be practiced now?

We do not treat recovery as a performance of purity. We do not measure human worth by clean time, relapse history, diagnosis, productivity, social status, or verbal fluency. We are here to become more skillful, not more impressive.

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We practice solidarity without coercion. We can support one another, challenge one another, and tell the truth without domination. We can hold responsibility without cruelty. We can name harm without reducing people to their worst behavior.

We keep returning to practice. Theory matters because reality matters. But this meeting is not a stage for intellectual performance. Our concepts must help us regulate, repair, survive, connect, and build lives worth living.

We are organisms in conditions. We are responsible for our behavior, and our behavior is shaped by material reality. In this room, we study both. We do not shame ourselves into recovery, and we do not explain away the consequences of our actions.

We are here to train attention, regulate emotion, tolerate distress, act effectively with others, and transform what can be transformed.

We are here to practice recovery together.