



HOW TO PREPARE FOR ADDICTION TREATMENT



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Making the decision to enter a residential treatment program can be a little scary. You're leaving everything familiar behind and embarking on an entirely new life of recovery. While this is an exciting prospect for many people, it can also put you under a little more stress and anxiety than usual in the days or weeks before your check-in date.

Getting a jump on preparations for beginning treatment ensures you enter your program with as little stress and anxiety hanging over you as possible. It helps you prepare to put your whole self into your treatment plan and leave the stress, triggers and minutia of daily life behind you for 30 to 90 days.

Chances are, you've chosen a high-quality treatment program that takes a holistic approach to recovery. This type of approach addresses your multiple and unique issues of body, mind and spirit. To ensure your body, mind and spirit are ready to engage in treatment, it's a good idea to make physical, mental, and spiritual preparations ahead of time.

Here, we offer tips and checklists for preparing for treatment, so that when it's time, you'll be ready to transform your life for the long-term.





PREPARE YOUR BODY



Preparing your body for treatment should be your immediate focus once you make the choice to seek help for your addiction.

Physical Preparations

If you've developed a dependence on alcohol, the first step of rehab will be detox. In detox, you'll abstain from substance use and let all traces of drugs and alcohol leave your body. This will break the physical dependence on drugs or alcohol.

Detox is considered by many to be the hardest part of treatment, although it's the part where you do the least work. Withdrawal symptoms can range from mild to severe and will probably include intense cravings.

Getting you through the detox process with as little discomfort as possible is the goal of medical detox. Medications will be provided to help reduce the severity of withdrawal symptoms, but you can help the detox process along and reduce your level of discomfort by taking good care of your body in the weeks or days leading up to treatment.



One of the worst things you can do before heading into treatment is go on a bender in anticipation of quitting. Although it may be tempting, over-using before treatment can have devastating consequences. These may include accidental overdose and legal trouble stemming from your drug or alcohol abuse. Over-using can also make detox more drawn-out and uncomfortable.

By choosing instead to take care of yourself in preparation for treatment, you're setting the stage for success.

Get plenty of quality sleep. Getting enough sleep each night leading up to treatment will help keep your mood stable and promote mental clarity during detox and treatment. It will also help keep stress and anxiety at bay. Quality sleep will be crucial during treatment and early recovery, so developing good sleep habits now will give you a head start.

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Exercise. Exercise strengthens your body and improves the way its systems perform. A daily half-hour walk gives you time to reflect, and it counts toward the 150 minutes of weekly exercise recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Eat a healthy diet. Like exercise, a healthy diet improves the functioning of your body's systems, which can help make detox easier. Eating healthy food helps to restore your health and promote feelings of well-being. It will also help you acclimate to the healthy fare offered in treatment.



Get Your Affairs in Order

There's a lot to take care of before you enter treatment. All of the little details and loose ends can add more stress to your life. Ironing them out right away instead of putting them off will put your mind at ease so that you can enter treatment relaxed and ready to dig in.

Make your travel plans. Many people choose a rehab program that's far from home, and there are a number of benefits of doing so. These include privacy and anonymity, a change of scenery, distance from everyday stressors and triggers and, in some cases, a lower cost of treatment.

If you'll be attending rehab far from home, sort out your travel plans early. Make travel reservations right away so you can get a decent price on tickets. If someone is taking you, make sure the transportation is reliable and your travel companion has the necessary time off to drive you.





Talk to your friends and family. Explain to your loved ones why you're entering treatment. Let them know you want to recover from your addiction and restore your life. Some people write a letter to their beloved friends and family members explaining their decision to enter treatment, stating their goals for the future and asking for support.

It may be hard to leave your family and friends for several weeks or months, and in some cases, it may be difficult to tell them why you'll be gone. But according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the support of your friends and family members will be very important for ongoing recovery once you've finished rehab.¹

Consider asking your family members to engage in counseling and join a support group while you're gone. Over the course of your addiction, your family members have likely developed unhealthy habits and mechanisms for coping with the consequences of the addiction. They may engage in enabling or codependent behaviors, and these can spell trouble for your early recovery once you return home. Counseling and support for family members will help them support you in recovery in the most effective ways possible.

REQUESTING A MEDICAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR ADDICTION TREATMENT IS YOUR RIGHT UNDER THE LAW.

Inform Your Employer. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, only 11 percent of people who need treatment for an addiction seek it.² One of the most common reasons for avoiding treatment is employment. Nearly 76 percent of people who have an addiction are employed, and most of them don't feel they can simply leave their job for up to 90 days. Contrary to the image of the "addict" in popular culture, the reality is that most people with an addiction have jobs to maintain and bills to pay.

Requesting a medical leave of absence for addiction treatment is your right under the law. It's now widely recognized that addiction is a medical condition that requires medical intervention. The Family and Medical Leave Act, or FMLA, and the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, are both reflections of the changing attitudes toward addiction.

Under the FMLA, employees who qualify are allowed to take 12 weeks of medical leave for medical conditions, including addiction.³ This leave may or may not be paid, but you're guaranteed to have your job when you return. Your boss or human resources department can give you the details regarding the company policies in place for medical leave.

Under the ADA, you're protected from being fired for reasons related to your addiction, including leaving your job for an extended period to seek treatment.⁴



Familiarize yourself with these laws and know your rights before you talk to your employer. You're not required to disclose that you're seeking treatment for an addiction, but it's usually best if you're honest and up-front with your employer. Many companies offer additional recovery resources and can be an important support system in early recovery.

Talk to your co-workers. You're under no obligation to tell your co-workers why you're leaving, but if you choose to do so, explain why you're seeking treatment and ask for their support.

Take Care of Your Obligations. Any obligations you have will need to be put on hold while you're in treatment. Be sure to take care of these ahead of time so they don't add anxiety while you're in treatment:

- ◆ Cancel standing commitments, such as volunteering, dates with friends and other activities you've agreed to.
- ◆ Wrap up legal obligations. If you have a court date or other legal obligations, talk to the courts or your attorney so that they'll know you'll be away for a time. Many treatment programs will help you sort out your legal obligations before you enter treatment.
- ◆ Sort out things at work, including finishing or handing off projects in the works, letting clients know you'll be on an extended leave and bringing co-workers up to speed on any other important projects.
- ◆ Arrange for your bills to be paid automatically through your bank or assign someone you trust to handle your financial matters while you're gone.
- ◆ Set up an auto response for email communications to let people who email you know that you'll be gone for an extended period of time.
- ◆ Make sure your spouse or significant other has all the essential information needed to run the household while you're gone, including account details and passwords for online bill paying and banking.





If you live alone, consider these details:

- ◆ Who will keep an eye on your home while you're gone? Consider finding a house sitter, or sublet your house or apartment if you're going into long-term treatment.
- ◆ Put your garbage, recycling and mail service on hold.
- ◆ Hire or ask someone to care for your lawn or garden while you're away.
- ◆ Make arrangements for your pets.
- ◆ Let your neighbors know you'll be gone, and ask them to keep an eye on things.



Get Packed. Packing for rehab may take some time, so get started early by making a list of what you'll need to take and gathering any important paperwork you'll need. Take only the essentials, and refer to the treatment center's list of items that are required as well as those that aren't allowed. Some of the items you'll want to gather ahead of time include:

- ◆ Enough prescription medication to last the length of your stay, along with copies of prescriptions and a detailed list of current medications you're on
- ◆ Immunization records
- ◆ Photo ID
- ◆ Insurance card

Once all the practical details are taken care of, they won't be crowding your mind and causing stress and anxiety. Now you can take a deep breath and turn your focus to preparing your mind and spirit for treatment.



READY YOUR MIND



Treatment is an incredible time of self-discovery. You'll be putting in a great deal of mental effort in a variety of group and individual therapies as you work to re-evaluate your beliefs, identify harmful thought and behavior patterns and address the complex issues that underlie your addiction. Entering treatment open-minded and ready to engage is critical for your success. Here are some things you can do to mentally prepare for rehab.

Start reflecting. Self-reflection is a major part of successful treatment and ongoing recovery. Self-reflection is the act of evaluating your attitudes, ideas, thoughts, beliefs, motivations and behaviors.



The American Society of Addiction Medicine points out that addiction brings with it a reduction in your ability to recognize significant problems in your life.⁵ These include problems with your behaviors and relationships. If you're not naturally self-reflective, start thinking now about your reasons for abusing drugs or alcohol. Think about your triggers—those people, places, things and circumstances that make you want to drink or use drugs.

Consider any underlying issues that you feel contributed to your addiction. The most common of these are chronic stress, family dysfunction and a history of trauma. Think about your ideas about who you are and your attitudes toward sobriety. Consider your relationships, and look for your own faulty thought and behavior patterns in the context of these relationships. Try to be aware of your emotional states and what triggered them.

Flexing your self-reflective muscles now will help you enter treatment ready to get to work delving into your unique issues. Leading up to rehab, spend a little time each day writing in a journal about why you're entering treatment, the types of problems your addiction has caused in your life, and your hopes and goals for the future.

Prepare to be honest. Honesty with yourself and others is essential during treatment and recovery, and it's the cornerstone of successful self-reflection. Practice being honest with yourself and your friends and family concerning your addiction. This doesn't mean you have to offer sordid details about your substance abuse, but do try to be honest about the extent of your addiction and the problems it's caused for you and your loved ones.

Prepare to fully engage in treatment. The Office of National Drug Control Policy stresses that your level of engagement in treatment has an important impact on the outcome.⁶ Engaging in treatment means leaving preconceived notions and judgments behind and keeping an open mind about what you're hearing and learning about addiction and about yourself during treatment. It means putting in the work it takes to sort through your complex issues and accepting responsibility for your thoughts, attitudes and behaviors.

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A photograph of three people (a man and two women) sitting in a row, meditating with their eyes closed and heads tilted back. They are outdoors at sunset, with a bright orange sun low on the horizon behind them, creating a strong backlight and lens flare. The man is in the foreground on the left, wearing a purple t-shirt. The two women are behind him, also in profile. The overall mood is peaceful and spiritual.

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Spirituality is not to be confused with religion. You can be agnostic or atheist and still enjoy a high level of spirituality.

Spirituality is hard to define, but it centers around self-awareness and well-being. It has to do with letting go of the past and feeling hopeful for the future, but living in the present moment. It involves creative pursuits that lead to a deeper level of self-awareness and an awareness of something greater than yourself, whether that's the universe, a particular deity or even the concept of love. It involves feeling a connection with your deeper self and the people around you. It has to do with compassion for yourself and for others.

During treatment, you'll travel down some spiritual paths, particularly if your treatment program incorporates 12-step recovery into their treatment approach or offers a variety of complementary therapies, as many do.





If it's been a while since you've flexed your spiritual muscles, you can begin to expand your awareness before starting treatment.

Keep a journal. Write about your past, your present situation, or what your hopes are for the future. What are you excited about, and what are you anxious about? What are your inherent strengths and values? How are you feeling right this minute?

Meditate. Meditation is simply the act of sitting with a quiet mind and focusing on the present moment. It has numerous benefits, including reducing stress, anxiety and depression. It also helps you stay more aware of your attitudes, thoughts and emotions throughout the day.

Draw on a higher power if you have one. For many, a belief in a higher power can bring feelings of peace and well-being. Spend time in prayer, and draw strength from your spiritual community.

A man with a beard and short brown hair is smiling at the camera. He is wearing a tan jacket over a red and blue plaid shirt and dark pants. He is standing on a city street with cars and buildings in the background. The sun is low in the sky, creating a warm, golden light. A semi-transparent dark blue banner is overlaid on the bottom right of the image.

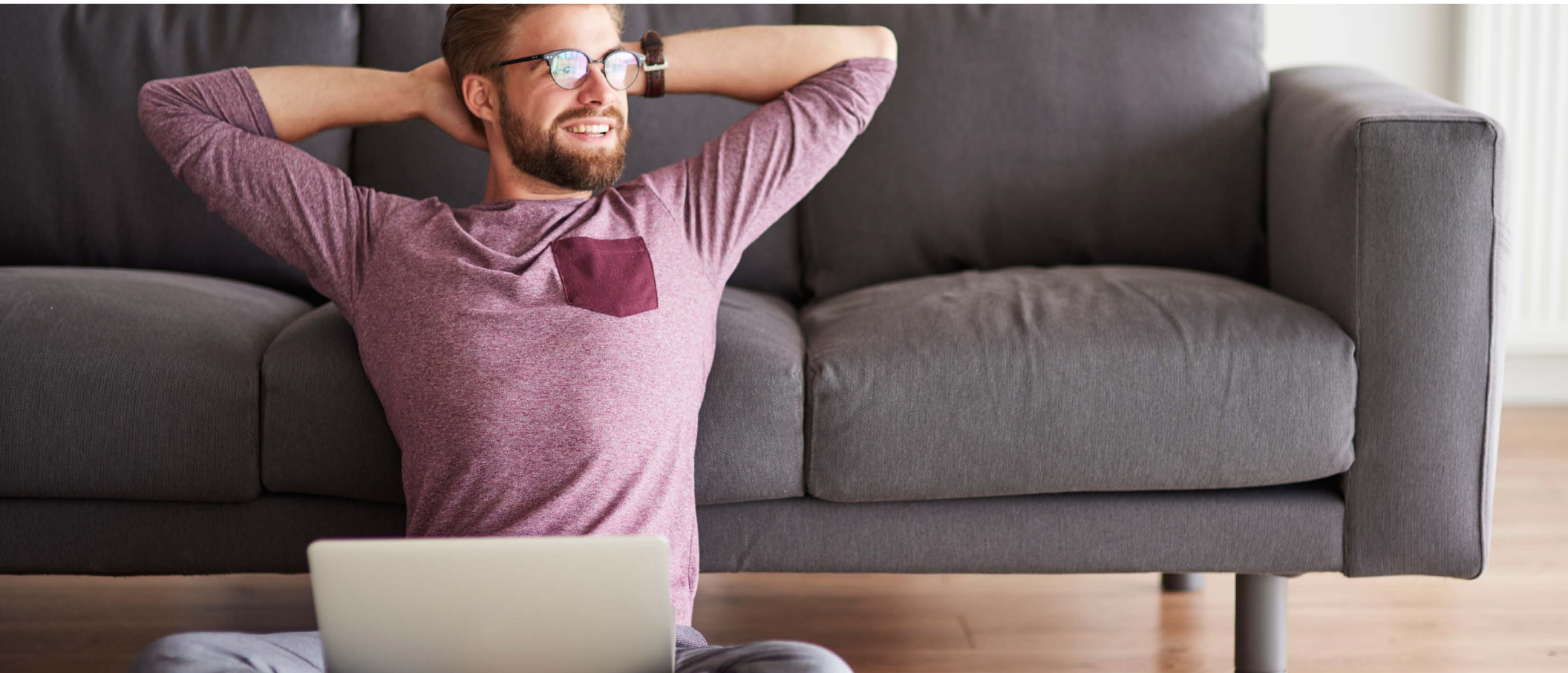
TIPS FOR SUCCEEDING IN TREATMENT

Once you're in treatment, a structured environment and full schedule will keep you busy. Having prepared for rehab will help you acclimate faster and prevent undue worry and stress about how things are going back home.

Here are some things you can do to improve your treatment experience and get the most out of rehab.

- ◆ **Be completely honest.** Honesty with yourself, your groups and your therapists will help you progress through treatment more quickly, and it will improve the effectiveness of therapy.
- ◆ **Work hard.** Put in the mental effort required to effectively address the issues that led to your addiction. As is often said, "Treatment doesn't fix you. You fix you."
- ◆ **Keep your end goal in mind.** When you feel overwhelmed about the enormity of recovery, remember what brought you to treatment and what you hope to get out of it.
- ◆ **Participate fully.** Be present and attentive during therapy and other programming. Contribute to the conversation, and really listen to what others are saying.
- ◆ **Maintain a positive attitude.** Inspire others, and let them inspire you.
- ◆ **Follow the rules.** Follow through on treatment goals, be on time for sessions and be respectful to your peers and the treatment staff.
- ◆ **Be patient.** Just as it takes time to develop an addiction, it takes time to develop the healthy thought and behavior patterns that promote successful recovery.
- ◆ **Take notes.** Keep a pen and paper handy so that you can jot down notes about things that resonate with you.
- ◆ **Stay the course.** No matter how tempted you might be, don't leave treatment early. Staying in treatment for an adequate amount of time is absolutely essential to successful recovery.

Preparing for treatment and doing everything you can to get the most out of rehab brings you ever closer to successful long-term sobriety. Treatment works to restore many lives, and it can restore yours. By fully preparing for and engaging in your treatment program, you're setting yourself up for successful long-term recovery.



SOURCES

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Located in beautiful rural Pennsylvania, Silvermist offers individualized treatment for substance use and mental health disorders. Silvermist sets the standard for addiction treatment on the East Coast by providing men and women a beautiful and discreet environment filled with all the amenities that support early recovery. Silvermist is grounded in the highest clinical standards and is committed to clinical integrity, community and education.

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