

Discovery versus Staying Stuck

Discovery is one of the most powerful tools in recovery.

"Discovery" means finding out . . . learning from experience . . . adapting . . . curiosity . . . openness . . . moving forward . . . growth.

Discovery is what children do naturally—they try to explore, find out, and have fun in trying new things. Other people who discover are explorers, artists, scientists, detectives, and hopefully *you!*

Staying stuck is the opposite of discovery.

"Staying stuck" means assuming . . . avoiding . . . rigid thinking . . . hiding . . . living in the past . . . being closed to the world.

One of the difficulties of PTSD and substance abuse is staying stuck. For example, if you've had PTSD for years without getting better, you may not feel like trying any more. Or, if you've been using heroin to feel relaxed, you may not search for other ways to relax.

A STORY

Situation: Amy has been lying to her therapist, Dr. Burke, about her cocaine use because she feels ashamed. She believes he'll stop working with her if he finds out.

Compare two different endings to the story:

Amy tries discovery. She tells Dr. Burke the truth because she thinks, "It'll be better to find out than to keep living with this shame." Dr. Burke asks her to start getting weekly urine tests, because the treatment cannot work if Amy hides her substance use. Amy resents this, but also sees that Dr. Burke is trying to help and will keep working with her.

Amy stays stuck. She keeps hiding the truth from Dr. Burke. Eventually she feels so bad that she stops attending treatment altogether because she can't take the self-hatred. She uses more and more cocaine.

THE PROCESS OF DISCOVERY

1. **Notice your belief.** For example:

"I believe that if I tell my friend I'm angry with him, he'll leave."

"I believe calling a hotline will make me feel more depressed."

"I believe I'll never get a job."

"I believe AA will be boring."

2. **Find an image (optional).** If you want, think of an image that helps you discover:

An explorer . . . embarking on a search

A detective . . . trying to find out

A child . . . interested and curious

An artist . . . playing with possibilities

A scientist . . . searching for the truth

Or write your own image here: _____

3. **Try discovery.** Create a plan to actually find out if your belief is true. Some ways are listed in Handout 2.