

# Building a Support System

by Steve Cutler | SUPPORT COMMUNITY |

## DELRAY BEACH RECOVERY COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

*No Need to Go It Alone.*

*Individuals in your support group can offer insight and suggest solutions for working through difficult days, because they have been through similar struggles and have experienced success in their own recovery. They provide healthy peer pressure to help you stay on course. They will celebrate your successes with you and cheer you on as your confidence and self-esteem grows.*

Once sober, former addicts often come to see that in the years they'd been drinking or using drugs they alienated friends who were not substance abusers — that their life was marked by dysfunctional, unstable relationships which enabled their addiction.

A primary step in recovery is to let go of relationships and situations that invite relapse and to begin to build a network that supports your success. It's a difficult step to take separating from people you've become attached to, however detrimental they were to your health. But once you commit to that process, the rewards are profound.

By surrounding yourself with friends and family who support your sober lifestyle you reduce the risk of slipping back into destructive patterns. Having a support group gives you the opportunity to talk through the struggles you face and helps you cope with anxiety and feelings of isolation and depression, which are powerful relapse triggers.

## Where to Start

**Get a sponsor.** Partnering with someone who has been successful in maintaining their own sobriety and is committed to your success is a key part of a recovery program.

Whatever struggle you face staying clean, chances are your sponsor has been there and can suggest solutions and lend support. Having someone you trust to talk to — someone honest and caring enough to tell you things you may not want to hear — helps you stay focused and committed to the program.

**See a therapist or counselor.** Recovery is a journey in self-awareness and personal growth. There's never a better time to work with a professional therapist, especially one who specializes in treating addiction.

**Go to Meetings and Support Groups.** Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous are the most famous — rightfully, because of their proven success — but there are support groups for every sort of addiction, most of them volunteer-run and free.

The offering in South Florida is particularly rich. You're bound to find groups with people you're comfortable with and respect.

To search for groups in your area, check out:

[AddictionRecoveryGuide.org](http://AddictionRecoveryGuide.org)  
[SmartRecoverySouthFlorida.com](http://SmartRecoverySouthFlorida.com)

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Now is the time to build a social network of people who will support you in your recovery. This includes people you meet in 12-step meetings and related events who are on a similar path, but also people you meet in daily life — at the gym, work or school — and whose lifestyle does not include substance abuse.

It might be hard at first to extend yourself to people you find interesting and you might like to spend time with — to ask for that phone number or make a date for coffee. But with a little effort you'll likely find your network of friends and support grows quickly.

**Get Involved in the Community.** Get out there. Take continuing ed classes, join special interest, political or athletic clubs. Run for Recover West Palm Beach, a running club, is one. Or you might volunteer to help others in some way, which is an effective antidote to depression.

Taking an active role in the community fosters a sense of empowerment, self-worth and accomplishment and puts you in contact with positive, productive people. And it helps you keep busy and adds structure your life.

**Involvement in a healthy support group increases your opportunities and appetite for having fun and being fully alive without drugs or alcohol.**



### About Steve Cutler

A freelance writer based in New York City and South Florida, Steve Cutler writes extensively on substance abuse, recovery and family systems.

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