

# Our Stories Have Power



FACES & VOICES OF RECOVERY

## Recovery Messaging Questions & Answers

### Tips to Remember When You're Answering Questions

- Personalize your message
- Stick to your message
- Repeat your message when possible – repetition is effective
- You are speaking for yourself
- You represent the recovery community
- You are the expert on recovery

These Q &As are for people in recovery, family members, friends and allies. They are suggestions and aren't the only points that you can make. You will notice that some parts of the answers are in bold. Experts have told us that phrases such as these are helpful in garnering media attention. Please remember that **this is an internal document for the use of recovery advocates, so please don't share it with the media.**

### **Q: Tell me about your experience with your addiction?**

**A:** My experience with addiction was a difficult time for me and my family. More important, I am in long-term recovery today. Recovery is not about the past; it is about the present and the future. Twenty million Americans, like me, have made better lives for themselves and their families through long-term recovery. I am speaking out to show all Americans that recovery IS a reality. I want others to be able to achieve what I have.

### **Q: What is your personal experience with addiction?**

**A:** Person in Recovery: My life was difficult until I got the help I needed. Addiction crept into every aspect of my life, just as recovery has now improved every aspect of my life. I am now in long-term recovery, which means I have not used alcohol or drugs for x years. Through my recovery, I have gained stability in my life. I have been able to focus on my family and our lives together, my job and my community. I am speaking out about the promise of long-term recovery because it worked for me, and I hope to help others to achieve it as well.

## Questions & Answers/pg 2

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Family Member: Our family's life was difficult until my *(son/daughter/husband/wife)* got the help *(he or she)* needed. *(He or she)* is now in long-term recovery and hasn't used alcohol or drugs for x years. This allowed our family to regain stability and hope for the future. I am speaking out about the promise of long-term recovery because it worked for me and my family, including my *(son/daughter/husband/wife)*, and I hope to help others to achieve it as well. **Recovery has allowed us to put the past in the past** and to live a life that is better than what we could have imagined possible.

**Q: What do you mean when you talk about your recovery as a family member?**

**A:** I've learned to make healthy choices for myself and my family. Our family has not had to deal with the negative effects of addiction in our home for the past x years. Our recovery has allowed us to live a balanced life that is better than what we could have imagined possible.

Note: If your family member hasn't found recovery yet, you can talk about your hope for the future. If you've lost a family member or loved one to addiction, you can talk about your loss if you want to share that information, and about why you think that it's important for other people to get the help that they need to recover.

**Q: What is long-term recovery? Is it different from "general" recovery?**

**A:** For me, long-term recovery means that I haven't used drugs or alcohol in x years. It has brought stability to my life, and given me and my family new purpose and hope for the future. I am now speaking out as part of Faces & Voices of Recovery because long-term recovery works and we need to expand treatment and recovery services and remove barriers to long-term recovery so others can achieve what I have.

**Q: What do you say to critics who think that addiction to alcohol and drugs is a personal failing and that recovery simply requires more personal responsibility?**

**A:** There are many reasons that people struggle with addiction. I am not here today to say how or why people face addiction. Instead, I am here to tell you what I know. People can and do recover from addiction, like I have, if they get the help they need.

**Q: Should addiction to alcohol and other drugs be treated like other medical conditions?**

**A:** There are many pathways to long-term recovery and we need to make sure that effective treatment and recovery support services are available so that people can get the help they need, when they need it. Whether or not you think addiction is a disease or an illness, it is a public health crisis. Alcohol and other drug problems cost federal, state and local governments over \$450 billion a year.

**Q: How effective has the War on Drugs been?**

**A:** Jails and prisons are overcrowded with a majority of inmates having committed crimes (nearly 80 percent of all crime in our country is drug-or alcohol-related) that were alcohol or drug-related. Community-based drug treatment provides bigger crime reduction returns than prison – for every dollar spent on drug treatment in the community, the state saves \$18 in benefits. According to Gil Kerilowski, the director of the federal Office of National Drug Control Policy, "Treatment and prevention can be half the cost of incarceration. You can't arrest your way out of the problem."

## Questions & Answers/pg 3

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**Q: What is Faces & Voices of Recovery? What do you do?**

**A:** Faces & Voices of Recovery is a national organization committed to organizing and mobilizing the millions of Americans in long-term recovery from alcohol and other drug addiction, our families, friends, and allies, to speak with one voice. We are dedicated to changing public perceptions of recovery, promoting effective public policy in Washington and in all 50 states, and keeping a focus on the fact that recovery works and is making life better for over 20 million Americans. It is our collective strength that will ensure our success, and it is our mission to bring the power and proof of recovery to everyone in America.

**Q: What is the Recovery Bill of Rights?**

**A:** Faces & Voices of Recovery released The Recovery Bill of Rights in 2008. It's a statement of the principle that all Americans have a right to recover from addiction to alcohol and other drugs. We are calling for policies that will end discrimination, broaden social understanding and achieve a just response to addiction as a public health crisis.

**Q: What success has Faces & Voices had?**

**A:** Faces & Voices started Rally for Recovery! in 2006, uniting recovery community organizations across the country as part of National Recovery Month – over 70,000 people participated in 90 events in 2009. Faces & Voices has advocated successfully for:

- Funding for recovery community organizations
- Enacting The Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act in 2008 and for strong regulations when the law goes into effect
- Ending restrictions that kept people with drug convictions who want to go to school from receiving federal student financial aid

In each of these successes, people in long-term recovery and their families told their recovery – not their addiction – stories. These victories show that the recovery community can have an impact and that, speaking together with one voice, we can make a difference. People in recovery should be allowed the same rights as other Americans. Our past should not determine our future success.

**Q: Doesn't speaking out violate the 12-step tradition of anonymity?**

**A:** Not at all. Everyone's recovery journey is different, and we recognize that speaking out is something that each individual must decide to do based on his or her level of comfort. Personally, speaking out about long-term recovery is important to me because it has helped me change my life for the better, and I want to make it possible for others to do the same. There also are many ways that people can support recovery behind the scenes. As we gain confidence in our recovery, we can be more visible and vocal to break down stigma, reverse discriminatory policies and protect the policies that help people achieve long-term recovery.

**Q: Why are you involved in advocating for recovery?**

**A:** By our silence, we let others define us. Today, I am here to break the silence to show that recovery is a reality. I am here to advocate on behalf of others who are trying to stabilize their lives and achieve long-term recovery. I want to do my part to educate and mobilize others around the power and promise of long-term recovery because it is working for over 20 million Americans. Faces & Voices of Recovery has given me the platform to speak out, and I encourage others to do the same.

**Q: Why is it important for members of the recovery community to speak out with one voice?**

**A:** It is the only way those of us in long-term recovery, our families, friends and allies will be able to effectively spread the word that recovery is working for over 20 million Americans. When we speak out with one voice, it shows policy makers, our friends, neighbors and employers that we're no different than anyone else. I am committed to speaking out so that others can get the help they need to recover.

**Q: Is it important for people in recovery to be advocates?**

**A:** It is important to first understand that recovery is very personal, and everyone's experience is different. This principle helps guide people as they decide how or if to advocate for those things that matter to them. Faces & Voices of Recovery believes in the power of advocacy to help change public opinion, public policy, and break down barriers formed by the misconceptions that tend to surround recovery. We believe that advocacy can help recruit people to get involved in whatever way they are comfortable to support recovery. People in long-term recovery and their families are the experts when it comes to recovery and their voices need to be heard.

**Q: What should Congress and the states do to support those in long-term recovery?**

**A:** Policymakers at the local, state and national levels should focus on reversing discriminatory laws that keep people from getting jobs, housing, education and treatment. We need to expand treatment and recovery services and support other programs that help people achieve long-term recovery. Our elected officials need to understand that over 20 million Americans have made better lives for themselves and their families through long-term recovery. Faces & Voices of Recovery and [name of your organization] will be working to ensure that Congress and state legislatures hear our voices and know where we stand.

**Q: What's the difference between AA, NA and other 12-step programs and what you're doing?**

**A:** 12-step programs like AA, NA or AI-Anon are one way that people work to sustain their personal recovery. Faces & Voices of Recovery and grassroots recovery community organizations around the country are doing something different. We are bringing people together to educate the public about the reality of recovery, change public policies to support recovery and in some cases, offer peer recovery support services.

**Q: Tell me about Rally for Recovery!**

**A:** Each September, in communities across the country, people in recovery, their family members and friends join together and Rally for Recovery! as part of National Recovery Month. Here in [City], more than [number] participate. At Rally for Recovery! events, recovery community organizations register voters and speak out about advocacy campaigns that they are working on to support recovery. To find out more about Rally for Recovery! and how to organize one in your community, go to the Faces & Voices of Recovery Web site at [www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org).

**Q: Is your organization only for people in recovery?**

**A:** Faces & Voices of Recovery exists to support, organize, and mobilize everyone in the recovery community, from those in recovery to friends, families, and other allies – anyone whose life has been touched by addiction and recovery. Everyone is welcome to join and help us spread the word that recovery is a reality and that it is making life better for over 20 million Americans and their families. It is our collective strength that will ensure our success, and it is our mission to bring the power and proof of recovery to everyone in America.

**Q: Does everyone who is involved in Faces & Voices of Recovery have to speak out?  
Are there other ways to get involved?**

**A:** We encourage everyone to get involved – in our national organization and in one of the many local and statewide recovery community organizations across the country – in whatever way they feel most comfortable. They can attend recovery community organization meetings in their hometowns, provide financial support for our initiatives, share their story, or simply tell us they support our mission. We're an open and inclusive organization and respect that people can get involved in different ways. Just as there are many pathways to recovery, there are many pathways to supporting recovery.

**Q: How can people get involved?**

**A:** Join Faces & Voices of Recovery and [name of local recovery community organization]. Faces & Voices of Recovery exists to support, organize, and mobilize everyone in the recovery community, from those newly in recovery to friends, families, and other allies – anyone whose life has been touched by addiction and recovery. You can connect with others, get involved, and spread the word that recovery is a reality. Visit Faces & Voices Web site at [www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org) to sign up, or call us at 202.737.0690 [and information about local recovery community organization].

**Other Questions**

Here are some other questions that you may be asked that you might want to think about:

Q: Where can people get help in your community?

Q: Were you arrested or did you commit crimes to support your drug habit?

Q: How can people find out about your organization?

Q: Did you neglect your children and family while you were using?

Q: Were you discriminated against?