

In the Rooms vs Around the Rooms

Recovery Reconstruction · Part 2 of 8

Attending versus participating, and why the difference decides what recovery you get.

In this workbook

- Core Reading — Essential text
- Learning Slides — Detailed concepts
- Worksheet — 33 questions

CORE READING

In the Rooms vs Around the Rooms

In the landscape of recovery, there exists a profound distinction between two states of being: "in the rooms" and "around the rooms." This dichotomy represents not just physical presence, but a fundamental difference in approach, engagement, and ultimately, the transformative power of the recovery journey.

Imagine two concentric circles. The outer circle represents "being around the rooms," a state of peripheral existence within the recovery community. Here, individuals hover at the edges, their feet barely touching the transformative waters of recovery. They are present, yet absent; physically there, yet emotionally and spiritually distant. These are the shadows at the fringes of meetings, slipping in as the clock strikes the hour and vanishing with the final word. Their presence is fleeting, like ghosts passing through a world they cannot fully inhabit.

In this outer circle, the air is thick with missed opportunities. Conversations remain unspoken, connections unmade. The wealth of wisdom and support that flows through the room passes by unnoticed, like a river flowing past one who refuses to drink. The seeds of recovery, abundant in the environment, fall on barren soil, unable to take root in minds closed to new possibilities.

Contrast this with the inner circle, the realm of "being in the rooms." Here, the air vibrates with energy, alive with the electricity of active participation. This inner sanctum is a crucible of transformation, where individuals don't just attend recovery, they embody it. They arrive early, their presence a testament to eagerness and commitment. They linger after meetings, understanding that often, the most profound connections are forged in these unstructured moments.

In this inner circle, voices rise and fall in a symphony of shared experience. Stories are offered like gifts, each one a thread in the tapestry of collective recovery. Listening is an act of love and support, each attentive ear a balm to wounds long hidden. Here, minds open like flowers to the sun, receptive to new ideas, willing to challenge old beliefs and embrace unfamiliar paths to healing.

The inner circle is a place of action. Hands reach out - to set up chairs, to offer comfort, to exchange contact information. Each small act of service is a brick in the foundation of a stronger recovery. Relationships bloom and intertwine, creating a network of support that extends far beyond the confines of the meeting room.

Those in the inner circle don't just hear the message of recovery; they live it, breathe it, integrate it into the very fabric of their being. They work the steps with fervor, not as a checklist to be completed, but as a roadmap to a new way of life. Their recovery is not compartmentalized to meeting times but permeates every aspect of their existence.

The boundary between these circles is permeable, yet crossing it requires a conscious decision, a willingness to step out of comfort zones and into vulnerability. It demands courage to move from the safety of anonymity into the light of community, from passive observation to active engagement.

This transition is not always easy or immediate. Many begin their journey in the outer circle, drawn by desperation or curiosity, but hesitant to fully commit. The path from "around" to "in" is often gradual, marked by small steps - a tentative share, a handshake offered, a phone number exchanged.

Yet, it is in this transition that the true magic of recovery often occurs. As individuals move from the periphery to the heart of the recovery community, they often find themselves transforming in ways they never imagined. The very act of full participation becomes a catalyst for deep, lasting change.

In essence, the difference between "being around the rooms" and "being in the rooms" is the difference between watching recovery happen and making recovery happen. It's the contrast between being a spectator in one's own healing journey and being an active protagonist. Those who choose to step fully into the rooms often find that they're not just entering a physical space, but stepping into a new version of themselves - one that is more connected, more authentic, and more alive than they ever thought possible.

KEY IDEAS

Learning Slides

Being In vs Around the Rooms

Understanding True Engagement

The distinction between being 'in the rooms' versus 'around the rooms' represents a fundamental difference in engagement, commitment, and the transformative power of the recovery journey.

Around the Rooms: The Outer Circle

Imagine the outer circle representing 'being around the rooms,' a state of peripheral existence within the recovery community. Here, individuals hover at the edges, their feet barely touching the transformative waters of recovery.

- Present yet absent; physically there, yet emotionally distant
- Shadows at the fringes, slipping in and out quickly
- Fleeting presence, like ghosts passing through
- The wealth of wisdom passes by unnoticed
- Seeds of recovery fall on barren soil

In the Rooms: The Inner Circle

The inner circle vibrates with energy, alive with the electricity of active participation. This inner sanctum is a crucible of transformation, where individuals don't just attend recovery, they embody it.

- Arrive early, demonstrating eagerness and commitment
- Linger after meetings for profound connections
- Voices rise in a symphony of shared experience
- Listening is an act of love and support
- Minds open like flowers to the sun

Active Participation

Being In the Rooms - #1

- Regularly attending meetings and actively listening to others' shares
- Volunteering to share personal experiences, struggles, and triumphs
- Participating in group discussions and offering support to others
- Contributing to the collective healing energy of the community

Commitment to Time

Being In the Rooms - #2

- Arriving early to help set up the meeting space
- Staying after the meeting to help clean up
- Engaging in informal conversations before and after meetings
- Understanding that profound connections happen in unstructured moments

Building Relationships

Being In the Rooms - #3

- Making an effort to meet new people at each meeting
- Exchanging contact information with others for support outside meetings
- Developing a network of sober friends and supporters
- Creating meaningful connections that extend beyond the meeting room

Service Work

Being In the Rooms - #4

- Volunteering for service positions within the group (e.g., secretary, treasurer, literature person)
- Helping newcomers feel welcome and understood
- Offering to be a temporary or long-term sponsor for others
- Each small act of service builds a stronger recovery foundation

Working the Program

Being In the Rooms - #5

- Actively working through the 12 steps with a sponsor
- Applying program principles in daily life
- Reading program literature outside of meetings
- Integrating recovery into every aspect of existence

Open-mindedness

Being In the Rooms - #6

- Being receptive to new ideas and perspectives shared in meetings
- Willing to try suggested recovery tools and strategies
- Open to feedback from sponsors and peers
- Challenging old beliefs and embracing new paths to healing

Emotional Investment

Being In the Rooms - #7

- Sharing honestly about personal struggles and victories
- Showing empathy and support for others' experiences
- Allowing oneself to be vulnerable within the safe space of the meeting
- Creating authentic connections through genuine emotional presence

Continuous Learning

Being In the Rooms - #8

- Attending different types of meetings (e.g., speaker meetings, step studies)
- Participating in workshops or retreats related to recovery
- Seeking to deepen understanding of addiction and recovery
- Embracing ongoing personal growth and self-discovery

Passive Attendance

Being Around the Rooms - #1

- Showing up to meetings but not actively participating
- Remaining silent during sharing sessions
- Not volunteering for any service positions
- Missing opportunities for genuine transformation

Minimal Time Commitment

Being Around the Rooms - #2

- Arriving just as the meeting starts or even late
- Leaving immediately after the meeting ends
- Not engaging in pre- or post-meeting socializing
- Missing valuable connection opportunities

Limited Relationship Building

Being Around the Rooms - #3

- Not making efforts to connect with others in the group
- Avoiding eye contact or conversation with other attendees
- Not developing a support network within the recovery community
- Maintaining isolation despite being physically present

Lack of Program Engagement

Being Around the Rooms - #4

- Not working the steps or getting a sponsor
- Not reading program literature outside of meetings
- Not applying program principles in daily life
- Compartmentalizing recovery to meeting times only

Closed-mindedness

Being Around the Rooms - #5

- Resistant to new ideas or suggestions shared in meetings
- Unwilling to try different types of meetings or recovery tools
- Dismissive of others' experiences or perspectives
- Clinging to old patterns and beliefs

Emotional Detachment

Being Around the Rooms - #6

- Not sharing personal experiences or feelings in meetings
- Maintaining an emotional distance from others in the group
- Not allowing oneself to be vulnerable or authentic
- Creating barriers to genuine connection

Selective Participation

Being Around the Rooms - #7

- Only attending meetings when feeling the urge to use
- Not maintaining a consistent meeting schedule
- Choosing meetings based on convenience rather than content or community
- Treating recovery as an emergency response rather than a daily practice

Lack of Growth

Being Around the Rooms - #8

- Not seeking to understand the deeper aspects of addiction and recovery
- Not challenging oneself to grow or change
- Stagnating in personal development
- Remaining in a comfort zone that limits transformation

The Transition

The boundary between these circles is permeable, yet crossing it requires a conscious decision, a willingness to step out of comfort zones and into vulnerability.

- Demands courage to move from safety into community
- From passive observation to active engagement
- Often gradual: a tentative share, a handshake, a phone number
- This transition is where true magic occurs
- Transformation happens as you move from periphery to heart

The Essential Difference

Understanding the Impact

The key difference lies in the level of engagement and commitment. Those 'in the rooms' are fully immersed in the recovery process, actively working on their sobriety, and contributing to the community.

- Spectator versus active protagonist in your healing journey
- Watching recovery happen vs. making recovery happen
- Those fully 'in' experience stronger sobriety, personal growth, and supportive networks
- Many start 'around' and gradually move 'in' as they see the benefits
- The goal: encourage movement from 'around' to 'in' for sustainable recovery

WORKSHEET

"In the Rooms" vs. "Around the Rooms" Worksheet

Deep reflection on recovery engagement

UNDERSTANDING

1. In your own words, describe what "being in the rooms" means:

2. Now, describe what "being around the rooms" means:

3. List three key differences between these two approaches:

a.

b.

c.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Rate yourself on the following aspects using a scale of 1-5, where 1 is "Never" and 5 is "Always":

4. I arrive early to meetings

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I stay after meetings to socialize or help clean up

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I actively participate in discussions during meetings

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I listen attentively when others share

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I share my own experiences in meetings

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

9. I make an effort to meet new people at meetings

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

10. I'm open to new ideas and perspectives shared in meetings

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

11. I have a support network within the recovery community

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

12. I apply what I learn in meetings to my daily life

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

13. I volunteer for service positions or to help with meetings

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Total Score: 30 / 50

REFLECTION

14. Based on your responses, do you consider yourself more "in the rooms" or "around the rooms"? Why?

15. Describe a recent meeting experience where you felt fully engaged ("in the rooms"):

16. Describe a recent meeting experience where you felt disconnected ("around the rooms"):

BENEFITS & CHALLENGES

17. List three benefits of being "in the rooms":

a.

b.

c.

18. List three challenges you face in being more "in the rooms":

a.

b.

c.

19. How might your recovery be different if you were more "in the rooms"?

OPEN-MINDEDNESS

20. Describe a time when being open-minded in a meeting led to a positive outcome:

21. What are some signs that you might be closed-minded in meetings?

22. How can you cultivate more open-mindedness in your recovery journey?

SUPPORT NETWORK

23. List three people in your recovery community you can reach out to for support:

a.

b.

c.

24. What steps can you take to expand your support network within the recovery community?

PARTICIPATION

25. List three ways you can increase your participation in meetings:

a.

b.

c.

26. What holds you back from sharing in meetings? How can you overcome this?

TIME COMMITMENT

27. How can you make time to arrive early and stay late for meetings?

28. What value do you see in spending extra time before and after meetings?

DAILY APPLICATION

29. Describe how being "in the rooms" can impact your life outside of meetings:

30. List three recovery principles you can apply to your daily life this week:

a.

b.

c.

ACTION PLAN

31. Based on this worksheet, what are three specific actions you can take to move from being "around the rooms" to being more "in the rooms"?

a.

b.

c.

32. When will you implement each of these actions? Set specific dates:

33. How will you hold yourself accountable to these actions?

Remember: Recovery is a journey, not a destination. Moving from being "around the rooms" to being "in the rooms" is a process that takes time and effort. Be patient with yourself, but also challenge yourself to grow. Every step towards fuller engagement is a step towards a stronger recovery.