

***My Relationship Timeline: The Things I Got Right***

*Now give yourself some credit.* Now that you have looked at the set-up for relationships not working, go back over your relationships in chronological order and think about where you attempted to do things better, where you did in fact make changes that mattered even if you still struggled with some basic issues. Recognize that you, like all humans, have a basic drive toward health and growth. You always get some things right.

Times I Thought it was Going to be Different:

*Examples:* I picked someone I thought was mentally healthier; I made a decision to commit to a partner in a deeper way; I decided to get into couple counseling; I decided to start a family; I looked for a relationship not built around sex.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Ways I Got it Right(er):

*Examples:* I got sober in AA; I got on a better footing financially; I felt some real love and connection with someone; I developed some supports in the community.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Ways it Was the Same Old Scenario:

*Examples:* I was still deceptive and dishonest; I was unable to express my needs in a balanced way; I was still depressed and felt unsuccessful and unlovable; I still acted out my addictions in secret.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

As you look at your typical relationship scenario, observe how things were arranged around your addictive acting out behavior as well as how things evolved or improved in some ways. Make a list of the problems with the old style, the most important characteristics of that scenario that need to change. You can use these in completing the worksheets in Chapter VIII and the “Relapse Scenario” in Chapter XII. Next to that list make a list of things you would ideally like to do differently and how that would look, even if it seems impossible right now.

Example:

Problems with Old Relationship Style	Vision for New Relationship Style
I was too ashamed of myself to be open or honest about what I needed. I just stored up resentments and acted out instead.	Feeling good about myself and feeling safe sharing who I really am and trusting someone to be responsive and caring.
I always felt mired in conflict and reacted with sarcasm and aggression when I was afraid I couldn't get my needs met.	Feeling centered and calm and approaching differences with a spirit of cooperation and good will.
Staying very busy so that I wouldn't have to spend time with my partners, trying to duck out of doing things together.	Valuing the time together with someone and feeling happy doing things together or just doing nothing together.
I always felt a relationship was tenuous and would end badly. I protected myself by holding back.	Investing in a relationship and allowing myself to commit to a future with someone.

Problems with Old Relationship Style	Vision for New Relationship Style


In the next chapter we will pause to take a look at the early childhood issues that lead to addiction and intimacy disability. In the remaining chapters we will talk about tools for changing relationship patterns and the challenges and recovery solutions involved in finding and maintaining an intimate relationship.