

# **The Serenity Model of Recovery: Relapse Prevention- Addressing the Fight or Flight Response**

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## Objectives

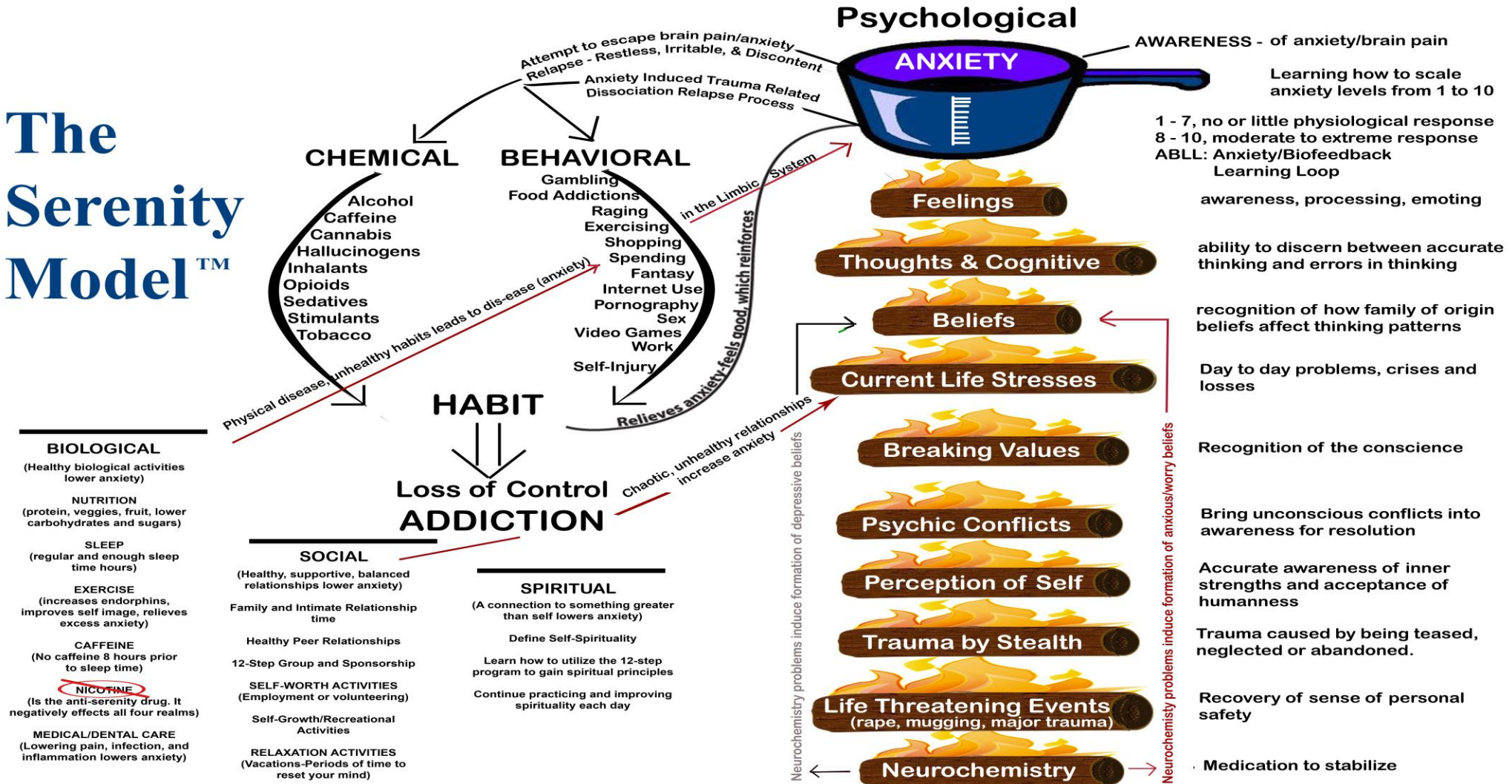
You will learn:

- The Serenity Model of Recovery: Relapse Prevention- Addressing the Fight or Flight Response demonstrates how an addiction is learned, about the physical addiction-tolerance and withdrawal; and, then how the brains fight or flight response is incorporated by the addiction into a powerful relapse process. From there the participants learn how to mitigate relapses utilizing this knowledge.

## **The Serenity Model of Recovery: Relapse Prevention- Addressing the Fight or Flight Response**

- The Serenity Model of Recovery is a pictorial metaphor to aid the therapist and patient in understanding the causes, characteristics, and ultimately the treatment of both chemical and behavioral addictions.

# The Serenity Model™



More on this later.



## **The Serenity Model of Recovery: Relapse Prevention- Addressing the Fight or Flight Response**

This unifying framework is based on the three parts stages of addiction:

- Stage 1 – Teaching the brain to be addicted - Intermittent Reinforcement
- Stage 2- Creating tolerance leading to the physical pain of withdrawal; and,
- Stage 3 – The strongest psychological determinant of relapse to addictive behavior...avoiding Brain Pain.

**The Serenity Model of Recovery:  
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- Brain Pain is defined as the combination of depression and anxiety.
- I utilize the term *Serenity*, in the model, as the Recovery field, treatment professionals, and recovering persons use the term extensively and it fits nicely in its meaning.
- Serenity, as utilized in this model, is defined that the lessening of Brain Pain.

- **Stage 1** – Teaching the brain to be addicted - Intermittent Reinforcement  
The current understanding of the psychological origin of an addiction is it is a process of *intermittent reinforcement* leading to chemical and/or behavioral use that is resistant to addiction.
- The Serenity Model moves beyond this and recognizes that the intermittent reinforcement process is only the first stage of addiction. The second stage of an addiction is much more powerful...It is based on avoiding brain pain through the fight or flight response inherent in the Limbic System.

- **Stage 1** – Teaching the brain to be addicted - Intermittent Reinforcement is the delivery of a reward at irregular intervals. For instance, if I want to train my dog, Bolt, to “stay” when she does the behavior correctly, I don’t give her a biscuit every time...I give it to her the third time, ninth time, seventh time, twelfth time, second time etc. Random intervals.

- **Stage 1** – Teaching the brain to be addicted - Intermittent Reinforcement- Behavior that has been rewarded on an intermittent schedule is more *resistant to extinction* than behavior reinforced on a continuous schedule.

- **Stage 1** – Teaching the brain to be addicted – For instance, as a young adolescent, if you rewarded feeling bored with smoking some weed, drinking a beer, or playing a video game...you didn't smoke, drink, or play every time you felt bored. Sometimes you were in school so you couldn't do it. Sometimes you didn't have access or the money to do it. So, the behavior became reinforced intermittently.
- In this instance boredom became the trigger for the adolescent.
- When I say “Stay”, the word ‘stay’ is the trigger for my dog Bolt.



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*Every feeling, thought, place, person, situation, image, smell, or sound that is intermittently reinforced become triggers for the person that has an addiction.*

- The main relapse prevention strategy for **Stage 1** Learning the Addiction, intermittently reinforced triggers, is Desensitization.
- Desensitization is a treatment or process that diminishes emotional responsiveness to a negative, aversive, or positive stimulus after repeated exposure to it.

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- This is Bolt bored. I could have reinforced this behavior.



The main relapse prevention strategy for **Stage 1** Learning the Addiction, intermittently reinforced triggers, is Desensitization.

- Desensitization is a treatment or process that diminishes emotional responsiveness to a negative, aversive, or positive stimulus after repeated exposure to it.
- After teaching the brain to be addicted, any time the adolescent is bored the dopamine system is “cued” that a reward is coming (remember Pavlov’s dog?). There is an anticipatory high.



The main relapse prevention strategy for **Stage 1** Learning the Addiction, intermittently reinforced triggers, is Desensitization.

- After the anticipatory high the dopamine feedback system responds by lowering the dopamine, below the normal baseline, which as the dopamine lowers is felt as anxiety, this is the feeling of a craving.
- By desensitizing the cues, the triggers, you stop the cravings.

The main relapse prevention strategy for **Stage 1** Learning the Addiction, intermittently reinforced triggers, is Desensitization.

- Every time you experience the trigger and it's not rewarded the dopamine response is lower the next time you experience the trigger.
- After multiple exposures to the trigger, with no reward, the trigger is desensitized.



The main relapse prevention strategy for **Stage 1** Learning the Addiction, intermittently reinforced triggers, is Desensitization.

- In 12-Step meetings the newcomer would often ask the old timer “when do the obsessions go away (obsessions are the thoughts caused by the craving) and the old timer would often say something like “Just hold on, it gets easier every day, and by a year it’s usually pretty good.” Why a year?
- Because in a year ‘*every feeling, thought, place, person, situation, image, smell, or sound*’ that became a trigger, has probably been experienced, and if not rewarded, has become desensitized. The magic year!!!! *Educating the patient about this gives them Hope and Motivation.*

The main relapse prevention strategy for **Stage 2** – Tolerance is detoxification.

- Detoxification, detox, is the process of allowing any toxins to leave the body while managing withdrawal symptoms. Detox can be done on an outpatient or inpatient basis. Medically supervised detox is strongly recommended for alcohol and benzodiazepine withdrawal as their withdrawal can be fatal. Sometimes opiate detox is done on an inpatient basis due to the severe uncomfortable physical symptoms even though detox is not life-threatening.
- There are many highly effective medications utilized for detox and withdrawal management now.

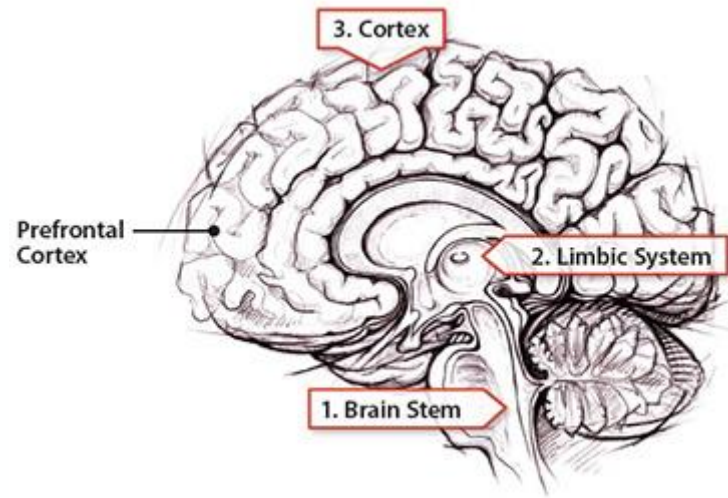
The main relapse prevention strategy for **Stage 2** – Tolerance is detoxification.

- Many people view addiction as only the physical stage- tolerance and fear of withdrawal. Stage 2 physical addiction, while very uncomfortable, is not the most powerful part of an addiction. Withdrawal in most cases can be mitigated very well with medication and can be accomplished in, most cases, less than a week.
- The most powerful part of addiction is the psychological part. Addiction can lead to loss of employment, family, freedom, integrity, health, and life. It is very powerful. In Stage 3 we look at why.

**Stage 3** – The strongest psychological determinant of relapse to addictive behavior...avoiding Brain Pain.

- The Serenity Model of Recovery addresses the psychological aspect by demonstrating how addiction utilizes the brains existing survival wiring to drive the person to relapse, to escape brain pain. Thus, leading the recovering person to social, psychological, emotional, spiritual collapse, and sometimes physical death.

**Stage 3** – The strongest psychological determinant of relapse to addictive behavior...avoiding Brain Pain.



- The human brain has three main parts, the Autonomic (Brain Stem), the Limbic (Reptilian Brain), and the Cortex (Mammal Brain).

**Stage 3** – The strongest psychological determinant of relapse to addictive behavior...avoiding Brain Pain.

- Every organism has an autonomic system, it's what keeps us alive, heart beating, breathing, stuff we don't have to think about...it's in auto. Even the simplest organisms, such as a jellyfish, have an autonomic system... but these types of organisms don't know they are in danger. It's all about survival, so another system was created...the limbic system.



**Stage 3** – The strongest psychological determinant of relapse to addictive behavior...avoiding Brain Pain.

- The limbic system, the reptilian brain, showed up in the fossil record over 250 million years ago. It is all about survival, fight or flight. For instance, if you start to step on a snake, it will either go into fight or flight. It's automatic. Driven by 250 million years of evolution.
- Then another part of the brain evolved...the mammal brain, and again it was all about survival.

**Stage 3** – The strongest psychological determinant of relapse to addictive behavior...avoiding Brain Pain.

- The modern mammal brain appeared between 6 and 8 million years ago. It helped us survive by being able to think, remember, reason, plan, talk and other important things.

**Stage 3** – The strongest psychological determinant of relapse to addictive behavior...avoiding Brain Pain.

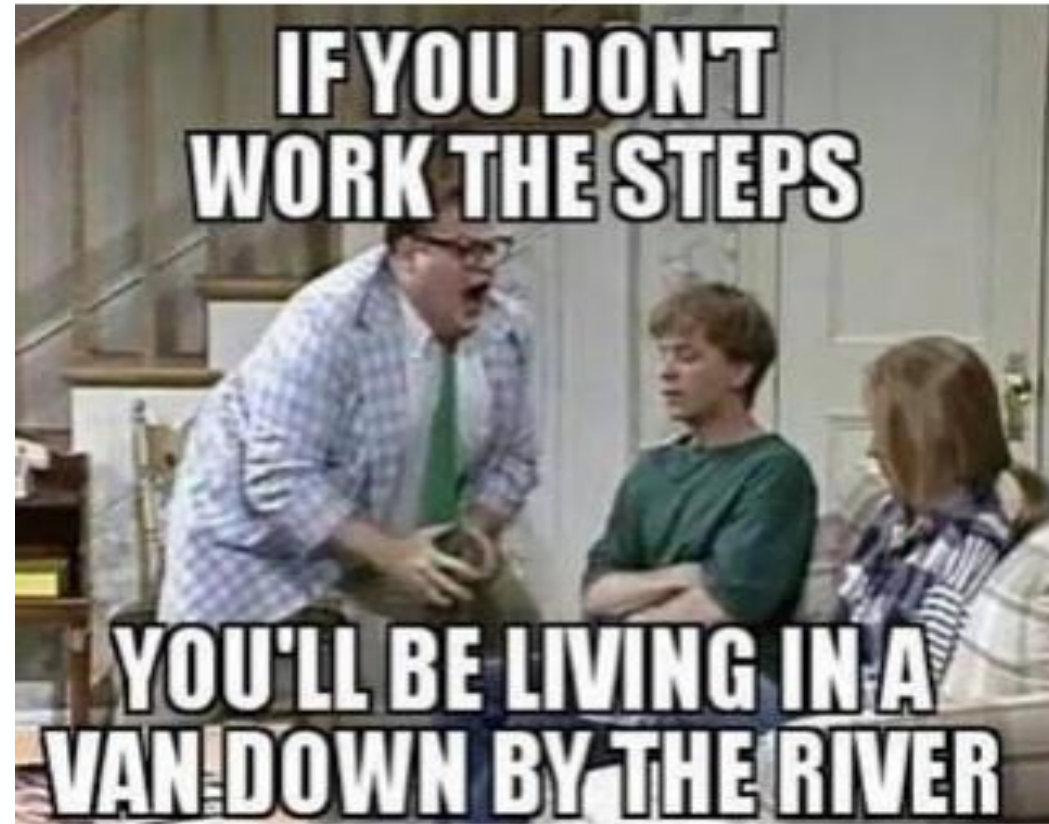
- Comparing the evolutionary ages of the cortex to the limbic system; 6 to 8 million years old versus 250 million years; its easy to see why the 250 million- years-old limbics fight or flight response, the mechanism developed to escape brain pain is difficult, if not impossible, to overcome using only our intelligence.
- Many recovering persons have thought they were smart enough to recover on their own, to their detriment.



**The key to relapse prevention for Stage 3 is:**

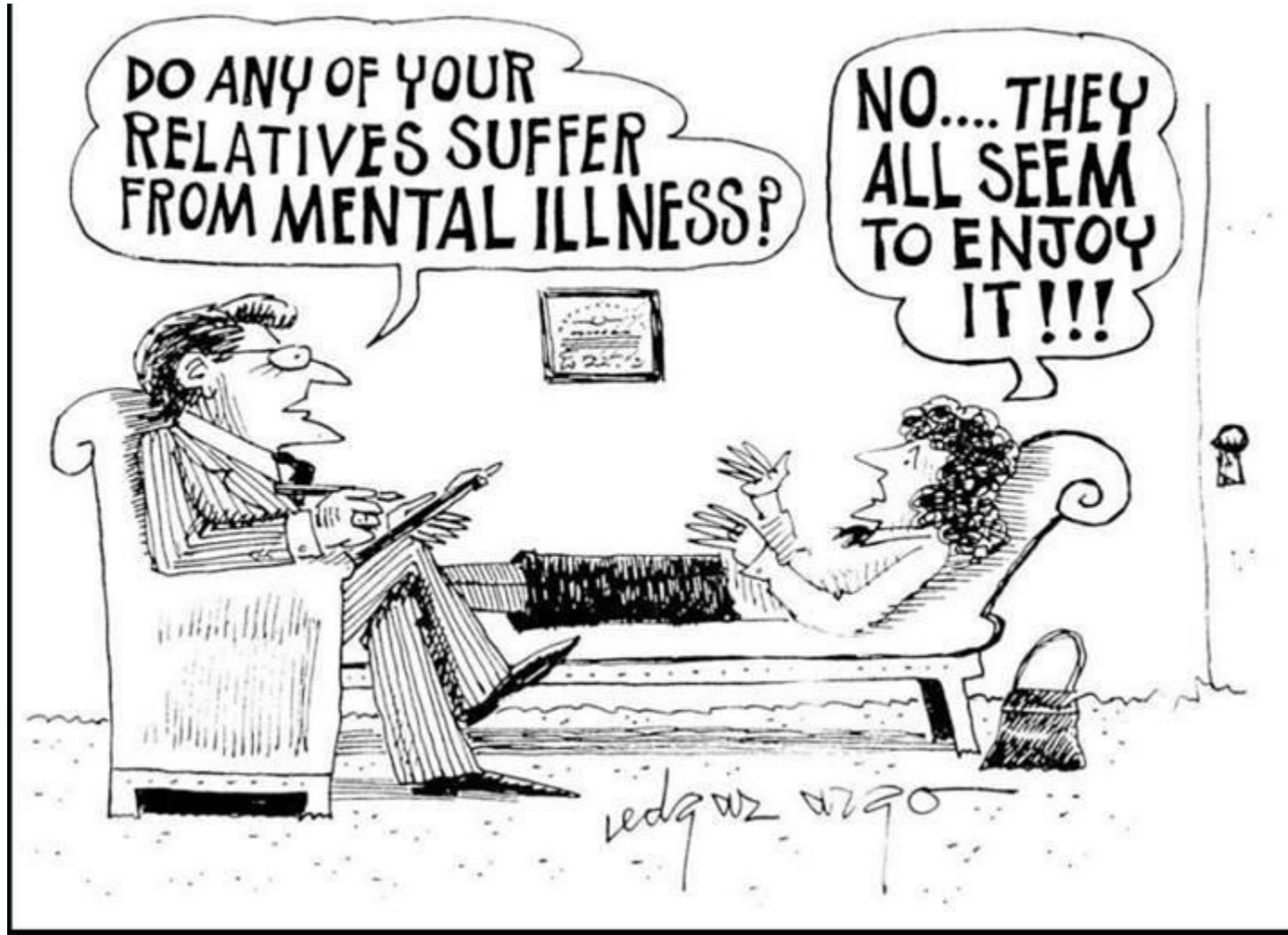
1. Recognition of the power of the fight or flight response.
2. Understanding that the cortex, the thinking part, knows what lowers brain pain, addictive chemicals and behaviors, so it will lie to you (distortions).
3. Understanding that both chemical and behavioral addictive use lower brain pain, so both are equally important to treat. If the recovering person has chemical use successfully in remission but is still dealing with brain pain using behavioral addiction it is a recipe for disaster.
4. Knowing the Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual causes of brain pain and addressing each element of all four realms.
5. Knowing how the 12-Steps work to lower brain pain.

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Special reminder on Euphoric Recall. Euphoric Recall is another of our brain's evolutionary survival wiring that addiction uses to cause us to relapse.

Why are we hardwired for Euphoric Recall?

How does addiction use Euphoric Recall to cause relapse?

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## Special reminder on Tobacco- the Anti-Serenity Drug

### Tobacco negatively affects all four realms of Recovery

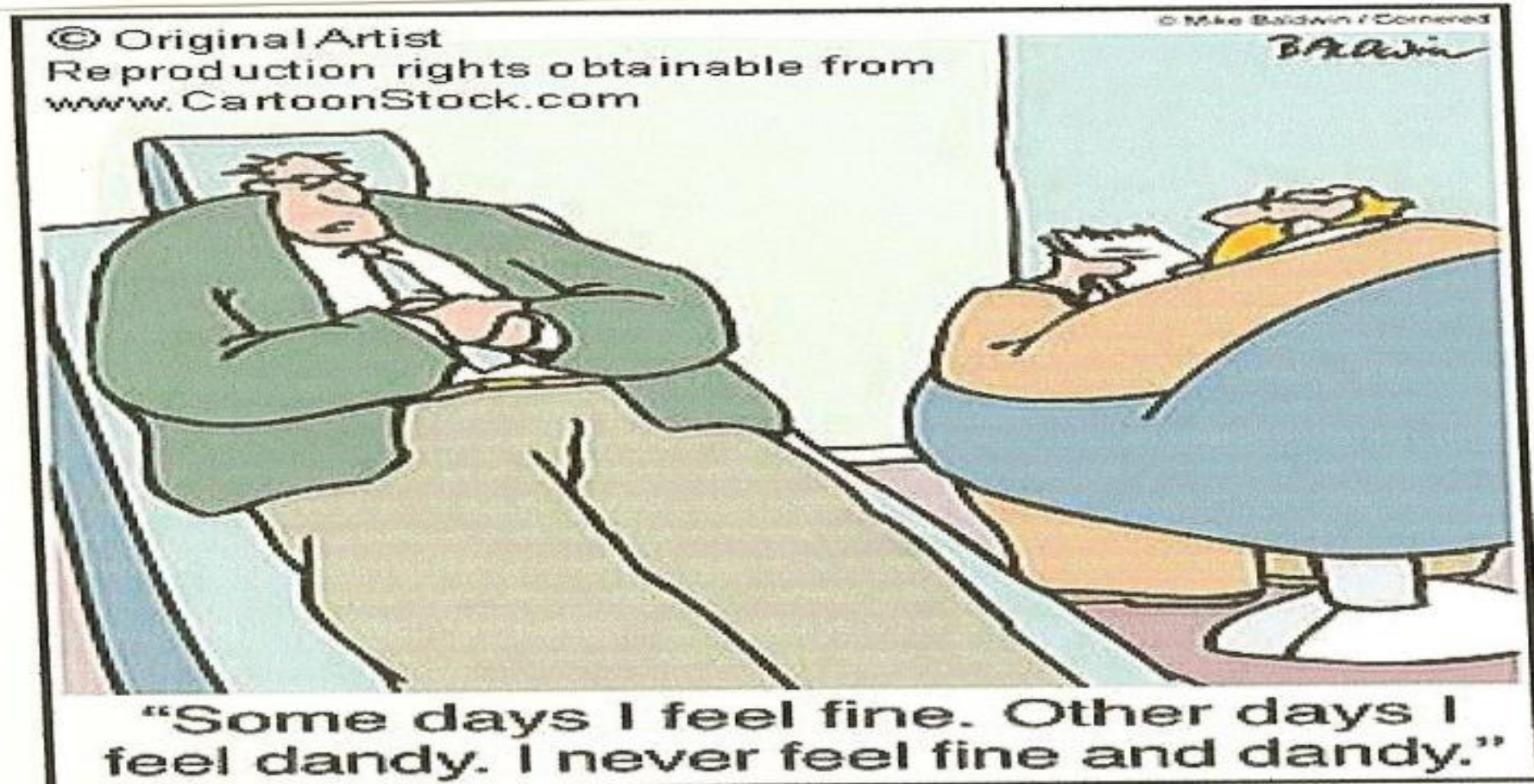
- Bio- Physically it lowers white blood cell counts up to 50% and if I feel ill, I know what will help, right? Tobacco also doubles sensitivity to pain....and the first pain reliever in history was...alcohol.
- Psychologically there is always a psychic conflict happening: “I like tobacco vs. I saw the commercial with the lady with half her face gone.” It’s unconscious but always a source of anxiety (brain pain) eating at you.
- Social- not accepted any longer
- Spiritually – perhaps you view your body as a temple of God and you’re destroying the temple.
- Stopping tobacco use doubles the probability of recovery.

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When you walk out the door in the morning and see a sky like this...



....go back inside, have another cup of coffee and stay home. It's NOT going to be a good day.

See More Crazy Pictures & Videos on [Owned.com](http://Owned.com)

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*Thank you for allowing me to be part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Midwest  
Conference on Problem Gambling and Substance Abuse*

*My cell phone is 785-249-8477. My personal email is [duane.olberding@outlook.com](mailto:duane.olberding@outlook.com)*

Then



Now



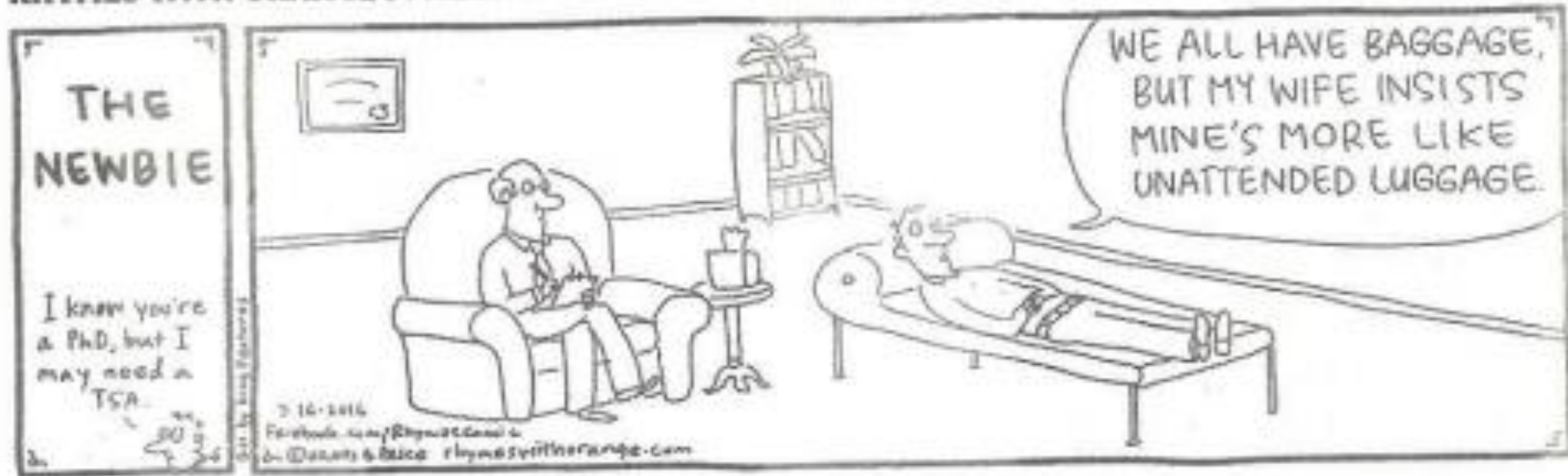
**Duane Olberding**

Orchardist, Gardener, Hunter  
& Fisherman

- The following slides are for those of you addicted to mental health and recovery comics.

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**RHYMES WITH ORANGE** BY HILARY PRICE

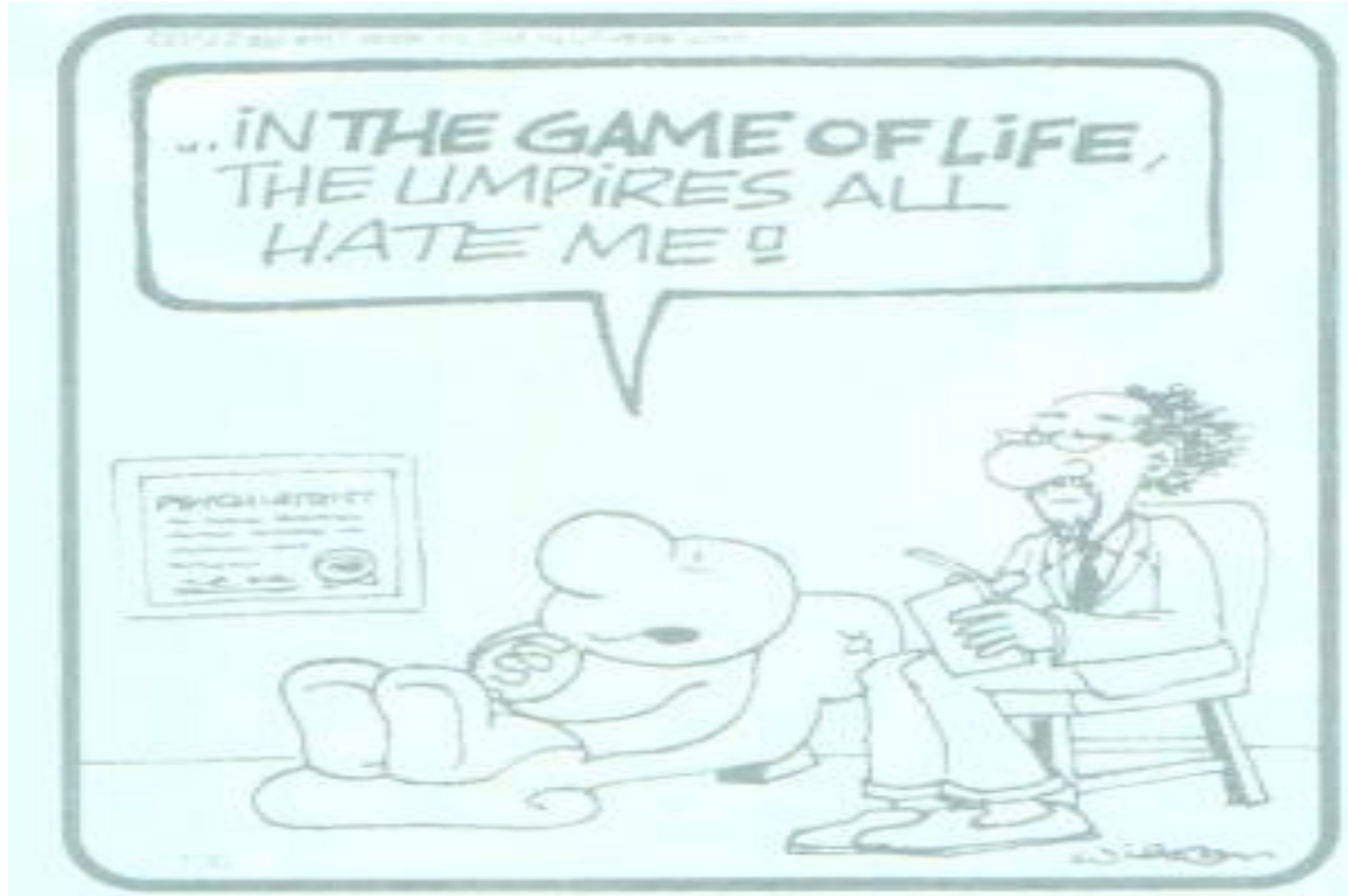


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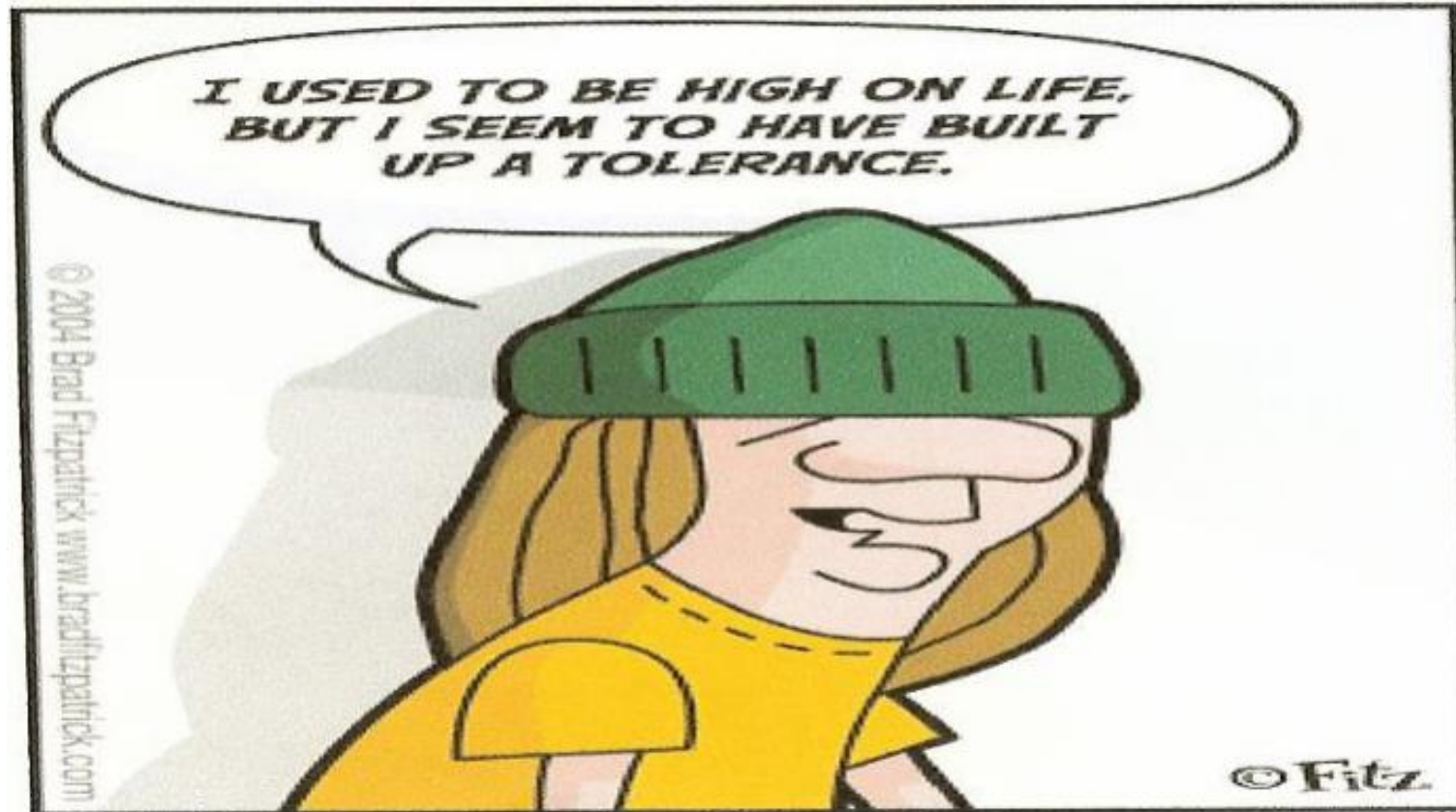
**THE ARGYLE SWEATER** BY SCOTT HILBURN



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## The Serenity Model of Recovery: Relapse Prevention- Addressing the Fight or Flight Response.

Written Breath Test

ARE YOU DRUNK?  
 YES  
 NO X



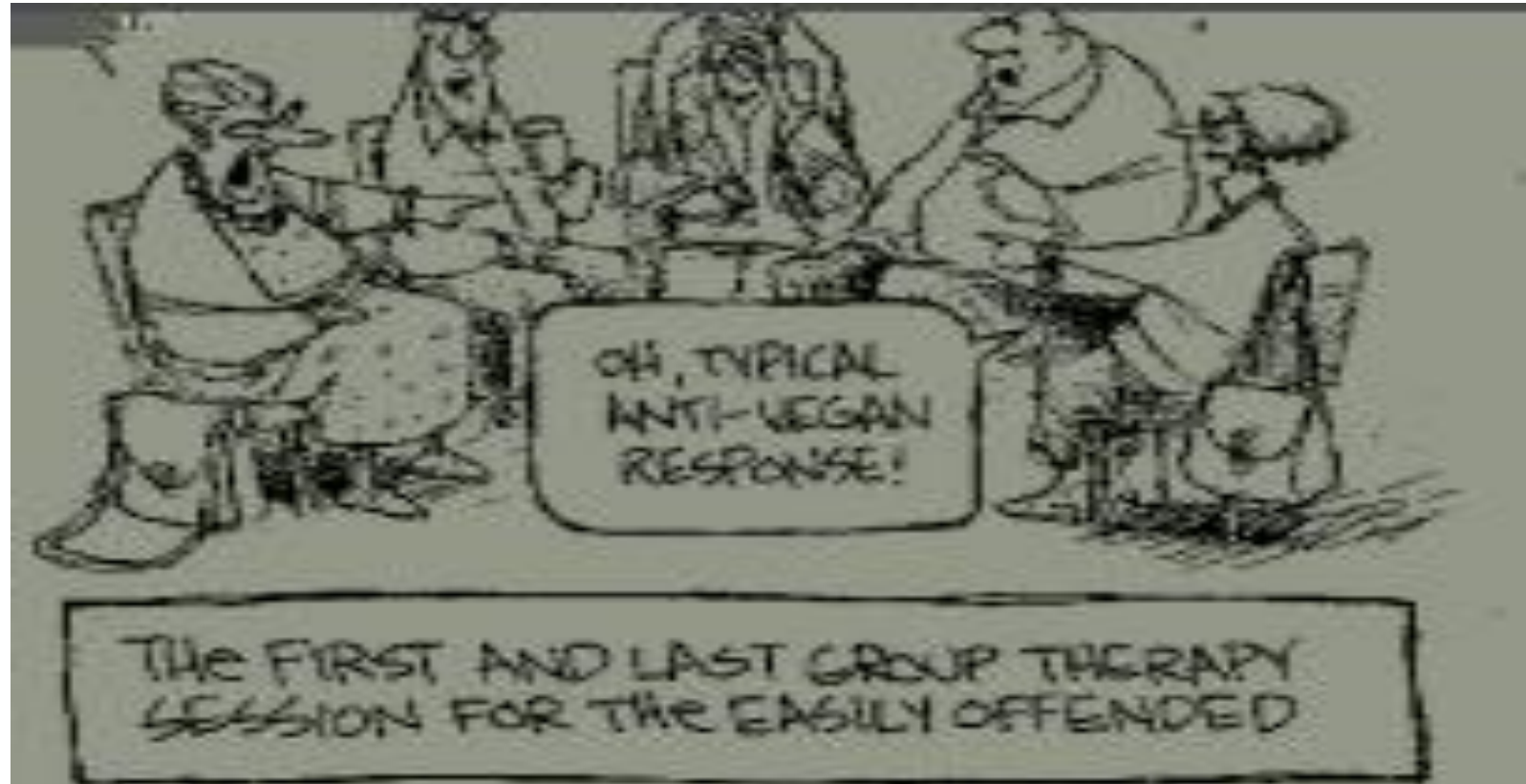
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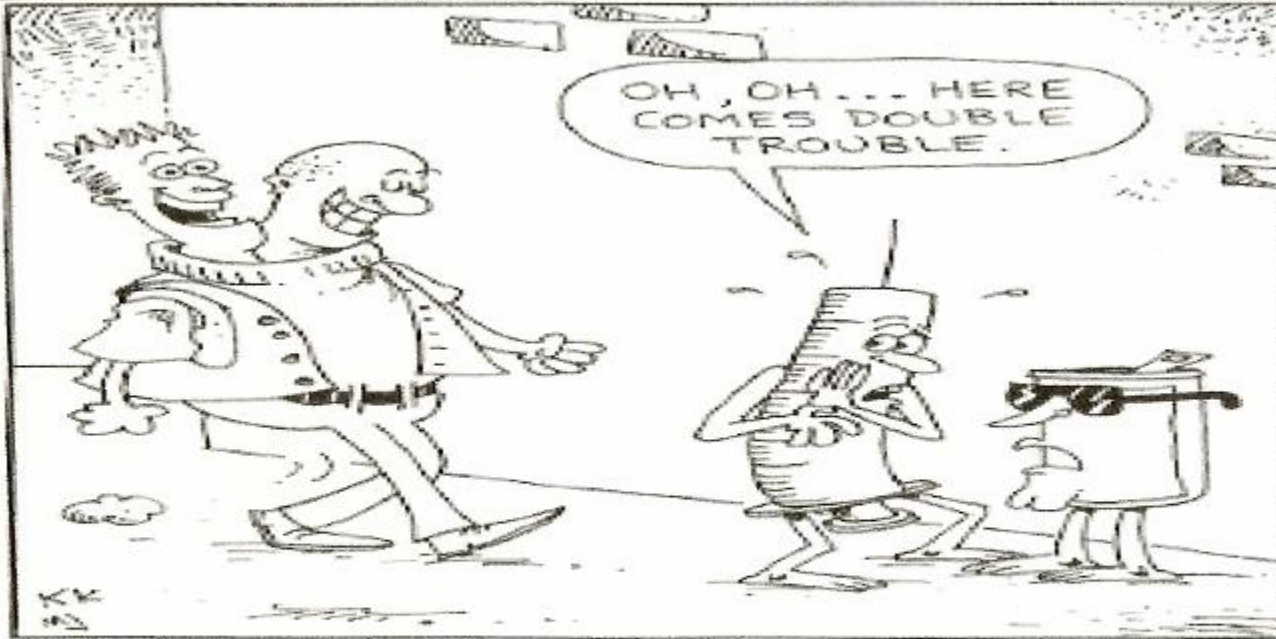
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**The closer Jones sticks to his sponsor, the safer  
he feels.**



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# The Serenity Model of Recovery: Relapse Prevention- Addressing the Fight or Flight Response.

**NON SEQUITUR** BY WILEY

THEY TAKE  
LAST CALL  
HERE VERY  
SERIOUSLY



PHOTO BY UNIVERSAL UCLICK



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**ZIGGY** BY TOM WILSON



