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4

RIGHT NOW

MEDICATIONS FOR ADDICTION, EXPLAINED

What They Are, How to Ask, and How to Pay

STEPHEN DEASON
MELISSA DEASON

Alder Creek EDITIONS

Medications for Addiction, Explained

With Thanks

These books are offered at a low price in print and free online through the generous support of Matthew Marberry and the Michael Marberry Family Fund.

Thank you, Matthew, for helping put these books in the hands of the people who need them.

Stephen Deason

DON'T PANIC

If you are in danger, call 911.

If you are in crisis, or thinking about suicide, call or text 988.

For free help finding treatment, call 1-800-662-4357.

For your medication plan, turn to page 24.

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The Mile Marker Library

BOOK 4 · RIGHT NOW

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Published by Alder Creek Editions, aldercreekeditions.com

Printable edition, 2026.

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Recovery Books

The Mile Marker Library: standalone books and tools for people getting into recovery on their own. Each one is numbered and labeled by what it helps with. Start with any of them.

RIGHT NOW

1. *Don't Panic: The First Hours After You Stop*
What to Do When You Stop Drinking or Using

2. *Wallet Crisis Card* **Free Printable**
Numbers to Call, Ready to Print

3. *Free Help Directory*
Meetings, Helplines, and Low-Cost Care

4. *Medications for Addiction, Explained* **This book**
What They Are, How to Ask, and How to Pay

DAILY PRACTICE

5. *Tools You Can Use on Your Own*
A Guide to Self-Directed Recovery

6. *Cravings and Hard Hours Workbook*
A Companion to Tools You Can Use on Your Own

7. *One Day at a Time, Written Down*
A 90-Day Gratitude Journal, in General and Christian Editions

8. *Daily Reader, 365 Days* **Forthcoming**
For Any Recovery Path

9. *Worksheet Library* **Forthcoming**
Every Journal Page and Exercise, Ready to Print

REBUILDING

10. *Money in Early Recovery*

Budgets, Debts, Benefits, and Credit

11. *Work and Recovery*

Finding a Job, Keeping It, and What to Tell Employers

12. *Finding a Safe Place to Live*

Sober Housing and What to Check Before You Move In

13. *Court, Probation, and Recovery* **Forthcoming**

What to Ask a Lawyer and What Records to Keep

PEOPLE AROUND YOU

14. *For Families*

When Someone You Love Can't Get to Treatment

15. *Group Facilitator Guide*

Running Free Peer Support Groups with These Books

16. *Employer Guide* **Forthcoming**

Hiring and Keeping People in Recovery

Who This Book Is For and How to Use It

This book is for anyone deciding whether to ask a provider about medication for opioid or alcohol use disorder.

Medications exist for opioid use disorder and for alcohol use disorder. They are prescribed by doctors, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and clinics, and they are used by people in every kind of recovery.

This book explains what the medications are, who can prescribe them, how to ask for them, and how to get them when you have no insurance and no money. It does not tell you whether a medication is right for you. Only a provider who knows your health can help you decide that.

What is in this book

- The three medications approved for opioid use disorder, and where each one comes from.
- The three medications approved for alcohol use disorder.
- What to say when you call or sit down with a provider.
- How to get care with no insurance, and what to do if you are told no.
- The questions people ask most, and who can answer them.

What this book does not do

It gives no doses and no instructions for taking anything. It does not tell you which medication to ask for. It does not say what will happen in your body. Those belong to you and a qualified provider, together.

The medication names here are the ones the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved for these uses, as described by the FDA and SAMHSA.

If you are in danger right now

Emergency: 911

Crisis or thoughts of suicide: call or text 988

Free treatment referrals: 1-800-662-4357

1. Who Decides

A medication for addiction is a medical decision. It takes a provider who can ask about your health, what you use, what else you take, and what you want.

What you bring to that conversation

- What you have been using, how much, and for how long.
- Other medicines you take, including ones you buy without a prescription.
- Health conditions you know about, and any allergies.
- Whether you are pregnant or could become pregnant.
- What you want: to stop, to cut back, to stay safe, to keep your job, to get your kids back.

What the provider brings

Your medical history, what the medications do, what they cost where you live, and how to start one safely. Bring your questions. Chapter 5 has a list you can read off the page.

Counseling and meetings

Some programs pair medication with counseling or group meetings. Some do not. Ask what a program expects, and say what you can commit to.

2. Medications for Opioid Use Disorder

The FDA has approved three medications for opioid use disorder: buprenorphine, methadone, and naltrexone. They work differently from each other, and they reach you through different doors.

Buprenorphine

- What it is: a prescription medicine for opioid use disorder. It comes in forms that dissolve in the mouth, and in longer-acting forms given by a clinic.
- Where it comes from: since 2023, federal law lets any provider with a standard DEA registration that includes Schedule III authority prescribe it. That means a family doctor, a nurse practitioner, a physician assistant, a clinic, an emergency department, or a telehealth provider, as your state allows.
- What that means for you: you may be able to start it at a regular clinic or community health center, without going to a special program.
- What to ask: what forms do you offer, how soon can I start, and what happens at the first visit?

Methadone

- What it is: a prescription medicine for opioid use disorder, taken daily as a liquid or tablet.
- Where it comes from: for opioid use disorder, methadone is dispensed only through an opioid treatment program certified by SAMHSA. People often call these methadone clinics.

- What that means for you: you go to the program to get your dose, and many programs start you daily. Over time, some people qualify for doses to take at home. The program decides that with you.
- How to find one: FindTreatment.gov, or call 1-800-662-4357.
- What to ask: what are your hours, how do I get there, what does it cost, do you take Medicaid, and how long is the wait?

Naltrexone

- What it is: a prescription medicine that blocks the effects of opioids. It comes as a pill and as a monthly injection given in a clinic.
- Where it comes from: any provider who can write prescriptions. It is not a controlled substance.
- What that means for you: a regular clinic can prescribe it, and some clinics give the injection on site.
- One thing to know: a provider will tell you how long you need to be off opioids before starting it, and will decide that with you.
- What to ask: do you offer the pill, the injection, or both, and what do I need to do before I start?

Naloxone is different

Naloxone, often sold as Narcan, is not a treatment for opioid use disorder. It reverses an opioid overdose while it is happening. Chapter 8 tells you where to get it.

3. Medications for Alcohol Use Disorder

The FDA has approved three medications for alcohol use disorder: naltrexone, acamprosate, and disulfiram. Any provider who can write prescriptions can prescribe them, including a family doctor or a community health center.

Naltrexone

- A pill, or a monthly injection given in a clinic.
- Used to help people drink less or stop drinking.
- What to ask: is this an option for me, and what should I know before starting?

Acamprosate

- A pill, usually started after a person has stopped drinking.
- What to ask: when would I start it, and how long would I take it?

Disulfiram

- A pill that causes an unpleasant reaction if you drink while taking it.
- It calls for a conversation about what you want and what you are ready for.
- What to ask: what happens if I drink while taking this, and is it a fit for my situation?

Which one

That choice belongs to you and a provider. What matters for this book is that all three exist, that a regular clinic can prescribe them, and that you can ask.

4. How to Ask

Many people never ask, because they do not know the medications exist or they expect to be judged. Here is how to open the conversation.

On the phone

"I want to know whether a medication for opioid use disorder is an option for me. Does anyone in your practice prescribe buprenorphine or naltrexone?"

"I want to know whether a medication for alcohol use disorder is an option for me. Can I make an appointment to talk about it?"

At the visit

"I have been using [what] for [how long]. I want to stop, and I want to know what medication options I have."

If you feel judged

You are asking about an FDA-approved medication for a medical condition. If a provider will not discuss it, you can ask to see someone else, call another clinic, or call 1-800-662-4357 for a referral to a program that offers medication.

Bring a person

Anyone you trust can come with you and take notes. You can also ask the provider to write down what you agreed on.

5. Questions to Ask a Provider

Read these off the page if that is easier.

- What medications do you offer for my situation?
- How do I start, and what happens at the first visit?
- How often would I come in?
- What does it cost with no insurance? Do you have a sliding scale?
- Does this medication interact with anything else I take?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- Who do I call after hours if something worries me?
- How long do people usually stay on it, and how would we decide when to stop?
- If I have a job, court dates, or childcare, how do we work around them?

Questions I want to ask:

What the provider told me:

What I will do next:

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6. Getting It Without Insurance

None of these doors requires you to have insurance before you call.

Community health centers
Federally funded health centers charge on a sliding scale based on income, and many prescribe medications for addiction. Find one at findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov.

Medicaid
Medicaid covers medications for addiction in many states. Apply at HealthCare.gov, through your state's Medicaid office, or with help from 211. Ask any clinic whether they take Medicaid.

State-funded treatment
States pay for treatment for people who cannot pay. The SAMHSA National Helpline, 1-800-662-4357, can point you to programs in your state. It is free, confidential, and open all day, every day.

Opioid treatment programs
Many take Medicaid, and some have sliding-scale fees or grant-funded slots. Ask when you call.

Telehealth
Some clinics start and continue buprenorphine or alcohol medications by video or phone, as state law allows. Ask a clinic whether they offer it, or search FindTreatment.gov.

Pharmacy costs

If a prescription costs more than you can pay, tell the pharmacist and the prescriber. Ask whether a different form or a generic is available, and ask the clinic whether they know of a program that helps with the cost.

7. If You Are Told No, or Cannot Get In

A no from one place is not a no from every place. Work down this list.

1. Ask why. Sometimes it is a rule about that clinic, not about you.
2. Ask them to refer you to somewhere that does prescribe.
3. Call 1-800-662-4357 and say what you are looking for and where you live.
4. Search FindTreatment.gov and filter for medications and for your payment type.
5. Call a community health center, an opioid treatment program, and a telehealth clinic, in that order.
6. Ask about a waiting list, ask how long it is, and ask what you can do while you wait.
7. Keep a log of who you called and what they said. It helps on the next call.

Places I called, and what they said:

My next call:

The date I will call back:

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8. Staying On It

Starting is one step. Staying on a medication takes appointments, refills, and rides. These are the things that trip people up, and most of them have workarounds.

- Appointments: ask for the first appointment of the day, or a telehealth visit, if getting there is hard.
- Refills: ask how many days ahead to call, and put it on a calendar.
- Rides: ask the clinic about transportation help. Medicaid covers rides to medical appointments in many states. 211 can help too.
- Travel, jail, or a hospital stay: tell your provider ahead of time if you can, and tell the new place what you take.
- Missed doses or side effects: call your clinic. That is what the number is for.
- Court or probation: ask your provider for a letter that says you are in treatment, if your court asks for proof.

Naloxone, alongside

If opioids have been part of your use, keep naloxone where you and the people around you can find it. Buy it at a pharmacy without a prescription, ask your local health department, or order it at nextdistro.org. Tell someone close to you where it is.

9. Questions People Ask

Is this trading one drug for another?

People in recovery hear this from friends, from family, and sometimes from a meeting. It is a question about medical treatment, and a provider is the person who can answer it for your situation. Your recovery belongs to you.

How long do people stay on it?

That differs from person to person. Ask your provider how you would decide together, and ask what stopping would look like.

Will it show up on a drug test?

Tell whoever runs the test that you are prescribed a medication, and ask your provider for documentation. Employers, courts, and programs each have their own rules.

What about meetings?

Some groups welcome people on medication and some do not. Groups differ from room to room. Chapter 10 of the Free Help Directory in this library and the support group list at the back of this book can point you to meetings, and you can ask a group how they handle it.

What if I am pregnant?

Tell a provider as early as you can and ask what your options are. Pregnancy changes the conversation, and it is a conversation to have with a clinician, not with a book.

Can I drink or use while taking these?

Ask your provider. Some combinations are dangerous, and your provider knows what you are taking.

What if I use again while on the medication?

Call your clinic and tell them. If you have used opioids after a break, your tolerance may be lower than it was. Do not use alone, and keep naloxone nearby.

10. Words You Will Hear

- Medication for opioid use disorder, or MOUD: the medications in Chapter 2.
- Medication-assisted treatment, or MAT: an older term for the same thing, still used by many programs.
- Opioid treatment program, or OTP: the certified programs that dispense methadone.
- Office-based treatment: getting a prescription at a regular clinic instead of a program.
- Induction: the first days of starting a medication, under a provider's direction.
- Take-home doses: methadone doses a program lets you take home.
- Telehealth: care by video or phone.
- Sliding scale: a fee based on your income.

11. My Medication Plan

Fill this in as you go. Take it to your appointments.

The clinic or program I am working with:

My provider's name and number:

What I am taking, and when I pick it up or take it:

My next appointment:

My refill date:

Who I call after hours:

What I will do if I miss a dose:

If I Use Again

If you use again, this book is still yours. Get safe first, then use this plan. Fill it in now, while you are steady.

If you return to opioids after a period of not using or using less, your tolerance may be lower than it was before. Do not use alone. Keep naloxone (Narcan) nearby, and make sure someone with you knows how to use it.

The first person I will call:

If they do not answer, I will call:

A safe place I can go:

What I will do in the next hour:

Who else needs to know (doctor, counselor, group):

What I will do tomorrow morning:

If you are in danger, call 911. For crisis support, call or text 988.

People and Resources

Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number

Crisis: call or text 988
988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, 24/7. Chat at 988lifeline.org.

Emergency: 911

Treatment referrals: 1-800-662-4357
SAMHSA National Helpline, free and confidential, 24/7, English and Spanish. Text your ZIP code to 435748 or search FindTreatment.gov.

Free Support Groups

These groups are free to attend. Most meet in person and online. Try more than one until you find a room that fits.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) aa.org
12-step groups for people with a drinking problem.

Narcotics Anonymous (NA) na.org
12-step groups for recovery from any drug.

SMART Recovery smartrecovery.org
Skills-based groups with no religious content, for any addiction.

LifeRing Secular Recovery lifering.org
Secular peer support, in person, online, and by email.

Recovery Dharma recoverydharma.org
Peer-led groups based on Buddhist practices.

Celebrate Recovery celebraterecovery.com
Christ-centered 12-step groups, usually hosted by churches.

Women for Sobriety womenforsobriety.org
Support groups for women.

For family and friends al-anon.org
Al-Anon, Nar-Anon, and SMART Recovery Family & Friends.

Online Meetings

Online meetings run at every hour of the day and night. You can use a first name only and keep your camera off. Many also have a phone number you can dial in to with no internet at all.

In The Rooms intherooms.com
Free live video meetings every week for many recovery paths, 12-step and others. A free account with a username is all you need.

AA Online Intergroup aa-intergroup.org
AA meetings by video, phone, chat, and email, around the clock.

Meeting Guide app aa.org
AA's free app lists in-person, online, and phone meetings.

Virtual NA virtual-na.org
Narcotics Anonymous meetings online and by phone.

SMART Recovery Online smartrecovery.org
Online meetings, chat, and message boards.

LifeRing Online lifering.org
Video meetings, chat, forums, and email groups.

Some recovery websites show phone numbers that connect to treatment centers selling their services. For free, neutral referrals, call the SAMHSA National Helpline:

1-800-662-4357

Alder Creek Editions is not connected to any group or website listed in this book. Websites change. If one stops working, the SAMHSA helpline can point you to current options.

About the Authors

Stephen Deason

Stephen Deason has been in Recovery for more than eleven years and still begins and ends each day with meditation and gratitude. He writes The Mile Marker Library for people getting into recovery on their own, including people who cannot attend or afford a treatment program. He writes as a peer, from his own experience. He has spent more than thirty years building teams and companies in healthcare and technology, holds graduate degrees in business and accounting, and writes about recovery, economics, business, and social enterprise. More of his work is at aldercreekeditions.com and stephendeason.com.

Melissa Deason

Melissa Deason is also in long-term recovery, is a CPS-AD CARES Certified Peer Support Specialist for Addictive Disease, has been an attorney, and now spends her days wrangling tiny humans and working with women entering Recovery. She is Stephen's wife and the co-author of this book.

Alder Creek EDITIONS

Also from Alder Creek Editions

The Mile Marker Library

Standalone books and tools for people getting into recovery on their own, and for the people around them. Free printable editions are at aldercreekeditions.com.

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4. *Medications for Addiction, Explained*
5. *Tools You Can Use on Your Own*
6. *Cravings and Hard Hours Workbook*
7. *One Day at a Time, Written Down*
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11. *Work and Recovery*
12. *Finding a Safe Place to Live*
13. *Court, Probation, and Recovery*
14. *For Families*
15. *Group Facilitator Guide*
16. *Employer Guide*

The Weakest Link: A Story About the Systems We Never See

Book I. A business fable about a family caring for an aging parent, and the failures that happen in the handoffs between the people and agencies involved.

The Invisible Architecture: A Story About Senior Care as a System

Book II. The same family returns as care needs grow, and the story widens to show senior care as a system whose structure decides who ends up carrying the work.

The Space Between: Institutional Architecture and Coordination Costs **Forthcoming**

Book III moves from story toward the system itself: why coordination costs fall on the person least able to refuse them, and how organizations can be designed to carry those costs.

The Family Integrator's Handbook

A workbook for the family member who coordinates a parent's care, with the calls, records, schedules, and decisions organized in one place.

The Paid Last Series

Residual Claimants **Forthcoming**

The Owner's Arithmetic **In development**

Capital and Governance **Planned**

Standalone Titles

Valued: How Purpose-Driven Businesses Can Conquer Addiction and Marginalization in America **Forthcoming**

Case studies of companies that hire people in recovery and others shut out of work. Each one earns its place in the market by serving customers first, then carries its social mission alongside.

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