Openhearted, Not Unguarded

Quick Reference

A Resilience Playbook for Recovery Communities

Someone sent you *this*? It's cool, it's for **everyone**. Take what helps, and ask what they had in mind if you want to.

Build a web of support, not a circle of perfect people. Get to know people in more than one circle. Then trouble in one relationship doesn't leave you with nowhere to turn.

These are practices, not steps. Use what fits the situation. The aim is to stay open to connection while caring for yourself and others. You may need different practice with different people. Try a small change, notice what happens, and adjust.

A. Build connections

Start small and keep showing up. Say hello, listen, take part, ask questions, and follow up or check in later. Be imperfect. Let trust grow over time. Close friends and casual connections both matter. Pick a small action and a time to try it, such as saying hello after a meeting.

You don't have to earn your place. You're worthy of welcome, whether or not you're outgoing, interesting, or useful. Wondering *Why would anyone want to talk to me?* You don't know their answer. We all came to fellowship in need, and someone welcomed us. Someday you may welcome a newcomer who wonders why *you* want to talk with *them*. If you aren't met right away, **keep sharing, keep seeking.** You'll be met. Time takes time.

Be discerning about who you enroll into your inner life.

Share only what you choose. You can talk about what you're going through without names or private details about your life. You don't have to share everything with anyone.

Give and receive. Ask for what you need. Offer what you can. Let others help you, too. You don't have to earn care by being useful.

Make room for repair. When contact is safe and welcome, listen, own your part, and agree on what needs to change. Follow through. Being friendly again doesn't always mean the problem is fixed. Repair doesn't require staying in the relationship. You can tend to your own healing even when you can't resolve things together. People aren't replaceable; other connections give us somewhere to turn when one relationship becomes difficult.

B. Practice discernment

Pause and notice what is happening.

Notice body signals, feelings, or a pattern that keeps coming up. They are clues, not proof.

Feeling uneasy doesn’t always mean danger. Feeling calm or pleased doesn’t prove things are fine. Your feelings are real, but they aren't facts.

Ask: **What happened? What am I assuming? What do I need?** If you’re not sure what you need, start with what you like, dislike, or wish for.

Use these questions when they help:

Freedom: Can I say no, slow down, or change my mind? Do I give others that same room?

Stakes: What might I risk by saying no? What might they feel they risk by disappointing me?

Drives: Is a need for attention or praise changing what I accept or do? Am I treating their response as something they owe me?

Influence: How is this connection shaping what I want? What am I leading the other person to expect?

Leave room to learn. Your ideas about someone else’s feelings may be wrong. A welcome response doesn’t prove that you’re treating them with care. Look at the effects over time. You don’t have to analyze every interaction or settle every doubt.

Question the story about yourself.

What you believe about who you are can shape what you notice and what you feel able to do. For example, does “I always have to help” leave room to receive help? Try a perspective that opens another choice, and let experience inform it.

C. Respect autonomy

Make room for your choices and other people's choices.

You can ask, decline, change your mind, or leave. Others can too. Your needs matter, but one person may not meet them. Seek other support rather than press for a different answer.

Opening up isn't an invitation to romantic or sexual attention. Giving help doesn't buy private information, intimacy, or continued contact. You don't owe those things in return for help.

Keep freely made commitments, or say what needs to change. You don't have to stay in an unsafe interaction to honor an agreement.

> **Practice a different choice.**
> If you say yes before you've thought it through, practice "Let me think." If you often dismiss others, practice asking and listening. Try the words when you're calm. Keep the skill, not a rule that you must always respond the same way.

Use your influence with care. More influence calls for more care, not more control. Be clear about what you want and can offer. State your limits without using someone's need for your help to get your way. Give people time to decide and room for other relationships. Step back when your attention isn't wanted.

D. Seek support

You don't need proof before asking for help. Talk with a friend, sponsor, someone who helps run your meeting, or a professional. You can ask about how someone treats you, how you treat them, or something you've seen happen to others.

Choose the next step that fits. You might set a limit, take space, work through discomfort, try repair, or seek protection. You don't have to confront someone or try repair before getting help.

Learn from what happens. What did you try? Did it help you make choices and treat yourself and others with care? Discomfort or relief alone doesn't tell you whether a change is helping. Ask for support, adjust, and try again where it makes sense. You can stop a practice that no longer helps.

Describe behavior, not someone's character. Say what you saw or heard, what worries you, and what you don't know. When it fits, share what you noticed and listen to their view. Seek help, not an audience. Gossip can push people away from the community where they're trying to heal. Protect privacy, but don't hide harm.

You deserve support even if you missed the signs or found it hard to say no. You are not to blame for someone else's harmful behavior. If one person can't help, try someone else. Staying in recovery doesn't mean staying in a relationship or meeting that harms you.

Practical digital safety

Use your options. You can mute, block, change privacy settings, or report unwanted contact. You don't need proof. Blocking is optional; if it feels unsafe, seek support and choose another step.

Watch for scams online. Be wary of crypto or investment pitches in recovery groups or private messages. Scammers may build convincing friendships or romantic ties before asking for emergency money. They may keep in touch hoping for money later. *FTC examples:* group crypto scams and new friends asking for money.

Financial requests. Tradition Seven is about the fellowship supporting itself. You can follow that principle personally. A request for money doesn't mean someone is dishonest, and a real need doesn't mean you must give. You can say no to giving or lending money without checking their story or judging their character, even if you trust them and can afford to help. You don't owe ongoing attention or emotional support. You can suggest other resources or step away.

Pause and check. Avoid investment links. Confirm unusual requests through another trusted way to reach the person. Never share login codes. Tell a group admin about suspicious posts.

We don’t need perfect people or perfect certainty to build a resilient fellowship.

Everyone deserves a chance at recovery. Everyone deserves to feel safe seeking it.

More guidance: Full playbook · MA Safety Card

Help improve this guide: What helps? What is hard to understand or use? Feedback: amalgam-mustard4k@icloud.com

Adapted from the Openhearted, Not Unguarded full playbook. An independent, member-created resource. Not an official publication of Marijuana Anonymous or any other 12-step fellowship.