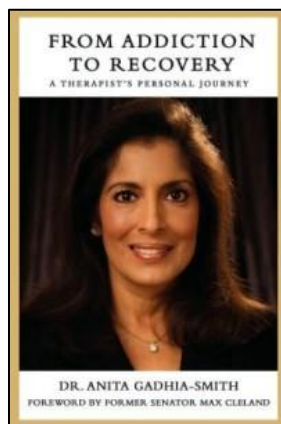


Book Review: From Addiction to Recovery: A Therapist's Personal Journey, by Dr. Anita Gadhia-Smith

Posted on [April 3, 2013](#) by [skane](#) in [Book Reviews](#)
[3](#)

Written by a renowned psychotherapist who is herself a recovering alcoholic and drug user, *From Addiction to Recovery: A Therapist's Personal Journey* is an exceedingly engaging and thoroughly engrossing personal memoir.



It also will set you back on your heels if you are expecting a light and breezy journey through time. This is no filtered look back to the recent past. It is a no-holds barred scrutiny of some self-described very bad behavior.

Not that Dr. Gadhia-Smith ever did anything bad enough to land her in jail. Other than a couple of DUIs, one which she got out of easily, the other that caused some minor consequences, she conducted her drug and alcohol use without harsh and long-lasting residual effects. Unless of course, you count as continuing nasty after-effects the decades-long numbing and refusal to deal with reality that characterizes most chronic alcoholics and drug users.

[From Addiction to Recovery: A Therapist's Personal Journey](#)

By [Dr. Anita Gadhia-Smith](#)

Published By [iUniverse.com](#)

And isn't that the point of any story about effective recovery? Until a person is ready to change, no amount of outside influence, no tearful begging or recriminations or threats will do a whit of good. You have to want to go through the painful process – and it is painful – in order to begin to heal. There is no shortcut, no matter what you may hear or read elsewhere. Progress moves at its own pace and time, depending on factors that may only be partially under your control.

Sure, you may well go to 12-step meetings. You probably don't do it initially, thinking that it's a waste of time or it couldn't possibly help you. You're not all that bad, right? But, gradually, it begins to dawn on you that there's more going on here than you can contend with. You recognize

rather quickly that things can get out of hand without someone to offer constructive comments and to listen to what's happening with you that seems, at times, more than a little overwhelming.

Dr. Gadhia-Smith, whose parents divorced when she was six years old, felt abandoned by her father, blamed her mother, and went through much of her childhood and early adulthood feeling torn between two worlds. Her parents moved to the United States from India in 1961. She was an only child, raised in Baltimore, Maryland. But she felt a tremendous split. She wasn't really American – everyone here looked at her as Indian. In India, she was considered an American. But what was she, really? Dr. Gadhia-Smith spent years trying to meld the two and come to some satisfactory resolution.

After her parents separated and divorced, Dr. Gadhia-Smith felt alone, that there was no one there for her. Her father was absent and her mother was having a nervous breakdown – literally. Lonely, and yet constantly able to surround herself with companions – generally of the opposite sex – Dr. Gadhia-Smith learned to deny her feelings at a young age.

Recounting her early experiences with alcohol, Dr. Gadhia-Smith says it is no wonder at all that she became addicted to the substance. She admits she'd do anything to allow her to escape from the pain that she experienced every day, and alcohol so neatly filled the bill. When she'd visit her father, she was allowed to drink a beer or two. In no time, alcohol was her security blanket, clung to as desperately as a rag doll by a child.

Later on, she gravitated to marijuana, then heroin, then painkillers. It was as natural a progression as breathing – and it definitely took the edge off, for a while. But it never seemed to last long enough. Tolerance made her need to use more and more often.

Anyone who's an addict knows just exactly how this goes.

Why did she write this book? As she says in the introduction, the book is “for anyone who is interested in alcoholism, addictions, the recovery process, relationships, or psychotherapy.” That certainly covers a lot of ground, but what isn't mentioned is that anyone can benefit from reading it – even if the read is a cursory one.

In other words, you don't have to use it as a manual or a how-to guide for getting clean and sober – although it certainly helps you if you are on the recovery path.



The nuggets contained in this book are golden. Take for example the comment that Dr. Gadhia-Smith feels that her life only really began after she got sober – even though that didn't occur until she was already twenty-seven years old. She'd been through a raft of relationships, most unable to break the three-month barrier, and still felt lost and alone. She attempted to continue her graduate studies, hold down a job, and still party non-stop until the wee hours – with predictably unsatisfactory results.

Cut to the present and the fact that Dr. Gadhia-Smith has been married to her husband, Ron, since she was thirty-six. She says, quite candidly, that her marriage has been a gift of sobriety, that they never would have met if they had not both been in recovery. That doesn't mean their life was pure wedded bliss. They fought constantly and bitterly at first. But the commitment and conviction they both felt to the union allowed them to weather the rough times. This part of the book is an incredibly touching love story – without all the sappy melodrama.

Life doesn't happen in a straight line. Life in recovery has a great many twists and turns, some unexpected plateaus and some fairly deep pits. But it is a continually amazing journey, one that includes experiencing the good and the bad and still being able to see the great and precious gift that life in sobriety is.

Naturally, there are some points that will resonate a bit more soundly because the author has studied psychotherapy, has herself been in therapy, and knows first-hand what her clients and patients are going through. She's been there herself. Who better to counsel addicts looking to establish themselves in recovery than someone who knows what the journey looks and feels like?

Read this book, if for nothing else than insight into how very much alike we all are. Despite our differences, when we enter recovery, embracing it with clarity and purpose, willing to do whatever it takes for as long as it takes, that's when life really begins.