**UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THINKING AND RELAPSE**

Because people talk to themselves constantly, the content of these messages or repetitive tapes can influence or predispose a person to relapse. Work to be aware of the messages that replay in your mind so that you can develop more helpful and rational thoughts to replace the negative thoughts. AA refers to this type of thinking as “stinking thinking.”

Stinky thinking -> leads to -> drinking thinking -> leads to -> drinking without thinking.

This path of negative thinking is generalized early to the use of any substance. Sometimes it is a case of excuses being made that takes a person down the path to relapse. Other times it is avoiding taking responsibility or just plain errors in thinking. Some examples of thinking that can lead to relapse (or just feeling bad in general) include the following:

1. Escapism
   1. “I can’t deal with it”
   2. “I can’t stand feeling this way”
   3. “I want to get away from my problems”
2. Relaxation
   1. “I just wanted to unwind”
   2. “It’s too hard”
3. Overwhelmed
   1. “I just wanted to unwind”
   2. “I need to feel better now”
4. Socialization
   1. “I don’t know what to say or do when I’m with others”
   2. “I feel anxious in social settings”
5. Lack of control
   1. “Recovery is too hard”
   2. “I don’t want to have to do all this”
6. Who cares?
   1. “What is the benefit of this?”
   2. “Does any of this even really matter?”
7. Magical thinking
   1. “I’ve done so many things wrong”
   2. “Everything is awful because of what I’ve done”
8. Jumping to conclusions:
   1. “No one talked to me at the meeting”
   2. “I don’t belong”
9. Minimizing
   1. “I’ll only have one drink, it’s no big deal”
   2. “So I used, nothing bad happened”
10. Magnifying
    1. “This is the worst thing that could have happened”
    2. “I’ve blown it now, why stop? Everything I worked on is down the tunes”