

# STEP ZERO

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**THEME : STEP ZERO or STEP "0"**

Assuming responsibility for their own abstemious evolution<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

The study of **Step Zero**, for abstemiology, requires the understanding of the meaning of teetotaler, abstemious process and withdrawal. Secondly, it will be necessary to discuss on the 04 (four) steps of **Step Zero**: abstemious responsibility, decision of beginning and remaining a teetotaler, abstemious behavior and, finally, practice of withdrawal conducts. However, none of these topics can be treated before understanding the theory of withdrawal characterization.

### 1. THEORY OF WITHDRAWAL CHARACTERIZATION

To understand the **theory of withdrawal characterization** we need, above all, to recognize that various activities, everyday facts, beliefs or thoughts need to be characterized so that they can belong to the teetotaler universe. The characterization of these terms changes significantly the scope and size of their values. For example, the **LEISURE** of a person who has not gone through the process of addiction is very different from the leisure of someone who has broken with the addict cycle. That happens because

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the teetotaler will have a much more restricted<sup>3</sup> way of leisure since he or she will have to avoid certain people, habits and places from their active season. This differentiation between the common person's LEISURE and the teetotaler's LEISURE requires, necessarily, a characterization, i.e., the common LEISURE is different from the ABSTEMIOUS LEISURE. The same reasoning goes for several other everyday events, so we have:

- ❖ Physical activity is different from abstemious physical activity.
- ❖ Health is different from abstemious health.
- ❖ Education is different from abstemious education.
- ❖ Focus/goal is different from abstemious goal.
- ❖ Relationships are different from abstemious relationships.
- ❖ Job/profession is different from abstemious profession.
- ❖ Culture is different from abstemious culture.
- ❖ Responsibility is different from abstemious responsibility.

Now, back to the matter at hand, the same previous example, in the case of an ABSTEMIOUS LEISURE. As said before, the common leisure is very different from the abstemious leisure. While the common leisure people can walk freely, attending parties and even ingesting alcohol, on an abstemious leisure moment these facts will not occur. The abstemious leisure consists of a qualified or differentiated leisure. The abstemious leisure is also fun, but a much more conscious fun. The abstemious leisure also represents fun, walks, entertainment and games, but without the use of drugs/alcohol and with the application of, at least, the technique of "avoid people, habits and places from the active season" and the technique "seek for healthy habits." Hence, we can claim that:

**ABSTEMIOUS LEISURE = COMMON LEISURE + AVOID AND SEEK TECHNIQUE<sup>4</sup>**

The minimum to reach the abstemious leisure is to add to the common leisure the technique of "avoid and seek". However, to be safer, it would be interesting that the

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<sup>3</sup> I prefer the terminology "differentiated" rather than "restricted".

<sup>4</sup> This technique shows the following reasoning: avoid people, habits and places during the time of addiction and seek for people, places and habits of the new abstemious life.

teetotaler added other techniques and made his/her abstemious leisure somewhat more protective.

By developing all these aspects, the ideas of **abstemious qualifiers and quantifiers** emerge.

## 1.1 ABSTEMIOUS QUALIFIERS AND QUANTIFIERS

It is important that professionals, family members, the teetotaler's tutors<sup>5</sup> and the teetotalers themselves to adjust their concepts. The concepts that are used in the common everyday life or in the process of addiction should be rearranged, restructured and adjusted to new definitions and paradigms. In this context, there is a need to quantify and qualify the abstinence.

The best **abstemious quantifier** is the **time**<sup>6</sup>. This **chronological element** brings a dynamic character to the withdrawal process making the abstemious journey to cease being static and unchanging. The life changes of the person who commits to the abstemious way will occur progressively so that the longer they remain a teetotaler, the bigger will be their metamorphosis<sup>7</sup>.

Consequently, as a rule, the withdrawal tends to be progressive since it helps developing the ethical, social, intellectual, psychological, biological and spiritual characteristics of the teetotaler. This is embodied in the various nomenclatures and definitions to the teetotaler according to its withdrawal time: infimum teetotaler, minor teetotaler (or teetominor), major teetotaler (or teetomajor), real major teetotaler (or real teetomajor), and mega-teetotaler (or post-teetotaler).

However, the **abstemious time** does not match the same understanding given to the ordinary time. The ordinary time matches, only, to the passing of a chronological lapse. While, in abstemious time, the same chronological lapse must be accompanied by the cessation of the use of drugs/alcohol. Thus, in order to be an abstemious quantifier, time needs to be qualified as an "abstemious time".

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<sup>5</sup> The therapist JOSÉ PLÍNIO DO AMARAL ALMEIDA suggests the term "Teetotalism expert" when we are referring to people who work or study the abstemious phenomenon.

<sup>6</sup> Just to illustrate, in another study, time is used to calculate the ABSTEMIOUS BALLAST and reclassify the person's withdrawal period on the abstemious ladder after the physical reintoxication occurred at the pyramidal peak of the relapse process.

<sup>7</sup> Here, the metamorphosis is the transmutation of the addicted person to a teetotaler, i.e., a true ABSTEMIOUS ALCHEMY.

Following the same reasoning, the **abstemious qualifiers** correspond to the characterization of a certain technical terms that need to be slightly remodeled. In this sense, to exemplify, I quote a small list of expressions that should be remodeled so that they can, in fact, qualify the withdrawal:

- ❖ **Abstemious limit** is different from physical or emotional limits.
- ❖ **Abstemious responsibility** is different from mere responsibility.
- ❖ **Abstemious sanity** is different from sanity.
- ❖ **Abstemious age** is different from physical or emotional age.
- ❖ **Abstemious discipline** is different from discipline.
- ❖ **Abstemious process** is different from treatment of addiction.
- ❖ **Abstemious spirituality** is different from spirituality and religion.
- ❖ **Abstemious (RE)educator** is a different professional of professionals connected to the addiction process.
- ❖ **Abstemious principles** are different from other principles.
- ❖ **Abstemious conscious evolution** does not match the common conscious evolution.
- ❖ **Abstemious assistance** is different from mere assistance.
- ❖ **Abstemious human dignity** is a qualification of human dignity.
- ❖ **Abstemious human right** is a qualified human right.
- ❖ **Abstemious time** is different from ordinary time.
- ❖ **Abstemious development** differs from mere development.

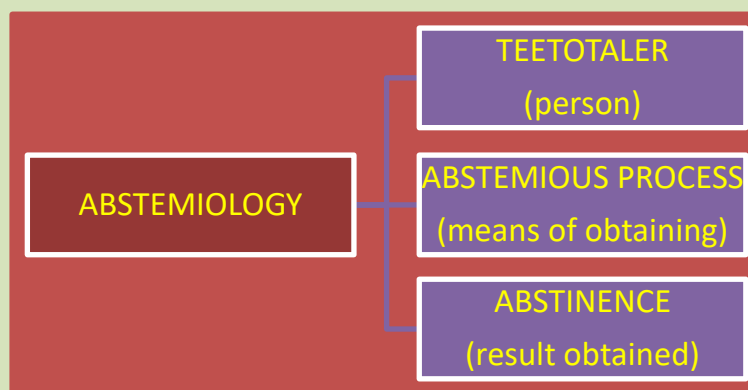
All these elements – and many others since this list has illustrative purposes only – must be remodeled to better understand the real abstemiological meaning that covers them.

Believing that this explains a little bit about the theory of withdrawal characterization, we will proceed to the study of what is understood as abstemiology.

## 2. THE ABSTEMIOLOGY TRIPOD

The abstemiology has 03 (three) central pillars, which are PERSON, ABSTINENCE and ABSTEMIOUS PROCESS. The person corresponds to the TEETOTALER. The ABSTINENCE is the result obtained and pursued by the abstemiology and encompasses several positive and negative effects. The ABSTEMIOUS

PROCESS is the means by which the person (TEETOTALER) obtains the longed-for ABSTINENCE. This process has several phases, shapes, ratings, interests of third parties and is home to several syndromes and detours. In short, the abstemiology studies the TEETOTALER, the ABSTINENCE and the PROCESS to which the teetotaler submits himself to interrupt the cycle of addiction and achieve abstinence.



Frame: the abstemiology Tripod.

We will stop, at this moment, to define with more care the content of the TEETOTALER and the ABSTEMIOUS PROCESS. For now, it is enough to understand that the teetotaler, for abstemiology, is the person who came from the addiction process. On the other hand, the abstemious process constitutes the way to be covered by the teetotaler to avoid returning to the addiction process”<sup>8</sup>.

The usual definitions of abstinence are very childish and devoid of deeper value. They are empty-of-content definitions lacking technical meaning. For instance, "abstinence is the act of abstaining, of refraining from using anything"<sup>9</sup>, or "abstinence is the act of depriving of anything, for some purpose"<sup>10</sup>, or "abstinence is to miss something or something"<sup>11</sup>.

This last definition turns out to be funny because it confuses abstinence with sadness. Thus, going straight to the point, the definition of abstinence used in this study should be understood as follows:

<sup>8</sup> Just to exemplify, the abstemious process has a **triangle of coherence** and it can have: success, evasion or abstemious evolution.

<sup>9</sup> Information available at: <<https://www.significados.com.br/abstinencia/>>. Accessed on Jan 29th. 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Information available at: <<http://www.dicionarioinformal.com.br/abstin%C3%Aancia/>>. Accessed on Jan 29th. 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Information available at: <<http://www.dicionarioinformal.com.br/abstin%C3%Aancia/>>. Accessed on Jan 29th. 2017.

**Abstinence is a process whereby a person who, in a lucid way, opts to abstain from unhealthy, pernicious or degrading habits, for a long time<sup>12</sup>, through scientific<sup>13</sup> or empirical<sup>14</sup> methods, techniques and instruments, with the purpose of restoring conducting one's own life and its dignity, as well as overcoming its limitations and evolving consciously.**

Thus, it will only be understood as abstinence that which empathically conforms to this concept. The simple interruption of drug/alcohol use is not abstinence<sup>15</sup>. This definition of abstinence addresses any type of unhealthy habit, such as drug addiction, compulsive shopping, gambling, religious fanaticism, or sex addiction.

Now, knowing what the theory of withdrawal characterization is, as well as what teetotaler, abstemious process and abstinence are, **Step Zero** can be discussed.

### 3. STEP "ZERO" or STEP "0"

The step "zero" precedes the application of the twelve (12) steps technique advocated by anonymous groups (A.A. and N.A.). Actually, the step "zero" is not just a step prior to the 12 steps, but it is the time preceding all other steps, i.e., it is as if step "zero" came before each step. However, what is the step "zero"? It is the moment when the teetotaler takes responsibility for his actions and begins to walk the path of abstinence. The step "zero" is the responsibility for the course of the abstemious life itself, it is to take control of the abstinence process evolution and not leave it in the hands of third parties. None of the twelve (12) steps can be given without initiating the

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<sup>12</sup> In another concept of abstinence suggested by the teetotaler Fábio, it was decided to replace the expression "by long temporal lapse" to the term "just for today". I understand that such substitution is coherent and justifiable. I only alert that one should not confuse the technique of "just for today" with the time lapse (chronological criteria) necessary to be considered a teetotaler.

<sup>13</sup> The abstemiology can also adopt the concepts of the Transtheoretical Model proposed by Prochaska and Diclemente (1980s), as long as it is in an adapted manner.

<sup>14</sup> The most varied anonymous groups present several abstemious concepts and techniques, and such techniques represent one of the ways for abstinence, so that to reject them would be incoherent and untechnical.

<sup>15</sup> We shall see later on, that this is only putative abstinence, and it corresponds only to one of the various forms of abstinence.

**Step Zero**, that is, the responsibility<sup>16</sup> to face each step and assume an abstemious posture consistent with his abstemious consciential evolution. It should be emphasized that responsibility in the abstemious process does not correspond to the same responsibility popularly known, since during abstinence a new responsibility will arise, that is, abstemious responsibility<sup>17</sup>.

**Thus, Step Zero can be divided into four stages: abstemious responsibility, abstemious decision, abstemious position and abstemious conducts.** The following chart elucidates these steps and some of their characteristics:

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<sup>16</sup> In his seminars, JOSÉ PLÍNIO DO AMARAL ALMEIDA always warns, "responsibility is to respond appropriately to the acts of life". This concept may be used here.

<sup>17</sup> Application of the theory of withdrawal characterization already explained, succinctly, previously.

STEP "ZERO OR STEP "0"					
CHARACTERISTICS PHASES	NATURE	GOAL	FORM	PRINCIPLES	TECHNICS
<b>ABSTEMIOUS RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>Self-understanding</b> of one's situation and <b>Self-confrontation</b> of consequences	Sobriety Maintenance  Understanding effects  Syndromes avoidance  Correct application of techniques  Ethics of abstemious principles	Identifies "who"	Principle of the inevitability of the consequences  Principle of assumption  Principle of consumption	How, where, what place, way or way to look for the techniques?
<b>ABSTEMIOUS DECISION (Decisionism)</b>	Volitional act (Emotional)	Characterized by the mere intention of doing something to change its condition	Identifies "why"	Principle of permanent self- investigation  Principle of priority	<b>KNOWING TECHNIQUES</b> Learning phase
<b>ABSTEMIOUS POSTURE (Position)</b>	Cognitive change (Rational)	Identification of what should be done	Identifies "what"	Principle of the <i>busilis et puctum dolens</i>  Principle of absolute rejection of any reservation	<b>UNDERSTANDING TECHNIQUES</b> Phase of knowledge
<b>ABSTEMIOUS CONDUCTS</b>	Realistic Action plan	Self-efficacy Effective action	Identifies "how"	Principle of the abstemious disciplinary regime  Principle of abstemious coalition  Principle of the preservation zone or safety principle or zone of certainty <sup>18</sup>	<b>APPLYING TECHNIQUES</b> Execution phase

Chart: Steps and characteristics of step "zero".

<sup>18</sup> Adaptation of the ideas developed by PHILIPP VON HECK (1858-1943).



We'll look at each one of these steps.

### (1) ABSTEMIOUS RESPONSIBILITY

It corresponds to the responsibility that must be internalized during the abstemious process. It is a new responsibility. The abstemious responsibility is a kind of responsibility qualified by the abstemious process. It is not enough to have responsibility; one must have responsibility for everything that involves his abstemious process: maintenance of sobriety, understanding of effects, avoidance of syndromes, correct application of techniques and ethics of the abstemious principles. Thus, the abstemious responsibility involves a series of new burdens and errands that must be incorporated into the positive S.I.A. **The assumption<sup>19</sup> of abstemious responsibility is the initial manifestation of the step "zero".** In the comparative table below, there are some examples of common responsibility and abstemious responsibility:

COMMON RESPONSIBILITY	ABSTEMIOUS RESPONSIBILITY
If you "drink" do not drive	I cannot "drink"
Use medications when needed	Use medications as recommended by your doctor
If I sleep late I'll wake up more "tired"	I cannot sleep late because I can't wake up tired I cannot wake up "tired"
I can do physical activity	I must do physical activity
I can study any subject	I must study abstemiology, adictology, conscientiology and psychology
Self-knowledge is useful	Self-knowledge is fundamental

<sup>19</sup> **PRINCIPLE OF ASSUMPTION:** this principle consists in the act of assuming its real condition, that is, it happens when the person asserts himself as being teetotaler or addicted. It is a very important principle from the evolutionary point of view, since, when assuming the condition of addict, for example, the person knows "what it is" and "to where it goes". On the other hand, assuming the status of teetotaler causes the person to change his or her posture and to seek the path of abstinence. What is important in this principle is that if the addict or teetotaler internalizes that, it causes him to assume his real condition towards the facts of life. The person becomes a convicted addict or teetotaler. The important thing about this principle is that the person assumes his real condition and stop "cheating himself". Therefore, the PRINCIPLE OF ASSUMPTION may have 04 (four) models:

- ❖ Neither the addict nor his/her relatives (codependents) recognize the addiction process: PRINCIPLE OF ABSOLUTE DISASSEMBLY.
- ❖ Relatives recognize the addiction process of their loved one, but the person does not self-recognize as being addicted (or, in rare cases, vice versa): PRINCIPLE OF RELATIVE DISASSEMBLY.
- ❖ To assume the condition of addict and self-recognition of the addiction process: it is when the person assumes that they are addicted - PRINCIPLE OF THE NEGATIVE ASSUMPTION.
- ❖ To assume the condition of teetotaler and self-recognition of the need to initiate, maintain and evolve in the abstemious process: it is when the person assumes responsibility for his own abstinence - PRINCIPLE OF THE POSITIVE ASSUMPTION.

<b>COMMON RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>ABSTEMIOUS RESPONSIBILITY</b>
Self-pitying people are unpleasant	Self-pity generates relapse
Sometimes I can go to places where drugs/alcohol are used: bars, concerts or parties	I should never go to places where drugs/alcohol are used
Routine annoys	Routine is necessary
I can take several risks	I must avoid taking unnecessary risks so that I will not increase my anxiety
If I am impulsive, I will deal with the consequences	The impulsive will relapse
If I do not finish what I started I feel bad	Not finishing what one starts is lack of finish and this generates relapse
I can sleep without forgiving anyone.	The lack of forgiveness or self-forgiveness is the cause of resentment and guilt that can lead me back to addiction

Chart: Comparison of common responsibility and abstemious responsibility.

## (2) TWO ABSTEMIOUS STEPS: DECISIONISM AND POSITIONISM

Making the decision not to use drugs/alcohol is easy; anyone makes that decision at any time. So, that one who wakes up with a hangover and nauseated by "boozing it up" the night before usually decides he will never "drink." However, a few days later — or on the same day — he goes back to "drinking". Why does this occur? Because making the decision of "not to drink" is very different from assuming the "BEING A TEETOTALER" position. The change of position — as will be seen below — is something much more complex and requires the application of new ideologies and techniques for the maintenance of sobriety. In its turn, the decision not to drink is very simple and does not necessarily mean that the person will remain sober for long periods. Thus, deciding "not to drink" is very different from assuming an abstemious position. However, by all means, "decisionism" precedes "positionism", that is, anyone who has assumed his abstemious position has decided to stop using drugs/alcohol. Deciding not to use drugs/alcohol is very logical and rational, but it is insufficient to remain abstemious.

In short, for someone who is not addicted to stop using drugs/alcohol is enough to just "decide" not to use it, that is, decisionism is enough. On the other hand, in order to enter the abstemious journey, it will be necessary to overcome two successive stages: deciding to stop using drugs/alcohol (decisionism) and assuming the abstemious position (positionism).

Thus, for instance, the relapse process will manifest itself to all teetotalers who decide not to use drugs/alcohol if they do not take an abstemious position against

the facts of life. **The abstemious process requires the overcoming of two stages: the decision not to use drugs/alcohol (decisionism) and, consequently, the change of attitude towards the facts of life (positionism).**

### **(3) ABSTEMIOUS POSITION**

It is the change of position when facing difficulties that will arise in the treatment. Position change occurs when the "before" addict becomes the "now" teetotaler. The teetotaler strives for sobriety and defends himself as best he can against the mishaps and difficulties that may arise. Abstinence requires humility, but does not accept passivity. Being abstemious is not just to "abstain"; on the contrary, being abstemious is to actively fight for sobriety and serve as a constant example. Being abstemious requires a lot of effort, struggle and dedication, that is, being abstemious requires change of position.

### **(4) ABSTEMIOUS CONDUCTS**

Abstemious conducts correspond to what the teetotaler must avoid in addition to what he must do. Here we have the application of the technique avoid people, habits and places from the active season and look for healthy conducts<sup>20</sup>. Conducts are the practical part of the step "zero", so they represent what the teetotaler must accomplish. The conducts are related to sobriety, techniques, principles, nexus of negligence, relapse process, abstemious human right, deviations of 2nd, 3rd or 4th echelon, recovery triangle, cognitive reserves, sanity, abstemious limits and zones of certainty. It should also be noted that conduct might be protective or violator of the abstemious process. The abstemious conducts ultimately result in overruling<sup>21</sup>, since they generate the effective model change of previous behavior that culminated with addiction.

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<sup>20</sup> Here, the acts necessary for the restoration of sanity should be understood as "healthy conducts" since the teetotaler lost it, even partially, during his addiction process.

<sup>21</sup> Overruling corresponds to the changes of life's rules that are necessary for the person to remain abstemious.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Abstemiology studies the **teetotaler**, the **process of abstinence**, and **abstinence**. In this **abstemious tripod**, principles, techniques, syndromes, effects, classifications, terminologies and many other abstemious themes are analyzed. With regard to **Step Zero**, it is necessary to understand the **theory of withdrawal characterization** since many factors must undergo a characterization to be analyzed in an abstemious way. It was mentioned the example of abstemious leisure, that differs from ordinary leisure since it must focus at least on the **avoidance and seek technique** to ensure that the teetotaler does not unnecessarily expose himself to risks while practicing his leisure.

**Step Zero** requires a sequence of acts, which are assumption of responsibility, decision-making (decisionism), attitude of position (positionism) and conduct consistent with the abstemious process. Remembering that all these 04 (stages) must be characterized, i.e., they include abstemious responsibility, abstemious decision, abstemious position, and abstemious conducts.

Finally, it should be noted that **Step Zero** does not only occur at the beginning of the abstemious process, on the contrary, the person who wants to change the paradigm addicted by the new abstemious model must internalize **Step Zero** daily. This means that **Step Zero** precedes several other steps advocated by anonymous groups. Therefore, before any step - and even during their application - there must be **Step Zero**.

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