

*From Emotional Sobriety by Tian Dayton*  
**Setting Up Your Healing Network**

**Talk doesn't cook rice.**  
*Chinese proverb*

Talk alone does not inscribe new hardwiring into our neural networks. Our emotions are in our bodies, as well as in our minds and hearts, and so is our balance. In order to restore emotional balance, we need to log the necessary hours in the presence of others who are experiencing balance and pleasure in their lives. Much healing takes place outside the clinic; we need to create a new design for living to create lasting change. Adding new relationships, as well as nourishing, creative, and physically enhancing activities such as hobbies, exercise, and relaxation, can help to reregulate a limbic system that talk alone cannot reach.

Because this is a journey, we need to prepare ourselves. We need to create what psychologists refer to as a “holding environment” in which we feel safe enough to heal. The feelings we are allowing to emerge within us may be scary, challenging, and beautiful. Our healing network will need to be strong enough to hold us through our learning how to tolerate not only painful emotions, but beautiful ones as well; not only our feelings that arise around disconnection, but also those fears and anxieties that connection engenders.

Think of recovery as downloading new, more refined software, as creating and operating from new programs. We're cleaning out our self system, debugging and clearing out contaminated emotional, psychological, and physiological programs so that we can operate more smoothly. Once we have successfully accomplished all of this, which may take several years, we are then operating from new, updated, and streamlined programming.

**Some of the primary tasks of recovery are as follows:**

- Learning the skills of mind, body, and emotional self-regulation.
- Resolving childhood wounds so they don't undermine self-regulation.
- Learning effective and healthy ways of self-soothing.
- Learning effective ways to manage stress.
- Developing emotional literacy so emotions can be talked out rather than acted out.
- Maintaining a healthy body; getting regular exercise, rest, and proper nutrition.
- Processing emotional ups and downs as they happen.
- Learning to consciously shift between feeling and thinking states.
- Learning to use the thinking mind to regulate our feelings.
- Developing inner resources: quiet, meditation, spiritual pursuits.
- Developing outer resources: a strong relationship network, work, hobbies, social life, and a supportive community.