Seven Heavenly Virtues Temperance

The first article in our series on [the Seven Heavenly Virtues](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/recovery-and-the-seven-heavenly-virtues/) was focused upon [diligence](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/seven-heavenly-virtues-diligence/), which we greatly associated with such qualities as faith and courage. Temperance is more aligned with prudence, and actually complements diligence quite well for those who are attempting to fully embrace the concept of virtuous living. While diligence is all about taking action and knowing when to do the right thing, temperance is the other side of the coin, where we learn to show restraint when most necessary.

We often [lack inhibitions](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/inhibitions-lowered-by-addiction/) while under the influence of drugs and alcohol, and our negative behaviors can become somewhat ingrained into our being over long periods of time. Temperance is often associated with sobriety itself, but we must learn to temper *all* behaviors if we wish to remain sober. Knowledge of temperance is what will ultimately help us to avoid leading an excessive and gluttonous lifestyle. We are able to [let go of our selfishness](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/letting-go-of-selfishness-with-help-from-the-rolling-stones/), and in doing so we will become a bit more thoughtful in our considerations regarding what is right and what is wrong.

Once we learn to see the value of prudence in our practice of temperance, we will come to see just why temperance and diligence are almost inseparable from one another. The following discussion should aid you in this understanding, while also explaining why the practice of temperance is so important to avoiding a life ruled by [the Seven Deadly Sins](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/addiction-and-the-seven-deadly-sins/) and the many character defects embodied therein. In fact, you just may come to see that temperance is the key to [removing many of your character defects](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/removing-our-character-defects/) on a daily basis.

Temperance is a complicated virtue to define, as everyone has their own ideas regarding which areas of life require the most self-control. For instance, the Amish are incredibly temperate, restraining from many modern-day luxuries that a fair portion of the world has come to see as necessities. But this is not to say that you cannot enjoy the internet, microwaves, and a life of finery without showing some level of temperance. The opposite of temperance is [gluttony](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/seven-deadly-sins-gluttony/), not [greed](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/seven-deadly-sins-greed/). Granted, the difference is somewhat negligible. But while materialism isn’t the best quality to demonstrate, there are arguably more important areas in which you may exhibit some restraint.

In fact, only two of the four most important areas of temperance as defined by the Seven Heavenly Virtues could be said to impact one’s greed at all. These areas are humility (another one of the Seven Heavenly Virtues) and self-regulation. Those with humility will not necessarily feel as if they deserve all the fineries in the world, and those who self-regulate will most certainly not succumb to gluttony or drunkenness. We can’t live every day as if we’re attending a Roman feast. This analogy is not meant to evoke imagery of [eating disorders](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/types-and-dangers-of-eating-disorders/), simply to point out that hedonism and ostentation rarely lead to lives of virtue. But they may, in many cases, exacerbate our addiction.

The third component of temperance is prudence, something we talked about quite a bit when we covered diligence. If you think about [the Serenity Prayer](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/breaking-down-the-serenity-prayer/), prudence is essentially the wisdom to understand the difference between that which we cannot change and that which we can or must alter for the greater good. In the scheme of this wisdom, temperance is the ability to restrain ourselves when we know we cannot change a given circumstance yet very much would like to try. We need inhibitions if we are to avoid doing greater harm than has already been done.

The fourth component of temperance is forgiveness. It may seem odd to some that forgiveness would factor into self-control at all, but the two go hand-in-hand better than you might think. When recovering from addiction and alcoholism, whether speaking of the addicts themselves or their recovering family and friends, there will come a time when we must learn to [let go of resentments](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/letting-go-of-resentments-before-they-kill-us/). If we don’t, we may find ourselves entertaining thoughts of [wrath](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/treatment/). But this sort of rampant [anger](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/five-stages-of-grief-anger/) will do us no good. We must replace it with temperance.

Temperance’s Role in Addiction Recovery

The sort of wrathful anger described above is just one example of an instance in which a lack of temperance may lead to [emotional disturbance](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/emotional-disturbance-highs-and-lows/) and possibly relapse. When we succumb to anger over our perceptions that somebody has wronged us, it can be difficult not to lash out. But in doing so, all we accomplish is ensuring that our relationship with the person with whom we are at odds will never be mended. This can then lead to [depression](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/five-stages-of-grief-depression/) when we fail to [accept the loss](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/accepting-loss-in-recovery/) of that person, and we are deep in our second bottle of liquor before we can even contemplate what has happened.

When we think of temperance as the opposite of gluttony, its role in addiction becomes even clearer. Addicts and alcoholics are prone to excessive living. As soon as we give in to one excess, another may soon look quite appealing. The concept of “one day at a time” has many applications, and one of them is the notion that we must live our lives in moderation. The line between a binge and a bender can be exceptionally thin, and we often find it best that we simply avoid both.

This is one of the reasons that abstinence-based programs are generally recommended. Sure, some people have managed to return to moderation. Kelly Osbourne did it, as noted in [our list of sober celebrities](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/sober-celebrities-famous-people-in-recovery/). But this is a rare feat, and many of us will not be able to pull it off. By the time we discover that moderation is impossible for us, we may have already reached the point of no return. If we wish to maintain our sobriety, we have to embrace temperance and do our best to avoid any slip-ups.

Also remember that the point of sobriety is not *just* to avoid drugs and alcohol, but to salvage our lives from the wreckage we have created of them. Any lack of inhibitions on our part, whether substance-fueled or otherwise, will stand in the way of this endeavor. Temperance is therefore essential, as self-restraint is the only way we can keep ourselves from causing even more harm than we have caused already. If we fail in this pursuit, we will wind up hurting those we love the most. [They do not want to watch us relapse](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/for-the-family-dealing-with-relapse/), nor do they want to see us struggle in any other facet of our lives. We should remember this whenever we find ourselves lacking self-control.

Learning to Favor Temperance over Gluttony

Gluttony in this sense could be replaced by any desire to live excessively. But as noted above, we will occasionally find ourselves wishing to give up our restraint and begin taking our self-will back. We have to remain strong in [our practice of Step Three](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/understanding-and-practicing-step-three/) if we are to avoid this. In other words, the key to unlocking our temperance is to embrace the spiritual remedy suggested by groups such as AA and NA. For some, however, this will present some major issues.

It’s a simple fact that many addicts and alcoholics, despite our lack of inhibitions over doing wrong when we are under the influence, have many [reservations about getting sober](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/putting-aside-your-reservations-against-sobriety/). For all the [guilt](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/guilt-the-heaviest-load-youll-ever-carry/) that we may feel over our actions in the past, it is hard for us to forget about the times that gluttony and excessive substance abuse have brought about a synthetic euphoria that helped us to escape from the reality of our lives. Desperately wishing to change aspects of our lives yet knowing we could not, we decided to forgo temperance and give in to our baser urges.

This is why we need the spiritual remedy. But some of us confuse the notion of spirituality with that of religion. For some, this brings about painful memories, moments in which we felt that there could be no loving deity watching over us unless said deity had decided to abandon us altogether. Alas, [true faith](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/alpha-series-the-true-meaning-of-faith/) is not about getting what we want at every turn, nor does it allow us to escape the harsh realities of life. True faith is about the belief that things will not remain sour forever. No matter what happens, balance will return to our lives in the end. Whether we come by this faith through religion or sheer optimism is altogether irrelevant.

We have the ability to create such balance in our own lives through the practice of temperance. Amethyst recently shared the story of [a remarkable young woman named Alexa](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/alexas-story/), who recovered from addiction only to develop a severe form of brain cancer. But this has not caused her to look at life as unforgiving, for she is still able to recognize the good that sobriety has brought her. If we can embrace temperance and prudently assess what is right from what is wrong, we can eventually come to experience the serenity that this amazing young woman has discovered. In doing so, we will never run short on reasons to refrain from reliving our previous excessive lifestyle. The only excess we will discover is the overwhelming joy of living life on life’s terms.