



Substance Abuse Workbook

2025

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Introduction

This document has been developed by NICRO at the request of our beneficiaries. It is being made available to the general public as part of our crime and violence prevention service. Individuals and organisations may make use of this document for non-profit and educational purposes.

This workbook contains explanatory notes, activities, worksheets, examples, and educational content, as well as guidance and advice.

The goal of this workbook is to provide educational information on reducing or stopping the use of substances, so that affected people can make more informed choices about their current situation.

This workbook can also be used on conjunction with the following workbooks and workbooks, available from NICRO Resources page on our website.

- Peer Pressure Workbooks for Teens
- Managing Difficult People Guide
- Emotional Intelligence Workbook
- Developing Resilience Workbook
- Co-Parenting Workbook
- Toxic Relationships Reader

Section 1: Understanding Addiction

DEFINITION OF SUBSTANCE USE, ABUSE, AND DEPENDENCE

What is Substance Use?

Substance use refers to the **consumption of alcohol, prescription medication, or illicit drugs**. Not all use is harmful. For example, drinking a glass of wine occasionally or taking prescribed medication as directed is considered use without immediate concern.

However, use becomes a problem when it interferes with health, responsibilities, or relationships.

What is Substance Abuse?

Substance abuse involves the **misuse of a substance in a way that causes harm**. This might include:

- Using substances more frequently or in higher amounts than intended
- Taking drugs outside of medical guidance
- Using substances to cope with stress, trauma, or mental health problems
- Engaging in risky behaviours while under the influence (e.g., driving drunk)

Abuse is not about the substance alone. It is about the **impact on daily functioning, safety, and well-being**.

What is Substance Dependence?

Dependence means the body and/or mind has become **reliant on the substance**. It includes:

- **Tolerance** – needing more of the substance to get the same effect
- **Withdrawal** – physical or emotional symptoms when not using
- **Loss of control** – repeated failed attempts to cut down or stop
- **Compulsive use** – continuing to use despite serious consequences
- Compulsive thoughts- thoughts around how the substance can be obtained, when it will be used, how good it will feel

Substance dependence is often associated with addiction, a chronic condition that affects brain function, behaviour, and decision-making.

The Continuum of Use

Stage	Description	Risk Level
Use	Occasional, controlled use	Low
Misuse/Abuse	Harmful patterns of use	Moderate-High
Dependence	Loss of control, tolerance, withdrawal	High/Critical

WORKSHEET: SELF-REFLECTION ON SUBSTANCE USE

Instructions: Complete the questions below honestly. There are no right or wrong answers. the goal is awareness.

- 1. What substances have I used in the past 12 months?**

- 2. Have I ever used a substance to escape or cope with difficult emotions or situations?** Yes / No – If yes, explain:

- 3. Have I experienced any of the following? (Tick all that apply)**
 - ☐ Needing more of a substance to feel the same effect
 - ☐ Using even when I promised myself I would not
 - ☐ Consistently thinking about the substance- either obtaining it or how it will feel to use/consume it and when.
 - ☐ Withdrawal symptoms (shakes, anxiety, sweating, cravings)
 - ☐ Problems at work, home, or with the law because of use
 - ☐ Losing interest in activities I used to enjoy

- 4. How do I feel about my current relationship with substances?**

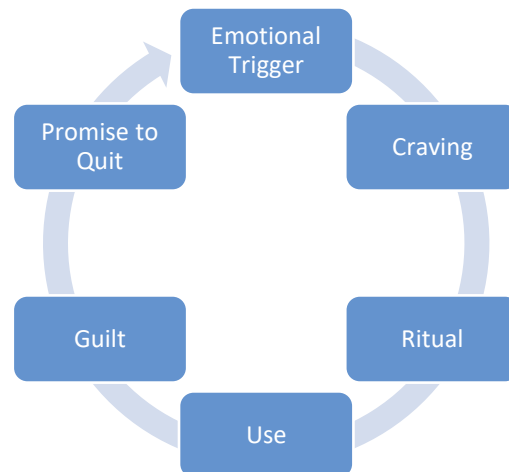
- 5. Am I ready to make a change? Why or why not?**

THE ADDICTION CYCLE

What Is the Addiction Cycle?

Addiction is not a single event. It is a repeating **pattern of thoughts, emotions, and behaviours**. Understanding this cycle can help you recognize where you are in the process and how to interrupt it before lapse happens.

The addiction cycle typically involves the following **six stages**:



1. Emotional Trigger or Pain

This is the **starting point**, often linked to a difficult emotional state such as:

- Stress
- Loneliness
- Grief
- Anger or resentment
- Anxiety or depression
- Trauma reminders

People often use substances to **escape** or **numb** emotional pain. not just to “get high.”

2. Craving or Urge

A **craving** is a strong psychological or physical desire to use. It might feel overwhelming and can be triggered by:

- Specific places or people
- Certain times of day
- Emotions or memories
- Social pressure
- Reminders that link to even the weather the first-time usage occurred

Cravings can seem irrational: even knowing the consequences, the urge still comes.

3. Ritual or Planning

This is the **mental rehearsal** stage. It involves planning how and when to use:

- Fantasizing about using
- Lying to others

- Making excuses to be alone
- Collecting money or preparing the environment

Even if no substance is used yet, this stage shows strong psychological engagement.

4. Substance Use

This is the moment of actual use. At this point, many people feel relief or release. but it is **short-term**. The longer-term results are often:

- Shame or regret
- Legal, financial, or health problems
- Relationship breakdowns

5. Guilt and Shame

After using, many people feel **self-hatred, guilt, or hopelessness**, which may lead to isolation or self-punishment. These feelings often reinforce the belief that change is impossible.

This emotional low can act as the **next trigger**, restarting the cycle.

6. Temporary Abstinence or Promises to Change

This is the **"I'm never doing this again"** phase. You might:

- Make apologies
- Throw substances away
- Set goals to stop

But without real support, strategies, or behavioural changes, the cycle typically **repeats**.

WORKSHEET: BREAKING THE CYCLE

Instructions: Think of the last time you used. Trace it through the cycle below. Be honest. This is for your own understanding.

1. **What was the emotional trigger?** (e.g., fight with partner, loneliness, financial stress)

2. **What did the craving feel like? What thoughts came up?**

3. **What did you do during the ritual/planning stage?**

4. **What happened during use? How long did it last?**

5. **What emotions did you feel afterward? (Guilt/Shame)**

6. **Did you make any promises or plans to quit afterward?**
☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, what were they?

7. **What would help you interrupt this cycle next time?**

COMMON TRIGGERS

What is a Trigger?

A **trigger** is any internal or external cue that **stimulates the urge to use substances**. Triggers can be thoughts, feelings, people, places, or events that activate cravings or habits linked to past substance use.

Triggers are **personal**, but most fall into common patterns. Recognizing and preparing for them is essential for lapse prevention.

Types of Triggers

1. Emotional Triggers (Internal)

These are emotional states that can lead to craving:

- Stress or anxiety
- Loneliness or boredom
- Anger, frustration
- Shame or guilt
- Depression or hopelessness
- Excitement or overconfidence

People do not only use substances to feel better. they sometimes use them to **enhance good feelings**, which can also be a risk.

2. Environmental Triggers (External)

These are people, places, or things associated with substance use:

- Certain friends or family members
- Bars, clubs, or specific neighbourhoods
- Parties or events where others are using
- Music, smells, or visual cues related to use
- Money in hand, seeing drug paraphernalia
- Weather

3. Situational Triggers

These relate to life events or daily circumstances:

- Arguments or relationship problems
- Financial trouble
- Job loss or work stress
- Legal problems or court dates
- Holidays, anniversaries, or grief dates

4. Cognitive Triggers

These are thoughts and beliefs that can set up lapse:

- "I can handle it this time."
- "One drink won't hurt."
- "I have been clean for a week. I deserve it."
- "I already messed up, might as well go all in."

These are **thinking errors**. ways the brain justifies harmful behaviour. Recognizing them helps break the cycle.

High-Risk Trigger Combinations

The most dangerous situations often combine several triggers. For example:

- Feeling lonely (**emotional**) at home (**environmental**) after losing a job (**situational**), and thinking, "What's the point?" (**cognitive**)

WORKSHEET: KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS

Instructions: Reflect honestly. Identifying your patterns helps you build strategies to manage them.

1. List three emotional states that have triggered use in the past:

2. List three people, places, or things that remind you of using:

3. Describe a recent situation where you felt at risk of using:

- What happened?
- How did you respond?
- What might you do differently next time?

4. Write down two common thoughts or excuses you use before lapse:

5. Which of these triggers do you feel least prepared to handle? Why?

PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF SUBSTANCES

Why This Matters

Understanding how substances affect your **body and mind** helps explain:

- Why cravings are so powerful
- Why withdrawal is difficult
- Why healing takes time
- Why lapse is often not just about “willpower”

Substances change your brain chemistry and body systems. These effects can last long after use stops and vary by drug type, dose, frequency, and individual health factors.

1. General Effects of Substance Use

Psychological (Mental and Emotional) Effects

- Mood swings (e.g., euphoria → depression)
- Anxiety or paranoia
- Poor impulse control
- Hallucinations or delusions (in high doses)
- Memory problems and confusion
- Emotional numbness or detachment
- Increased risk of mental illness (e.g., depression, psychosis)

Long-term use can **re-wire brain circuits**, especially those involved in motivation, reward, decision-making, and stress response.

Physical Effects

- Damage to the heart, liver, lungs, or kidneys
- Disrupted sleep and appetite
- Dehydration and malnutrition
- Chronic fatigue or pain
- Immune system suppression
- Risk of overdose or death
- Sexual dysfunction and hormonal changes
- Increased risk of infections (especially with injected drugs)

Substance-Specific Examples

Substance	Physical Effects	Psychological Effects
Alcohol	Liver damage, high blood pressure	Depression, impaired judgment, aggression
Cocaine	Heart strain, nose damage (snorted)	Paranoia, anxiety, overconfidence
Heroin	Respiratory failure, collapsed veins	Euphoria followed by apathy, intense craving
Methamphetamine	Tooth decay, skin sores, insomnia	Paranoia, hallucinations, severe anxiety
Cannabis	Lung irritation (smoked), slowed reflexes	Memory issues, anxiety, detachment

Substance	Physical Effects	Psychological Effects
Prescription opioids	Constipation, drowsiness	Mood swings, addiction risk, depression
Benzodiazepines (e.g., Xanax)	Sedation, dizziness	Confusion, memory loss, dependence

Polysubstance use (using more than one drug at once) increases risks and worsens both physical and psychological outcomes.

WORKSHEET: MY EXPERIENCE WITH SUBSTANCE EFFECTS

Instructions: Reflect on your own use and how it has affected your body and mind. Be honest. this is not about shame, it is about understanding what needs healing.

1. List the substances you have used most frequently:

2. What physical effects have you noticed (during or after use)?
(e.g., fatigue, illness, weight changes, pain, sexual problems)

3. What mental or emotional changes have you experienced?
(e.g., mood swings, anxiety, numbness, paranoia, low motivation)

4. Have these effects changed over time (better or worse)? Explain:

5. What symptoms are still affecting you today (if any)?

Recovery Insight

Many effects **improve or reverse over time** once use stops. but others may require medical or psychological treatment.

Tracking your symptoms over weeks and months can help you **measure progress**, not just sobriety.

ACTIVITY: MY SUBSTANCE USE TIMELINE

Purpose:

This exercise helps you reflect on the journey of your substance use. not just when it started, but **how it changed over time**. Understanding key moments can help you recognize triggers, trauma links, and life events that contributed to use.

Instructions:

You can complete this activity by:

- Drawing a timeline across the page and adding events along it, **OR**
- Filling in the guided questions and event log below.

Be honest and specific. this is for your growth, not judgment.

Step 1: Life Timeline Basics

Age/Year	Life Events	Substance Use? (Yes/No)	Notes (type of substance, pattern, reason for use)

Step 2: Guided Reflection Questions

1. **When did you first try a substance (including alcohol or cigarettes)? What was the situation?**
2. **When did substance use become more frequent or problematic for you?**
3. **What changed at that time (relationships, trauma, stress)?**
4. **Have there been periods when you stopped or reduced use? What helped you stop?**
5. **What was your lowest point (emotionally, physically, or socially) due to substance use?**
 -
6. **What patterns or cycles do you notice when you look at your timeline?** (e.g., use increases after loss, relationship problems, money issues, etc.)
7. **How does it feel to look at your substance use history this way?**
 - ☐ Angry ☐ Sad ☐ Motivated ☐ Overwhelmed ☐ Hopeful
 - Other:

Insight Box: Why This Activity Matters

Many people in recovery believe they “just ended up here,” but timelines help reveal that addiction is often **linked to events, pain, and unmet needs**. Seeing it clearly helps you:

- Break shame by putting your journey in context
- Identify trauma or high-risk periods
- Plan for what to do differently in similar future situations

Section 2: Motivation for Change

STAGES OF CHANGE MODEL (PROCHASKA & DiCLEMENTE)

Why Understanding Change Matters

Change does not happen all at once. It happens in stages. often with **lapse**, hesitation, and growth happening side by side. The **Stages of Change Model** helps people understand where they are in the recovery process, without judgment.

Developed by **Prochaska and DiClemente**, this model is used worldwide to guide addiction recovery and other behaviour change efforts.

The Six Stages of Change

1. Precontemplation ("Not Ready")

- **Mindset:** "I don't have a problem." / "People are overreacting."
- The person may deny or minimize the consequences of substance use.
- There is no intention to change behaviour in the near future.

Goal: Raise awareness. Start planting seeds of insight.

2. Contemplation ("Thinking About It")

- **Mindset:** "Maybe I have a problem." / "I want to stop, but I'm scared."
- The person begins to recognize the negative impact of substance use.
- Ambivalence is strong. fear, doubt, and resistance are common.

Goal: Weigh pros and cons honestly. Encourage hope and self-belief.

3. Preparation ("Getting Ready")

- **Mindset:** "I want to change. what do I do next?"
- The person accepts they need to change and starts planning.
- May set a quit date, tell someone, or explore support options.

Goal: Develop a concrete plan, gather support, and remove barriers.

4. Action ("Making the Change")

- **Mindset:** "I'm doing it."
- Active efforts are being made. not using, attending meetings, setting boundaries.
- This stage is vulnerable to lapse due to stress, pressure, or withdrawal.

Goal: Build structure, coping tools, and accountability. Celebrate small wins.

5. Maintenance ("Staying on Track")

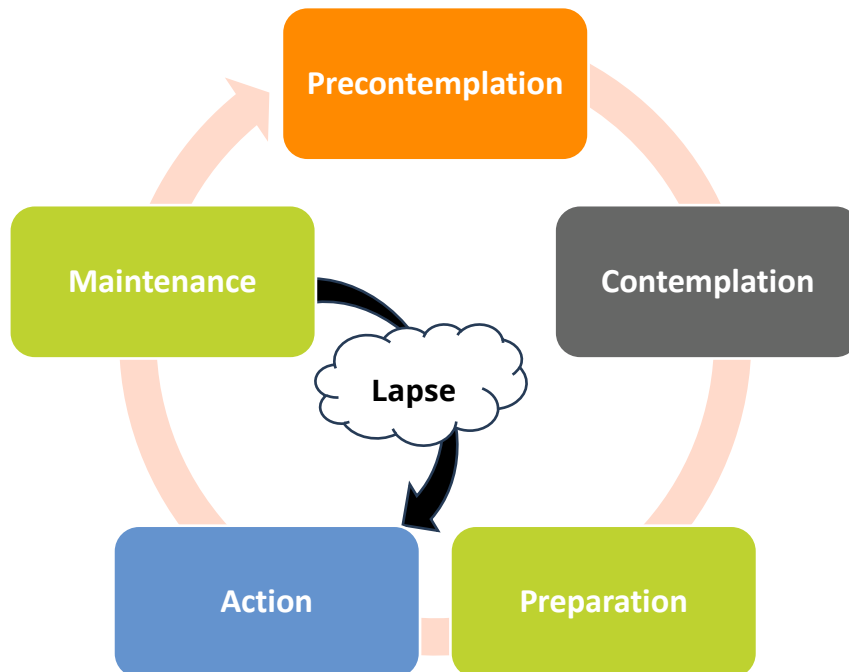
- **Mindset:** "I've changed, and I'm protecting my progress."
- New behaviours are becoming routine. The person is managing triggers and stress without substances.
- This stage can last months or years.

Goal: Strengthen habits, reinforce identity change, prepare for future setbacks.

6. Lapse

- **Mindset:** “I messed up.”
- Many people return to earlier stages after a lapse. This is not failure. It is a **part of the process** for many.

Goal: Learn from the lapse. Re-enter the cycle with more knowledge and support.



WORKSHEET: WHAT STAGE AM I IN?

Instructions: Reflect on your current mindset and actions to identify your stage of change.

1. **Do you think your substance use is a problem? Why or why not?**

2. **Have you thought about changing? What is holding you back?**

3. **Have you made any plans or taken small steps toward change?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what are they?

4. **Have you recently made a change or stopped using?**

☐ Yes – When:

☐ No – Still planning

What is helping you stay on track?

5. **Have you lapsed before? What did you learn from it?**

Stage Self-Check (Tick One That Fits Best Today)

Stage	Description	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Precontemplation	I do not think I need to change	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contemplation	I am unsure. I want to stop, but I am not ready	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preparation	I am planning to make a change soon	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action	I have already started changing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintenance	I have been staying clean/sober for a while	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relapse	I have slipped. but I want to get back on track	<input type="checkbox"/>

Insight Box: Change Is Not Linear

- Recovery is a **process**, not a finish line.
- People move forward and backward through these stages many times.
- The important part is not where you are. it is that you are honest with yourself about it.

AMBIVALENCE ABOUT QUITTING

What Is Ambivalence?

Ambivalence means having **mixed or conflicting feelings** about something. In recovery, it is extremely common. and normal. to feel two things at once:

"I want to stop using... but I'm not sure I can."

"I hate what this is doing to me... but I also don't know who I am without it."

Ambivalence is **not resistance**. It is part of the change process. especially in the **contemplation and preparation stages** of recovery.

Why Quitting Feels So Conflicted

Substance use often becomes deeply **entangled** with:

- Emotional relief (e.g., numbing pain, anxiety)
- Social identity (e.g., "my friends all use")
- Daily habits and routines (e.g., smoking after meals)
- Self-worth (e.g., believing "I can't change")

You may want change **and** fear it. You may hate the consequences **and** miss the comfort. That is ambivalence. and it needs to be worked through, not ignored.

Examples of Ambivalent Thoughts

Thought Supporting Use	Thought Supporting Quitting
"It helps me cope with stress."	"But it's ruining my health and relationships."
"I don't want to lose my friends."	"But they're not really supporting my future."
"I've tried before and failed."	"But I've also learned from those attempts."
"Life is boring without it."	"But it's time I found new purpose."

WORKSHEET: EXPLORING MY AMBIVALENCE

Instructions: Use this worksheet to explore both sides of how you feel. Be honest. There are no wrong answers.

1. What I like (or used to like) about using substances:

2. What I do not like about using substances:

3. What I fear I will lose if I quit:

4. What I hope to gain if I quit:

Decision Balance Matrix

Fill in each box with your thoughts. Then ask: **Which side is pulling stronger? Why?**

	Stay the Same (Keep Using)	Make a Change (Quit or Reduce Use)
Pros		
Cons		

Insight Box: You Do not Need Certainty. You Need Honesty

- You do not have to be 100% ready to quit.
- But you do need to be honest with yourself about the **costs and benefits**, and where you want your life to go.
- The goal is not to erase ambivalence overnight. The goal is to move through it.

BEHAVIOURAL ACTIVATION METHOD

This is a long read, but it is very useful information. Behavioural activation is a very effective method of changing unwanted behaviours, which include substance use and abuse.

What is It?

- Behavioural Activation is a practical, evidence-based approach to managing low mood, anxiety, and substance use triggers by **increasing meaningful, goal-driven activities**.
- It helps you reconnect with positive reinforcement in life by **doing more of what works**, even when you do not feel like it.
- Substance use often replaces healthy routines with avoidance and isolation.
- Behavioural Activation helps reverse this by encouraging intentional engagement with **activities that bring either mastery (a sense of achievement) or pleasure (enjoyment or calm)**.
- The logic behind behaviour activation is as follows.:
 - **Increase** the adaptive activities that engage mastery and pleasure.
 - **Decrease** activities that maintain negative experiences, feelings, and emotions.
 - **Identify the barriers** that are going to be experienced when engaging in adaptive activities and come up with problem solving strategies to address those barriers.
- To begin with, you would identify the adaptive activities that provide you with experiences of feeling in control, feeling enjoyment, or feeling some sense of self mastery.
- This could be something very simple, such as completing a task at work, or taking out the garbage or walking the dogs.
- The activity does not need to be complicated.
- It does not even need to necessarily be enjoyable.
- The goal here is to engage in activities that allow you to feel some sense of accomplishment, and that sense of accomplishment feeds into an increase in feeling in control of one's environment and increasing the sense of self-mastery.
- Next, you would identify the activities that have the opposite effect: activities that are more likely to make you feel depressed and lethargic.
- Such activities could refer to very simple things such as oversleeping or over thinking.
- Next, you would identify all the barriers you are likely to encounter when you start to implement the positive adaptive activities. For each one of these barriers, produce a problem-solving solution.

The Logic of Behavioural Activation

- The logic behind this illustration of behaviour activation is as follows.
 - People who are feeling anxious and depressed often report not feeling enjoyment in activities that they used to enjoy.
 - They feel lethargic.
 - They lack energy and interest in their surroundings.
 - It then becomes a vicious cycle where they do not have enough energy and motivation to do the activities that used to bring them pleasure. And enjoyment.
 - They may also start to neglect their duties and responsibilities around the house, such as doing the laundry, taking the garbage out, and so forth.
 - These experiences further increase their sense of failure, of feeling worthless, of feeling as if they are not accomplishing anything.
 - It is not very easy to get into a downward spiral where once lethargy further increases the likelihood, they will not fulfil one's duties and responsibilities.
 - This internal increase feelings of failure.
- In order to snap out of this, you have to gradually introduce very small, easily achievable activities that provide you with opportunities to feel self-mastery and a sense of accomplishment.
- It is important to choose activities that you have at least an **80% chance of succeeding at**.
- As each of these small activities are achieved, you will start to feel an increased sense of accomplishment, which in turn will make it more likely you will start to be in a better state of mind.

Painting the Lounge

- Let us say you want to paint the walls in your lounge.
- Every day you stare at the walls, and you hate the colour, but the thought of painting the whole lounge is just overwhelming and exhausting.
- As a result, you make no move towards painting the walls.
- However, you continue to see the walls and all the time they remind you of your inability to accomplish this task.
- We need to break this task into smaller goals, each one being at least 80% easy to achieve.
 - The first step would be to go the hardware store and collecting some paint swatches. That can be easily achieved.
 - The next simple step would be to select from the paint swatch is the colour that you want to paint the lounge. That is also easily achieved.

- The next step would be to make sure you have all of the equipment that you need to paint the balls.
- The next step would be to set yourself the task of painting a small colour block onto one of the walls. There is no expectation to complete painting the entire wall in one day.
- The goal is to simply paint one small colour block onto the wall.
- At no point in any of these small tasks would you feel overwhelmed.
- They are all small tasks, easily achieved.
- None of them put you under any significant pressure.
- Each one has at least an 80% chance of being successful.
- But by but gradually over time, you are working towards achieving your overall goal of repainting the lounge.
- It is important to only focus on the small individual goals one at a time rather than focusing on the larger end goal of painting the entire lounge, because thinking about that larger end goal will just make you feel overwhelmed.
- Each of these smaller goals is a goal in itself.
- Seeing the gradual progress, you are making overtime will start to increase your sense of accomplishment and self-mastery and little bit by little bit over time you become more motivated and more energetic.
- This is a gradual process.
- An important part of the behaviour activation plan is to include a positive activity, however small it is, however insignificant it might seem in a bigger picture, to include one of those daily.
- You need to give your brain daily exposure to some positive experience, however small and insignificant.
- By feeding your brain small doses of positive experiences, you will gradually start to reactivate who brain's capacity to recognise and experienced positive emotions.
- Doing something enjoyable once a week will not achieve the same results as doing something however small on a daily basis.

Why Behavioural Activation Works in Recovery

When you are in recovery, motivation and energy levels may be low, especially early on. Avoidance, boredom, and withdrawal can keep you stuck in a cycle of low mood and cravings.

Behavioural Activation helps by:

- Breaking the cycle of avoidance and isolation
- Improving mood by increasing positive experiences
- Replacing substance-related behaviours with healthy habits
- Building a sense of purpose, structure, and control

Two Core Targets

Increase Adaptive Activities

These include:

- Activities that bring **mastery** (e.g., completing a task, learning a skill)
- Activities that bring **pleasure** (e.g., listening to music, spending time in nature)
- Even small actions. like making your bed or taking a short walk. help rebuild momentum and self-worth.

Reduce Avoidant and Negative-Maintenance Behaviours

Avoidance and numbing behaviours can maintain distress. Examples include:

- Oversleeping or staying in bed all day
- Isolating from others
- Scrolling endlessly on social media
- Ruminating or procrastinating

Identify Barriers. and Break Them Down

- You may face **practical, emotional, or internal barriers** to doing positive activities. These can include:
 - Low energy
 - Fear of failure or embarrassment
 - “I’ll do it tomorrow” thinking
 - Cravings or withdrawal symptoms
 - Lack of routine or support
- Behavioural Activation teaches that **you do not need to feel motivated to act. action creates motivation.**

Problem-Solving Common Barriers

Barrier	Strategy
“I don’t feel like it”	Do it anyway. commit to just 5 minutes to start
“I don’t have time”	Replace one unhelpful habit with a helpful one
“I’ll fail” or “I’m too behind”	Start small. focus on progress, not perfection
“I’m too tired”	Choose low-energy, low-effort activities (e.g. music, walking)
“No one supports me”	Find one person or join a support group

WORKSHEET: MASTERY AND PLEASURE ACTIVITY BRAINSTORM

Purpose:

To help you identify a variety of activities that either give you a **sense of achievement (mastery)** or **bring you joy or calm (pleasure)**. even if they feel small or unimportant at first.

These activities are the building blocks of a recovery-oriented life. Over time, they help rebuild structure, confidence, and emotional balance.

Instructions:

1. Use the prompts below to brainstorm activities under two categories: **Mastery** and **Pleasure**.
2. Include activities you have enjoyed in the past, things you have been meaning to try, or new ideas.
3. Think small and achievable. even 5–10-minute activities count.

Mastery Activities

Things that give you a sense of accomplishment, progress, or skill-building.

Need help? Here are some mastery examples:

- Tidying your space
- Attending a meeting
- Following through on a goal
- Learning something new
- Fixing or organizing something
- Doing a task you have been putting off

Activity	When I Last Did It (if ever)	Would I Do It Again? (✓/✗)
e.g., Cleaned my room	3 weeks ago,	✓
e.g., Paid a bill on time	This week	✓

Activity	When I Last Did It (if ever)	Would I Do It Again? (✓/✗)

Pleasure Activities

Things that bring joy, comfort, or help you feel relaxed.

Here are some pleasure examples:

- Listening to music or a podcast
- Taking a bath or shower
- Drawing or colouring
- Being in nature
- Watching a good film or series
- Cooking something simple

Activity	When I Last Did It (if ever)	Would I Do It Again? (✓/✗)
e.g., Listened to music I like	Yesterday	✓
e.g., Took a walk in nature	Last weekend	✓

Reflection:

1. Which of these activities could I realistically do this week?
2. What usually stops me from doing these things?

3. One small activity I will commit to doing tomorrow:

WORKSHEET: BARRIER IDENTIFICATION AND PROBLEM-SOLVING TABLE

Purpose:

To help you identify common internal or external **barriers** that may prevent you from doing activities that support your recovery. and to develop practical, recovery-oriented strategies to overcome them.

Instructions:

- 1. List **adaptive activities** you want to start doing (e.g., attending meetings, walking daily, journaling).
- 2. Identify **barriers** you are likely to encounter. These may be emotional (e.g., low mood), mental (e.g., procrastination), physical (e.g., fatigue), or environmental (e.g., lack of privacy).
- 3. Develop a specific **strategy** to help you move through or around each barrier.

Activity I Want to Do	Likely Barrier(s)	Problem-Solving Strategy
e.g., Go for a morning walk	Feel tired / unmotivated	Lay out walking clothes the night before; commit to 5 minutes only
e.g., Attend support group	Anxiety around people	Ask someone to go with me; plan to leave after 30 minutes if overwhelmed

Common Barriers & Sample Strategies:

Barrier Type	Examples	Strategy Ideas
Emotional	Low mood, anxiety, guilt	"Do it anyway" mindset, start small
Mental / Cognitive	Procrastination, racing thoughts	Use timers, simplify the task
Physical	Fatigue, illness, discomfort	Choose low-energy alternatives
Environmental / Practical	Lack of transport, space, money	Use alternatives, ask for help
Social	Fear of judgment, lack of support	Join peer groups, involve trusted person

Reflection:

1. What patterns do I notice in the types of barriers I face?
2. Which strategies have worked for me before?
3. One barrier I will work on managing this week:

WORKSHEET: BEHAVIOURAL ACTIVATION TRACKER (7 DAYS)

Purpose:

This tracker supports recovery by helping you:

- Build structure and routine
- Identify what kinds of activities improve your mood or reduce cravings
- Stay accountable to yourself
- Notice patterns between behaviour and emotional wellbeing

This worksheet is best used alongside your weekly recovery planner.

Instructions:

At the end of each day (or as you go), write down:

- **Key activities** you engaged in
- Whether each activity involved **Mastery (M)** or **Pleasure (P)**
- Your **mood before and after** the activity (use a 1–10 scale: 1 = very low, 10 = very high)
- Any **substance cravings or lapses**

7-Day Behavioural Activation Tracker

Day	Activity	M / P	Mood Before (1–10)	Mood After (1–10)	Craving? (Y/N)	Notes (Energy, Motivation, Thoughts)
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						

Day	Activity	M / P	Mood Before (1–10)	Mood After (1–10)	Craving? (Y/N)	Notes (Energy, Motivation, Thoughts)
Friday						
Saturday						
Sunday						

Reflection Prompts:

Which types of activities improved your mood or reduced cravings the most?

Did you notice any patterns between certain times of day, activities, and cravings?

What is one mastery or pleasure activity you want to repeat or increase next week?

What made it difficult to complete activities on some days?

WEEKLY RECOVERY PLANNER

Purpose:

To support structure, self-awareness, and intentional living in recovery by planning activities that promote mastery, pleasure, and relapse prevention.

Instructions:

At the beginning of each week, take 10–15 minutes to:

- Identify your priorities for the week
- Schedule recovery-supportive activities (self-care, meetings, coping strategies)
- Set small, achievable goals
- Reflect on potential barriers and how to handle them

1. Weekly Overview

Area of Life	Goal for the Week (examples)	Goal for the Week
Recovery	(e.g., Attend two meetings, work on lapse prevention plan)	
Physical health	(e.g., Walk three times/week, cut sugar, rest properly)	
Mental/emotional health	(e.g., Journal daily, do grounding exercise)	
Relationships	(e.g., Call a support person, set boundaries)	
Personal growth	(e.g., Read, attend class, try a new hobby)	
Daily structure	(e.g., Wake up by 8AM, build a bedtime routine)	

2. Weekly Calendar					
Day	Morning Activity	Midday Activity	Evening Activity	Cravings? (Y/N)	Mastery/Pleasure Activity
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					

3. Anticipated Triggers or Stressors

Trigger or Risk Situation	What I Will Do to Cope

4. Coping Toolbox for This Week

Select or add at least three coping strategies you plan to use this week:

- Go for a walk
- Practice deep breathing
- Call someone in recovery
- Write in journal
- Listen to calming music
- Attend a support meeting
- Other: _____

- Other: _____

5. Weekly Motivation

Why I am doing this:

6. End-of-Week Reflection (complete on Sunday)

What went well this week?

What was difficult?

What did I learn about myself or my recovery process?

What will I change or try next week?

Section 3: Triggers and Cravings

INTERNAL VS. EXTERNAL TRIGGERS

What Are Triggers?

A **trigger** is anything that brings on the urge to use a substance. Triggers do not cause lapse directly, but they **increased risk** by activating emotional, physical, or psychological responses tied to past use.

Triggers are usually categorized as **internal** or **external**. and knowing the difference helps you build more effective coping strategies. Recognizing the **first sign** of a trigger gives you the chance to intervene before cravings grow stronger.



Internal Triggers

These come from **inside you**. thoughts, emotions, or physical sensations. They often happen without anything on the outside changing.

Examples:

- Boredom or restlessness
- Stress, sadness, or anxiety
- Anger or frustration
- Physical pain or illness
- Negative self-talk (e.g., "I'm worthless")
- Memories or dreams about using
- Overconfidence ("I've got this, I can use just once")

Internal triggers are often overlooked because they are invisible to others. but they are just as dangerous as external ones.

External Triggers

These come from your **surroundings**. people, places, situations, or things that remind you of using.

Examples:

- Seeing someone use
- Being offered a drink or drug
- Passing by a bar or dealer
- Certain music, smells, or objects
- Parties or events where people are drinking
- Friends or family who still use
- Seeing money or payday

External triggers are often **predictable** and can be **avoided or managed** with boundaries and planning.

Trigger = Cue → Craving → Habit Loop

When you are triggered (internally or externally), your brain remembers past use. It may:

- Release dopamine
- Create intrusive thoughts about using
- Justify a lapse with false beliefs

Insight Box: Managing Triggers = Managing Recovery

- You cannot control every trigger, but you **can** control your response.
- The key is **awareness + action**.
- Every time you resist a trigger, you rewire your brain toward healing.

WORKSHEET: IDENTIFY MY TRIGGERS

Instructions: Reflect on your own experiences. List specific examples of both internal and external triggers that have led to substance use in the past.

1. Internal Triggers I have Experienced:

2. What thoughts or feelings came up before I used?

3. External Triggers I have Experienced:

4. What places, people, or situations should I avoid (or prepare for)?

PLACES	PEOPLE	SITUATIONS

5. What are two internal triggers I did not notice until after I used?

Next Step: Trigger Plan

For each trigger, write:

- What the trigger is
- Whether it is internal or external
- One strategy to handle it next time

Trigger	Internal/External	My Coping Strategy

CRAVING MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Understanding Cravings

Cravings are intense urges or desires to use substances. They can feel overwhelming and uncontrollable but are temporary and manageable with the right tools.

Effective craving management improves your ability to stay sober and strengthens your confidence over time.

Urge Surfing

What Is It?

Urge Surfing is a mindfulness technique that helps you **observe cravings without acting on them**. Instead of fighting or running from the craving, you “ride it out” like a wave, watching it rise, peak, and then subside.

How to Practice Urge Surfing:

1. **Notice the craving:** When you feel the urge, pause and name it. “I’m experiencing a craving right now.”
2. **Focus on your breathing:** Take slow, deep breaths to ground yourself.
3. **Observe sensations:** Pay attention to physical feelings (e.g., tight chest, jitteriness) and thoughts without judgment.
4. **Ride the wave:** Remind yourself cravings usually last 5–15 minutes and will pass. Do not fight it or give in.
5. **Let it go:** After the wave passes, acknowledge your success and redirect your attention to something else.

Why It Works

- Helps you separate your identity from the craving
- Builds tolerance to discomfort without substance use
- Improves mindfulness and emotional regulation

Delay-Distraction Techniques

What Are They?

Delay-distraction means **postponing acting on a craving** and using activities to shift your attention until the urge passes.

How to Practice Delay-Distraction:

1. **Delay:** Commit to waiting at least 10–15 minutes before acting on the urge. This helps the craving weaken.
2. **Distract:** Engage in an activity that takes your mind and body off the craving. Examples include:
 - Going for a walk or exercising
 - Calling a supportive friend
 - Listening to music or a podcast

- Doing a hobby or craft
 - Practicing deep breathing or meditation
 - Drinking water or having a healthy snack
3. **Evaluate:** After the delay, reassess the craving. Often, it will have decreased or disappeared.

Why It Works

- Interrupts the automatic behaviour loop
- Uses time and activity to reduce urge intensity
- Creates healthier habits and coping strategies

Insight Box: Cravings Are Temporary

- Cravings do not last forever.
- Each time you resist or manage a craving, you weaken its power and strengthen your recovery.
- You are not you are craving. you are the rider who controls the wave.

10 HEALTHY ALTERNATIVES

You can use when you feel triggered. practical, accessible, and focused on short-term relief and long-term stability

10 Healthy Alternatives When You Feel Triggered

- **Go for a Walk (Preferably Outside)**
 - Physical movement helps release stress and shifts your focus.
 - Nature boosts mood and calms your nervous system.
- **Call or Text a Supportive Person**
 - Reach out to a sponsor, friend, therapist, or family member.
 - You do not need to say much. just **connect**.
- **Practice “Urge Surfing”**
 - Sit with the craving, notice where it shows up in your body, and let it rise and fall like a wave.
 - Cravings pass. they always do.
- **Use a Delay-Distraction Strategy (The “15-Minute Rule”)**
 - Promise yourself to wait 15 minutes before acting.
 - In that time, do something that distracts you. clean, stretch, draw, organize.
- **Write in a Journal (Stream of Consciousness or Prompt-Based)**
 - Get your thoughts out of your head and onto paper. Write without judgment.
- **Use Grounding Techniques (5-4-3-2-1 Method)**
 - Name five things you can see, four you can touch, three you can hear, two you can smell, one you can taste.
 - It brings you back to the present.
- **Listen to Music That Matches or Lifts Your Mood**
 - Use music to regulate emotion. calming sounds for anxiety, uplifting beats for sadness, etc.

- **Take a Cold Shower or Splash Cold Water on Your Face**
 - This activates your parasympathetic nervous system and can help snap you out of a triggered state.
- **Eat a very sour candy- the sour taste also often shocks the body out of the triggered state**
- **Repeat a Recovery Affirmation or Mantra**

Examples:

 - "This feeling will pass."
 - "I don't have to act on every thought."
 - "One step at a time."
- **Create Something (Draw, Cook, Build, Write Poetry, etc.)**
 - Channel your energy into something tangible.
 - Creating gives a sense of control and satisfaction.

WORKSHEET: MY CRAVING MANAGEMENT PLAN

Instructions: Use this worksheet to identify your personal cravings and plan how to manage them.

1. Common situations when I get cravings:

2. Physical sensations I notice during cravings:

3. How I usually respond to cravings:

4. Urge Surfing Practice (try now or next time):

What will you say to yourself when a craving hits?

How will you focus on your breathing?

5. Delay-Distraction Strategies I Will Use:

Activity	How It Helps Me

6. Support People I Can Call/Text When Cravings Hit:

ACTIVITY: TRIGGER BUSTERS BRAINSTORM

Come up with a list of ten healthy alternatives when you feel triggered.

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

Section 4: Lapse Prevention

WHAT LAPSE IS (NOT JUST USE, BUT THOUGHTS/BEHAVIOUR LEADING TO IT)

What Is a Lapse?

- A **lapse** is a **temporary return to substance use** after a period of abstinence or reduced use.
- But importantly, a lapse is not just about the moment you use again. It includes the **thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that happen before**.

Why This Matters

- Many people think a lapse means “failure” or “all is lost.”
- That is not true.
- A lapse is a warning sign, an opportunity to learn and adjust.
- **Understanding the full process. not just the use. helps prevent lapses from turning into longer lapses.**

Lapse Happens in Stages

1. **Trigger or High-Risk Situation:** Something happens (internal or external) that increases stress or cravings.
2. **Thoughts and Emotions:** You may start thinking, “*Maybe one won’t hurt*”, “*I deserve this*”, or feel overwhelmed, anxious, or hopeless.
3. **Behavioural Changes:** Small choices like skipping meetings, isolating from support, or rationalizing use.
4. **The Lapse:** The actual substance use event.
5. **Aftermath:** How you respond after using. with shame and giving up or learning and recommitting.



Common Warning Signs Before a Lapse

Thoughts	Behaviours	Emotions
“Just one won’t hurt.”	Avoiding support groups	Anxiety
“I can handle it now.”	Hanging out with using friends	Frustration
“I deserve a break.”	Neglecting self-care	Hopelessness
“No one understands me.”	Not using coping skills	Anger

Insight Box: A Lapse Is a Signal, not a Failure

- A lapse is a chance to **pause, learn, and get stronger**.

- **How you respond after a lapse matters far more than the lapse itself.**
- With awareness and planning, you can reduce lapses and protect your recovery journey.

REFRAMING LAPSES

- There will be small lapses along the way in your road forward.
- Instead of seeing the lapses as failures, see them as **proof of success**.
- Examples:
 - You went from drinking every day to drinking once a week and kept that up for one month. That is significant progress. Now try to go to two months drinking once a week.
 - You managed to stay away from drugs for six weeks before lapsing. That is a significant achievement, given that in the past you used drugs daily. **You have proven you can stop using drugs.** Now you are working on increasing the time between lapses. Try going for 8 weeks.
- Frame the progress you have made in positive terms instead of focusing on the lapse as a sign of failure.

WORKSHEET: MY LAPSE WARNING SIGNS

Instructions: Reflect honestly on what usually happens before a lapse. Write down your personal warning signs.

1. What triggers or situations usually lead to a lapse for me?

2. What thoughts do I notice before I use again?

3. What behaviours or habits change before a lapse?

4. How do I feel emotionally before a lapse?

5. What can I do differently next time I notice these warning signs?

BUILDING A LAPSE PREVENTION PLAN

Why You Need a Lapse Prevention Plan

Lapses do not happen out of nowhere. They often follow predictable patterns of triggers, thoughts, and behaviours. Having a **lapse prevention plan** means you:

- Identify your personal warning signs early
- Know exactly what steps to take when you feel vulnerable
- Build habits and support systems to protect your recovery

This plan is not about perfection; it is about **being prepared and proactive**.

Preparation Builds Strength

Having a plan does not mean you will never face a lapse. But it gives you **control** when things get hard. Preparation is your strongest tool against setbacks.

Step 1: Identify Your Warning Signs

Review your own triggers, thoughts, emotions, and behaviours that usually precede a lapse.

Type	Examples (Your Own Warning Signs)
Triggers	(e.g., stress at work, seeing old friends who use)
Thoughts	(e.g., "One won't hurt," "I can handle it now")
Behaviours	(e.g., skipping meetings, isolating)
Emotions	(e.g., anxiety, anger, hopelessness)

Step 2: Choose Your Coping Strategies

For each warning sign, pick at least one healthy coping strategy you can use.

Warning Sign	Coping Strategy
Feeling anxious or stressed	Practice deep breathing or meditation
Thinking "One won't hurt"	Use urge surfing or delay-distraction
Skipping support meetings	Call a sponsor or peer support
Feeling isolated	Reach out to a trusted friend or family

Step 3: Create an Emergency Action Plan

Write down clear, immediate steps you will take when you notice warning signs or cravings:

- **Who will I call?**
(Name and phone number of support person)
- **What healthy activities will I do?**
(Examples: walk, journal, listen to music)
- **Where will I go if I feel unsafe or vulnerable?**
(Safe place or community resource)
- **What will I remind myself?**
(Positive affirmations or reasons for recovery)

Worksheet: My Lapse Prevention Plan

My Warning Signs	My Coping Strategies	Emergency Contacts & Actions

My Warning Signs	My Coping Strategies	Emergency Contacts & Actions

ACTIVITY: CRISIS CARD

What Is a Crisis Card?

- A **Crisis Card** is a small, portable tool you create for yourself to use in moments of high stress, strong cravings, or emotional crisis.
- It reminds you what to do, who to contact, and why to stay on track. **when your thinking is clouded and impulsive decisions feel tempting.**
- Think of it as a **lifeline in your pocket.**
- The card is just a tool.
- **Your decision to use it in the moment makes the difference.**
- Keep it close. Use it when the storm hits.
- That one pause can protect your entire recovery.

Tip: Laminate your card or store it on your phone's home screen for easy access. Review or update it every month, or after any lapse.

Why It Works

- Provides clear steps when thinking is impaired
- Reinforces healthy decisions under pressure
- Connects you back to your goals and support network
- Prevents panic, isolation, and automatic lapse behaviour

How to Fill Out Your Crisis Card

Cut this card out (or copy it into your phone or wallet) and **carry it with you at all times.**

My Crisis Card

1. My Top 3 Triggers or Warning Signs:

2. What I Will Do Instead of Using (3 Steps):

3. People I Can Call or Text:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

4. Places I Can Go Where I Feel Safe:

5. One Positive Affirmation or Recovery Goal:

Section 5: Emotional Regulation and Coping Skills

CONNECTION BETWEEN FEELINGS AND SUBSTANCE USE

Why Emotions Matter in Recovery

- Many people who struggle with substance use are not just trying to "get high". they are often trying to **escape** something: pain, stress, anxiety, loneliness, anger, or grief.
- Substances become a way to **numb, distract, or avoid** uncomfortable emotions.
- Over time, this becomes a pattern:



- Understanding this connection is **essential** for lasting recovery.

Substance Use as Emotional Avoidance

Instead of managing feelings in a healthy way, substances often become a shortcut. But the cost is high. emotionally, physically, and socially.

Feeling	Common Triggers	Substance Use as a Response
Anxiety	Stress, uncertainty	Drinking to calm nerves
Anger	Conflict, powerlessness	Smoking to "cool off"
Loneliness	Isolation, relationship issues	Using to feel connected or numb
Guilt/Shame	Past mistakes, self-criticism	Using to forget or punish self
Sadness	Loss, rejection, grief	Using to "lift mood"
Boredom	Lack of purpose or activity	Using to escape emptiness

The problem? **Substances only suppress the symptoms. not the cause.**

Recovery Means Learning to Feel Without Numbing

You do not need to fix your emotions. you need to **feel them safely**. Emotions are **signals**, not threats. Recovery involves:

- Identifying emotions accurately
- Expressing them without using
- Building emotional resilience

WORKSHEET: MY EMOTIONS AND MY USE

Instructions: Reflect on how emotions have influenced your substance use.

- Your feelings are real. but they are not dangerous.
- They do not have to control you.
- You can learn to sit with discomfort, feel it, and let it pass without using.

1. What emotions do I most often try to avoid?

2. How did I use substances to manage these emotions?

3. What usually triggered these feelings?

4. What did using actually solve in the long run?

5. How do I want to handle these emotions differently in recovery?

EMOTIONAL LITERACY

What Is Emotional Literacy?

Emotional literacy means being able to:

- Recognize what you are feeling
- Accurately name the emotion
- Understand where it comes from
- Respond to it in a healthy way

Emotional literacy is about being **emotionally aware** and **emotionally responsible**.

Why It Matters in Recovery

People who struggle with substance use often have:

- Difficulty naming or expressing emotions
- A tendency to suppress, ignore, or explode with feelings
- A history of trauma or environments where feelings were not safe to express

Without emotional literacy, it is easy to become overwhelmed or confused by feelings and turn to substances to cope.

Recovery is not just about stopping the behaviour. It is about learning new ways to **feel, process, and respond**.

Signs of Emotional Illiteracy

If these sound familiar, emotional literacy may need strengthening:

- "I do not know what I am feeling. I just feel bad."
- "I go from 0 to 100. I explode without warning."
- "I was never allowed to show emotions growing up."
- "I only know two feelings: angry and numb."
- "Crying feels weak. I push it all down."

Building Emotional Literacy: The 4 Skills

1. **Awareness:** Noticing when an emotion is present
2. **Labelling:** Accurately naming the feeling (not just "bad" or "fine")
3. **Understanding:** Knowing what caused it and what it is telling you
4. **Regulating:** Choosing a response that aligns with your recovery

ACTIVITY: WHAT AM I FEELING, REALLY?

Use this list and reflection exercise to build emotional vocabulary and insight.

Common Emotions (Group Them to Be More Precise):

Core Emotion	More Specific Feelings
Sadness	Disappointed, grieving, lonely, hopeless
Anger	Frustrated, betrayed, irritated, outraged
Fear	Anxious, panicked, insecure, threatened
Joy	Proud, relieved, excited, content
Guilt	Remorseful, ashamed, regretful, embarrassed
Love	Affectionate, grateful, compassionate, connected

- If you can name it, you can tame it.
- When you can name what you are feeling, you do not have to run from it
- You can **respond**, not react.

Reflection Prompts:

1. In the past week, what emotions have I felt most strongly?

2. How did I react to those feelings?

3. Did I name them at the time. or only notice in hindsight?

4. How did those feelings affect my decisions or cravings?

5. How can I respond more skilfully next time?

HEALTHY COPING SKILLS

Why Coping Skills Matter

- Substance use often becomes a default way to cope with life's stressors. emotional pain, conflict, boredom, anxiety, grief.
- But recovery depends on learning **new ways to cope** that do not cause further harm.
- **Healthy coping skills** are strategies you choose **instead of using** tools that help you tolerate discomfort, manage cravings, and respond to life more constructively.
- The goal is not to feel good all the time
- The goal is to feel and still make healthy choices.

Examples of Healthy Coping Skills

Category	Coping Strategy	How It Helps
Mindfulness	Breathing exercises, body scans, grounding	Calms the nervous system, reduces impulsivity
Journaling	Reflecting on thoughts/feelings daily	Increases self-awareness, releases tension
Exercise	Walking, yoga, sports, stretching	Boosts mood, reduces cravings
Creative Outlets	Art, music, writing, dance	Expresses emotions safely
Social Support	Talking with sober peers, support groups	Reduces isolation, adds accountability
Spirituality	Prayer, meditation, time in nature	Creates meaning and inner peace
Routine	Structured daily plan, sleep schedule	Reduces chaos, builds stability
Problem-Solving	Making a list, breaking down tasks	Reduces overwhelm, builds control

WORKSHEET: MY COPING TOOLBOX

Instructions: Reflect on what coping skills work for you now. and what you would like to try building.

- Build your toolbox slowly.
- Pick the 2–3 strategies that work for you and practice them often.
- Consistency matters more than variety.

1. What situations or emotions do I need coping skills for?

2. What unhealthy ways have I used to cope in the past?

3. What healthy coping skills do I already use (even sometimes)?

4. What new skills would I be willing to try?

5. My three go-to coping skills when I am feeling triggered or overwhelmed:

WORKSHEET: FEELING TRACKER (1 WEEK)

Instructions:

- Each day, take a few minutes to reflect and complete the row.
- You can do this in the morning, evening, or after emotional events.
- Use a **feelings wheel** if you struggle to name emotions precisely (sad vs. ashamed vs. disappointed).
- Track **patterns**: Are certain triggers showing up often? Do your urges increase with certain emotions?
- Use this tracker during sessions to **identify emotional blind spots** or default coping strategies.
- **What Gets Tracked, Gets Changed**
- You cannot change of what you are not aware.
- This tracker helps you **pause, reflect, and choose.** instead of reacting.

Day	Main Emotions Felt Today (use feeling words)	Trigger/Event That Caused Emotion	Intensity (0-10)	How I Coped (healthy or unhealthy)	Did I Have Urges? (Y/N)	Notes (What I learned)
Mon						
Tue						
Wed						
Thu						
Fri						
Sat						
Sun						

Section 6: Relationships and Boundaries

CO-DEPENDENCY AND ENABLING

What Is Co-dependency?

Co-dependency is a dysfunctional relationship pattern where one person's self-worth and identity are overly tied to caring for, fixing, or controlling another. often at their own expense.

In the context of addiction and recovery, co-dependency can look like:

- Constantly rescuing a loved one from the consequences of their substance use
- Putting someone else's needs or emotions above your own. always
- Feeling guilty, anxious, or empty when not "helping"
- Measuring your value by how much others need you

This mindset keeps both people stuck: the user does not grow, and the helper burns out.

Healthy love does not mean fixing people. It means allowing them to face reality, while **caring for yourself** in the process

What Is Enabling?

Enabling is any behaviour that protects someone from experiencing the natural consequences of their substance use. and unintentionally allows it to continue.

- **Examples of Enabling:**
 - Giving money to someone who uses it to buy drugs or alcohol
 - Covering up for their behaviour (calling in sick for them, lying to family)
 - Taking over responsibilities they have neglected
 - Avoiding confrontation to "keep the peace"
 - Denying or minimizing the impact of their addiction

Enabling often **feels like love**, but it blocks the person from reaching accountability and change.

How Co-dependency and Enabling Work Together

Codependent Thinking	Enabling Behaviour
"They'll fall apart without me."	You pay their rent. again.
"If I don't help, I'm selfish."	You make excuses for their drinking.
"They'll get angry if I say no."	You let them cross your boundaries.
"I just want to keep the peace."	You avoid setting consequences.

Both patterns are driven by **fear, guilt, or control**, not true support.

Reflection Prompts

Use these to explore your own relationship patterns or to support clients examining family dynamics.

1. Have I ever put someone else's needs ahead of my own to the point of harm?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes

Describe: _____

2. Do I feel responsible for other people's feelings or outcomes?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes

Example: _____

3. Have I ever helped someone avoid the consequences of their substance use?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

What happened: _____

4. How do I feel when I set a boundary?

☐ Guilty ☐ Anxious ☐ Relieved ☐ Empowered

Describe why: _____

Breaking the Cycle: What Healthy Support Looks Like

- Saying "no" with respect and clarity
- Allowing people to experience consequences
- Setting and keeping firm boundaries
- Focusing on your own healing and growth
- Encouraging treatment. without forcing it
- Practicing self-care, not self-sacrifice

WORKSHEET: AM I ENABLING?

- Use this checklist to explore whether your actions may be **enabling** someone's substance use.
- Enabling is usually done with **good intentions**, but it can unintentionally keep someone stuck in their addiction.
- Be honest. this is about **awareness, not blame**.

✓ Part 1: Enabling Behaviour Checklist

Place a ✓ next to any statements that feel true for you (currently or in the past):

Avoiding Consequences

- ☐ I have given someone money even though I suspected they might use it to buy substances.
- ☐ I have lied or made excuses for someone's behaviour (e.g., calling in sick for them, covering for missed obligations).
- ☐ I have bailed someone out of jail, paid their fines, or covered rent/bills when they used their money irresponsibly.

Avoiding Conflict

- ☐ I stay silent about my concerns because I do not want to upset them.
- ☐ I avoid setting boundaries because I fear they will get angry, leave, or lapse.
- ☐ I walk on eggshells around them to keep the peace.

Taking Over Responsibilities

- ☐ I handle their tasks (e.g., chores, parenting, finances) because they will not or cannot.
- ☐ I find myself "fixing" their problems more than they try to fix them.
- ☐ I feel like their caretaker, not their partner/friend/parent.

Emotional Overload

- ☐ I feel exhausted, resentful, or overwhelmed from constantly helping.
- ☐ I feel responsible for their recovery or lapse.
- ☐ I often ignore my own needs to focus on theirs.

Part 2: Reflection Questions

1. What motivates me to help this person, even when it hurts me?
2. What are the emotional consequences of my enabling behaviour?

3. What would change if I stopped enabling and started setting boundaries?

Part 3: Shifting from Enabling to Healthy Support

Complete the sentences below:

- One thing I can **stop doing** to reduce enabling:
- One thing I can **start doing** to support their accountability:
- One **boundary** I want to set (or reinforce):

SETTING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

What Are Boundaries?

- **Boundaries** are the **limits and rules** you set to protect your emotional, physical, and mental health.
- They define what is **okay and not okay** in your relationships.
- They are not about controlling others.
- They are about **protecting yourself**.

Why Boundaries Matter in Recovery

Whether you are working on your own recovery or supporting someone else, boundaries help you:

- Stay focused on your own healing
- Avoid being drawn into chaos, manipulation, or guilt
- Build mutual respect in relationships
- Reduce stress, resentment, and burnout
- Prevent enabling and co-dependency

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Boundaries

Unhealthy Boundaries	Healthy Boundaries
Saying yes when you mean no	Saying no respectfully and clearly
Avoiding conflict at all costs	Expressing needs even when it is uncomfortable
Feeling responsible for someone else's actions	Owning your choices, not theirs
Letting others violate your space or safety	Protecting your body, time, and energy
Overexplaining or apologizing for your limits	Stating boundaries without guilt

Examples of Healthy Boundaries

- "I am not comfortable giving you money. I care about you, but I will not fund your substance use."
- "If you come home under the influence, I will leave the room or the house."
- "I am not available to talk when you are yelling at me. We can talk when you are calm."
- "I need time for myself in the evenings. That means I will not always answer the phone."

Activity: My Boundary Assessment

1. What boundaries do I currently struggle to set (with others or myself)?

2. What situations make me feel uncomfortable, resentful, or powerless?

3. What rights do I have in my relationships that I sometimes forget?

I have the right to:

- ☐ Say no without guilt
- ☐ Protect my time and energy
- ☐ Be spoken to with respect
- ☐ Leave harmful situations
- ☐ Focus on my own recovery

4. What boundary do I need to set this week?

Boundary-Setting Script Template

Use this to practice setting clear and respectful limits:

"I feel _____ when you _____, so I need to _____. If that does not happen, I will _____."

Example:

"I feel disrespected when you come over intoxicated, so I need to ask you not to visit while using. If that does not happen, I will not open the door."

REPAIRING TRUST

Why Trust Breaks Down

Substance use often damages trust. not just with others, but with yourself. People may feel betrayed by:

- Lies, manipulation, or secrecy
- Broken promises (e.g., to stop using)
- Financial harm, neglect, or emotional absence
- Repeated cycles of hope followed by disappointment
- Risky or harmful behaviours under the influence

Trust is **earned**, not given. Once broken, it takes **consistent effort** and **time** to rebuild. You cannot force anyone to trust you again. You can **live in a way that earns it**.

The Reality of Rebuilding Trust

- It does not happen overnight. It is a **long-term process**
- Words alone will not rebuild it; only **consistent actions** will
- Others may remain guarded. This is **normal**, not a personal attack
- Your job is not to demand trust, but to **become trustworthy again**

How to Rebuild Trust Step-by-Step

1. Acknowledge the Harm

Do not deny, minimize, or blame others for your past actions.

"I know I hurt you. I take responsibility for what I did, and I understand if it takes time to rebuild your trust."

2. Apologize Honestly

A genuine apology has no "but." It focuses on the other person's pain, not your intent.

"I am sorry for lying to you about my substance use. I can see how that hurt you deeply."

3. Be Consistent

Keep your word, even on small things. show you are reliable.

- ✓ Show up on time
- ✓ Follow through on promises
- ✓ Stick to your recovery commitments

4. Accept Their Boundaries

They may not be ready to reconnect fully. respect that without pressure.

"I understand you need space, and I'll keep working on myself in the meantime."

5. Stay Honest. Even When It is Hard

Do not try to look perfect. Be honest about your struggles and progress.

6. Practice Patience

Rebuilding trust is not about **being forgiven quickly**. it is about **becoming someone worthy of trust**.

Reflection: Rebuilding Trust with Myself

Substance use often damages self-trust. Reflect below:

- 1. What promises to have I had broken to myself?**
- 2. How did those broken promises affect my self-worth?**
- 3. What small, daily actions can I take to rebuild trust with myself?**

Reflection: Rebuilding Trust with Others

- 1. Who in my life has lost trust in me due to my substance use?**
- 2. What specific actions of mine damaged that trust?**
- 3. What can I do. consistently. to demonstrate I am changing?**

WORKSHEET: PEOPLE IN MY LIFE

Purpose:

- Understanding your relationships is key to building a strong recovery.
- This worksheet helps you map out who is in your life, how they affect you, and how you want to manage those relationships going forward.

1 Who are the important people in my life right now?

Name	Relationship (e.g., friend, family, coworker)	How do they support or challenge my recovery?

Positive Influences

- Who encourages me to stay sober and healthy?
- Who listens without judgment?
- Who helps me stay accountable?

List three people and how they help:

Negative Influences

- Who makes it harder for me to stay sober?
- Who pressures me to use or undermines my goals?
- Who drains my energy or causes stress?

List three people and what challenges they bring:

Boundaries and Changes

- Are there relationships I need to set boundaries with or limit contact?
- Are there people I want to connect with more or ask for support?

List your plans:

Person	Boundary or Change Needed	How will I do this?

Support Network Check

Do I have enough positive support in my life?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

If no or unsure, what steps can I take to build more support?

Reflection:

How do my relationships affect my recovery journey overall?

What is one small change I can make this week in my social life to support my sobriety?

Section 7: Building a New Life

FINDING PURPOSE

Why Finding Purpose Matters

Recovery is not just about stopping substance use. It is about creating a life worth living. Having a clear sense of **purpose** gives you:

- Motivation to stay sober through challenges
- A reason to set and achieve goals
- A stronger sense of identity beyond addiction
- Greater resilience against cravings and triggers
- A feeling of FULFILLMENT and self-worth

Without purpose, recovery can feel empty or meaningless, making lapse more likely.

What Is Purpose?

Purpose is your personal **“why”**. the meaningful reason you get up each day. It might include:

- Relationships (family, friends, community)
- Passions or interests (art, sports, activism)
- Personal growth and learning
- Helping others or contributing to something bigger
- Spirituality or faith

Purpose is unique to you and can change over time.

ACTIVITY: EXPLORING MY PURPOSE

Take time to reflect and answer the following questions:

1. What activities or moments in my life have made me feel most alive or fulfilled?
2. What values or principles are most important to me?
3. Who or what inspires me to be better?
4. How would I like to be remembered by others?

5. What strengths or talents do I have that I can use to contribute to others?

Building Purpose Through Goals

Once you identify your purpose, you can set goals that align with it.

- Break big goals into small, manageable steps
- Celebrate progress, no matter how small
- Revisit and adjust your goals regularly

Example:

If your purpose is to support your family, a goal might be: Attend one family gathering this month sober.

REBUILDING ROUTINES

Why Routines Matter in Recovery

Recovery is not just about stopping substance use. It is about rebuilding a stable, healthy life. Routines provide:

- **Structure:** Reduces chaos and uncertainty
- **Consistency:** Builds positive habits that replace old patterns
- **Predictability:** Lowers stress and anxiety
- **Focus:** Helps you prioritize recovery goals
- **Self-care:** Ensures time for rest, nutrition, and activities that improve well-being

Without routines, old habits and triggers can easily fill the void.

Key Areas for Healthy Routines

Consider routines that support these areas:

Area	Examples of Healthy Routines
Sleep	Going to bed and waking up at the same time daily
Nutrition	Eating balanced meals at regular times
Physical Activity	Daily walks, exercise classes, yoga
Recovery Practices	Attending meetings, journaling, mindfulness
Work/Study	Scheduled focused work or study periods
Social	Regular calls or meetings with supportive people
Relaxation	Reading, hobbies, meditation, downtime

ACTIVITY: MY DAILY ROUTINE PLANNER

Fill out a typical weekday schedule with current and ideal routines. Identify gaps or unhealthy patterns.

Time	Current Activity	Ideal/Healthy Activity
Morning		
Mid-morning		
Afternoon		
Evening		
Night		

Tips for Rebuilding Routines

- **Start Small:** Change one routine at a time to avoid overwhelm.
- **Be Flexible:** Allow adjustments without self-judgment.
- **Use Reminders:** Alarms, notes, or apps can help build consistency.
- **Celebrate Wins:** Acknowledge when you stick to a routine, no matter how small.
- **Plan for Obstacles:** Think ahead about what might disrupt your routine and how to respond.

MEANINGFUL ACTIVITIES (VOLUNTEERING, LEARNING, HOBBIES)

Why Meaningful Activities Matter

Engaging in meaningful activities helps you:

- Build a sense of purpose and accomplishment
- Replace substance use with positive, fulfilling experiences
- Improve mental health and reduce boredom
- Strengthen social connections and community ties
- Enhance self-esteem and motivation in recovery

Without meaningful engagement, people often feel empty, disconnected, or restless. which can increase lapse risk.

Types of Meaningful Activities

Category	Examples	Benefits
Volunteering	Community clean-ups, mentoring, charity work	Builds social connection, purpose, and self-worth
Learning	Taking courses, reading, skill-building	Expands knowledge, boosts confidence
Hobbies	Art, music, sports, gardening, cooking	Provides relaxation, joy, and creative outlet
Social Groups	Clubs, support groups, sports teams	Fosters belonging and accountability
Spirituality	Meditation, prayer, faith groups	Offers comfort, guidance, and inner peace

ACTIVITY: EXPLORING MEANINGFUL ACTIVITIES

1. What activities have I enjoyed in the past or want to try?

2. How do these activities make me feel?

3. What barriers might prevent me from engaging in these activities?

4. What small step can I take this week to start or re-engage with a meaningful activity?

Integrating Meaningful Activities into Your Routine

- Schedule regular time for these activities in your weekly planner.
- Start small. Even 10-15 minutes can make a difference.
- Reach out to friends, family, or support groups for encouragement.
- Reflect on how these activities affect your mood and motivation.



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