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11

DAILY PRACTICE

DAILY READER, 365 DAYS

For Any Recovery Path

STEPHEN DEASON

Alder Creek EDITIONS

Daily Reader, 365 Days

With Thanks

These books are offered at a low price in print and free online through the generous support of Matthew Marberry and the Michael Marberry Family Fund.

Thank you, Matthew, for helping put these books in the hands of the people who need them.

Stephen Deason

DON'T PANIC

If you are in danger, call 911.

If you are in crisis, or thinking about suicide, call or text 988.

For free help finding treatment, call 1-800-662-4357.

If you have used again, turn to page 14.

Part of

The Mile Marker Library

BOOK 8 · DAILY PRACTICE

Daily Reader, 365 Days

For Any Recovery Path

Stephen Deason

Melissa Deason

Alder Creek EDITIONS

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Recovery Books

The Mile Marker Library: standalone books and tools for people getting into recovery on their own. Each one is numbered and labeled by what it helps with. Start with any of them.

RIGHT NOW

1. *Don't Panic: The First Hours After You Stop*
What to Do When You Stop Drinking or Using

2. *Wallet Crisis Card* **Free Printable**
Numbers to Call, Ready to Print

3. *Free Help Directory*
Meetings, Helplines, and Low-Cost Care

4. *Medications for Addiction, Explained*
What They Are, How to Ask, and How to Pay

DAILY PRACTICE

5. *Tools You Can Use on Your Own*
A Guide to Self-Directed Recovery

6. *Cravings and Hard Hours Workbook*
A Companion to Tools You Can Use on Your Own

7. *One Day at a Time, Written Down*
A 90-Day Gratitude Journal, in General and Christian Editions

8. *Daily Reader, 365 Days* **This book**
For Any Recovery Path

9. *Worksheet Library*
Every Journal Page and Exercise, Ready to Print

REBUILDING

10. *Money in Early Recovery*

Budgets, Debts, Benefits, and Credit

11. *Work and Recovery*

Finding a Job, Keeping It, and What to Tell Employers

12. *Finding a Safe Place to Live*

Sober Housing and What to Check Before You Move In

13. *Court, Probation, and Recovery*

What to Ask a Lawyer and What Records to Keep

PEOPLE AROUND YOU

14. *For Families*

When Someone You Love Can't Get to Treatment

15. *Group Facilitator Guide*

Running Free Peer Support Groups with These Books

16. *Employer Guide*

Hiring and Keeping People in Recovery

Who This Book Is For and How to Use It

This book is for anybody in the first year after stopping drinking or using, on any path: a twelve-step group, SMART Recovery, Recovery Dharma, LifeRing, Women for Sobriety, a faith community, a counselor, medication, or nothing formal yet. If you are still using some days, or trying to stop and not there yet, this book is for you too. Start on any page. If you have used recently, read If I Use Again first.

SMART Recovery teaches tools for changing how you think and act, drawn from a kind of counseling called cognitive behavioral therapy. Recovery Dharma uses Buddhist meditation and practice. LifeRing is not religious, and its members aim not to drink or use at all. Women for Sobriety is a program for women.

There is one page for each day. Each page has a short reading, one thing to do today, and one question to answer. The rest of the page is yours to write on. Anyone who picks up this book can read what you write in it, so keep it somewhere private. In a sober house, staff may search rooms, so write as if they could read it. If you are on probation, parole, or in a court program, or you have a custody or family court case, talk with your attorney before you write down details of use or of your case. If someone at home reads your things to use them against you, keep the book where that person cannot find it, or write less.

The days are numbered, not dated, so you can start on any day of the year. Write the date at the top of each page when you read it. If you miss a day, pick up where you left off. If you would rather read by theme, each month has one:

- Month 1, Days 1 to 31: The First Month
- Month 2, Days 32 to 59: People
- Month 3, Days 60 to 90: Cravings and Hard Hours
- Month 4, Days 91 to 120: Honesty
- Month 5, Days 121 to 151: Time
- Month 6, Days 152 to 181: Money and Work
- Month 7, Days 182 to 212: Home and Family
- Month 8, Days 213 to 243: Feelings
- Month 9, Days 244 to 273: Setbacks
- Month 10, Days 274 to 304: Health
- Month 11, Days 305 to 334: Being Useful
- Month 12, Days 335 to 365: The Long Run

Every seventh day is a Look Back day, for reading over the week's answers. If a Look Back day comes in a bad stretch, skip the counting. Read one page that helped, call one person, and pick up again tomorrow. If reading old pages brings thoughts of hurting yourself, call or text 988.

If you have used again, turn first to the page called If I Use Again, just after Safety and Getting Help. Then read Month 9, Days 244 to 273, whatever day you are on.

Book 7 in this library, One Day at a Time, Written Down, is a journal for the first ninety days. The two can be used together. Other books in the library cover cravings, money, work, housing, court, family, and more, and the readings point to them where they help.

This book is not medical advice. Nothing in it tells you to start, stop, or change a medication. You and your prescriber decide that together. If you get your medication at a clinic, your prescriber means the clinic's medical staff, and your counselor there can help you reach them.

Safety and Getting Help

If somebody is overdosing, unconscious, having a seizure, or cannot be woken, call 911 now. Signs of an opioid overdose: the person will not wake up when you shout their name and rub your knuckles hard on the middle of their chest, their breathing is slow, shallow, or stopped, they make choking, gurgling, or snoring sounds, their lips or fingernails change color, or their pupils are very small. If you have naloxone, give it. It will not harm someone who has not taken opioids. If the person is not breathing, give rescue breaths if you know how, or do what the 911 dispatcher tells you. If the person does not respond or breathe normally 2 to 3 minutes after a dose, give another dose with a new spray or device. Keep doing that every 2 to 3 minutes until they breathe or help comes. Once they are breathing, lay them on their side so they do not choke, and stay with them until help comes. Naloxone can wear off before the opioid does, so a person who wakes up still needs to be seen by medical staff. You can buy naloxone without a prescription at pharmacies and many other stores, and many health departments and harm reduction programs give it out free. Call 211 to find one near you.

After cocaine, meth, or other stimulants, call 911 if the person passes out, has trouble breathing, has chest pain, is very hot, or has a seizure. If opioids could be involved,

give naloxone too, because stimulants can contain fentanyl.

In an overdose or any other emergency, call 911 first, even if you are on probation, parole, or in a court program, and call your attorney after. Most states have laws that may protect the person who overdosed and the person who called for help. The laws differ by state, so ask your attorney what yours covers.

Withdrawal from alcohol, benzodiazepines, and some other drugs can be life-threatening. If you have been drinking heavily or taking benzodiazepines regularly, call a doctor before you stop. Alcohol withdrawal can start hours or days after the last drink and can get worse over the next few days. Before you stop, tell someone and ask them to check on you, because someone who is having a seizure or is confused cannot call for help. If you or someone with you has a seizure, is confused, has a fever, or sees or hears things that are not there, call 911. If you are shaking, sweating, or your heart is racing, call a doctor today, or 911 if it is getting worse. If you are too sick to look after a child in your care, call another adult to take over now, or call 911 if nobody can come. A child is never the person who watches over you.

If you are thinking about killing yourself or hurting yourself, or you are in a crisis with your mood or your using, call or text 988. You can also chat at 988lifeline.org. It is free, confidential, and open all the time. For Spanish,

press 2. Veterans, service members, and people worried about them can reach the Veterans Crisis Line at 988, then press 1, or text 838255. You do not have to be enrolled in VA care to use it. You can also call 988 if you are worried about someone else.

If someone at home hits you, threatens you, or will not let you leave, call 911 if you are in danger. The National Domestic Violence Hotline is 1-800-799-7233, or text START to 88788. It is free, confidential, and open all day and night.

For sexual assault, the National Sexual Assault Hotline is 1-800-656-4673, or text HOPE to 64673. It is free, confidential, and open all day and night.

If someone has asked you not to contact them, or a court order limits contact, do not contact them in any way, and ask your attorney before you do anything that involves them.

To find treatment, detox, or somebody to talk to, the SAMHSA National Helpline is 1-800-662-4357. It is free, confidential, and open 24 hours a day, every day of the year, in English and Spanish.

For food, rent, utility, and other local help, call 211.

If I Use Again

Turn to this page first if you have used again.

If you went back to drinking heavily or taking benzodiazepines regularly, call a doctor before you stop again, because stopping suddenly can be dangerous. If you are shaking, sweating, or your heart is racing, call a doctor today. If you or someone with you has a seizure, is confused, has a fever, or sees or hears things that are not there, call 911.

If you went back to opioids after any time away, your body cannot handle the amount you used to take. That amount can kill you in the first days back. This includes time in jail, a hospital, detox, or treatment, and time after stopping methadone, buprenorphine, or naltrexone, or after missing a naltrexone dose or shot. Street drugs can also contain fentanyl, even pills and powders sold as something else, so a dose you think you know can be far stronger. Mixing opioids, including methadone and buprenorphine, with alcohol or benzodiazepines raises the risk of dying. Some street drugs also contain xylazine, an animal sedative that naloxone does not reverse. Give naloxone anyway, because xylazine is often mixed with opioids, call 911, and give rescue breaths if the person is not breathing. Wounds from xylazine can get worse fast, so get any sore seen by a doctor or clinic early.

Do not use alone. Have naloxone where somebody can reach it, and show them how to use it. Tell one person

where you are. If you are going to be alone anyway, ask someone to call or come by at a set time soon after you use, and leave the door unlocked. Tell that person to call 911 and come in if you do not answer. If you live in a sober house, do not lock yourself in a room to hide your using. Tell someone where you are, even if it could cost you your bed. A child is never the person who watches over you or finds you. If you are looking after children, get another adult to take over their care before you do anything else, and do not drive them anywhere.

If somebody is overdosing, unconscious, having a seizure, or cannot be woken, call 911 now. Signs of an opioid overdose: the person will not wake up when you shout their name and rub your knuckles hard on the middle of their chest, their breathing is slow, shallow, or stopped, they make choking, gurgling, or snoring sounds, their lips or fingernails change color, or their pupils are very small. If you have naloxone, give it. If the person is not breathing, give rescue breaths if you know how, or do what the 911 dispatcher tells you. If the person does not respond or breathe normally 2 to 3 minutes after a dose, give another dose with a new spray or device. Keep doing that every 2 to 3 minutes until they breathe or help comes. Once they are breathing, lay them on their side so they do not choke, and stay with them until help comes. Naloxone can wear off, so a person who wakes up still needs medical care. Call 911 first even if you are on supervision, and call your attorney after.

If you are thinking about killing yourself or hurting yourself, or part of you did not care whether you woke up, call or text 988 now. Veterans and service members can call 988, then press 1, or text 838255. You can also chat at 988lifeline.org.

If you are on supervision, talk to your attorney before you tell your officer. Staff at some sober houses report drug tests and rule breaks to officers or courts, so talk to your attorney before you tell staff at a house like that, but follow the house safety rules. If you signed a form that lets your clinic share your results with your officer or the court, talk to your attorney before you tell the clinic about the slip, and keep dosing.

Then tell one person what happened, and open this book to Day 244, the start of the month on setbacks. Book 5 in this library has a chapter called After a Slip.

SAMHSA National Helpline: 1-800-662-4357. Free, confidential, 24 hours a day, every day, English and Spanish.

Month 1. The First Month

Only the Next Hour

You do not have to decide anything about the rest of your life today. You have to get through the next hour without drinking or using. Write the time down now. When the clock reaches the next hour, write that time down too, and keep going until bed. By tonight you will have a page of times, and each one is an hour you finished.

Withdrawal from alcohol, benzodiazepines, and some other drugs can be life-threatening. If you or someone with you has a seizure, is confused, or sees or hears things that are not there, call 911. If you are shaking, sweating, or your heart is racing, call a doctor today, or 911 if it is getting worse.

Today: Write down the time every hour until you go to bed.

Ask yourself: What will I do in the next ten minutes?

Eat Something

Early on, hunger, thirst, and tiredness can feel a lot like a craving. Eat something today at regular times, even if it is small and even if you are not hungry. Keep water where you can see it and drink some every time you notice it. If you cannot afford food, call 211 and ask for the nearest food pantry. Book 3 in this library, the Free Help Directory, lists more.

Today: Eat three times, at times you write down this morning.

Ask yourself: When did I last eat, and what was it?

Getting Through a Bad Night

Sleep can stay rough for a while after you stop. Lying awake can feel like proof that recovery is not working. Get up at the same time every day, whatever the night was like. If you work nights or rotating shifts, keep your wake-up time as steady as your schedule allows. Keep the room dark, even for daytime sleep, and the phone across the room. If you are awake for a long time, get up, sit somewhere dim, and do something dull until you feel sleepy. If you share a room or live in a sober house, earplugs and a sleep mask can help, and check the house rules on where you can sit at night. If you go days without sleep, call a doctor. If you see or hear things that are not there, are confused, or have a seizure, call 911, because those can be signs of dangerous withdrawal. If you are shaking or sweating, call a doctor today.

Today: Pick a wake-up time and set an alarm for it.

Ask yourself: What do I do in the last hour before bed?

One Person

Pick one person who knows, or could know, that you are trying to stop. It can be family, someone from a meeting, a counselor, a neighbor, or a coworker. Tell that person one true sentence about today, something like "I have not used since Tuesday and tonight is hard." You do not have to explain or promise anything. If there is nobody, call or text 988 on a hard night. To find treatment or a group, call the SAMHSA National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357. It is free and answers every day, all day.

Today: Send that one sentence to one person.

Ask yourself: Who would I want to know if tonight went badly?

Clear One Thing Out

Anything you used, anything you used with, and any number for getting more can still pull at you while it sits in your home or your phone. Clear out one of those things today. Pour it out, throw it away, delete the number, or ask someone to take it. If what you used was a medicine prescribed to you, keep it in a locked place and talk to your prescriber before you throw it out or stop taking it, because stopping some medicines suddenly can bring dangerous withdrawal. If you or someone with you has a seizure, is confused, or sees or hears things that are not there, call 911. One thing is enough for today. Tomorrow you can do another.

Today: Remove one item, number, or app.

Ask yourself: What in my home or my phone makes it easier to use?

A Craving Rises and Falls

A craving can feel as if it will keep growing until you give in. It rises, it peaks, and it falls. When one starts, look at the clock. Then do something with your hands or your body: walk, wash the dishes, take a shower, call someone. Look at the clock again when the craving eases and write down how long it lasted. The next time, you will have a number to hold on to.

Today: Time your next craving from start to finish.

Ask yourself: What did I do the last time a craving passed?

One Week

Go back over this week's pages. Count the hours or days you did not drink or use, even if the week had a slip in it. Notice which times of day were hardest and what you did that helped. Write those down together on one line. That line is the start of your own plan. If this week went badly, start the plan today.

Today: Write down the hardest time of day this week and one thing that helped.

Ask yourself: What do I want to do differently next week?

The Hours That Used to Be for Using

You may have used at certain times: after work, Friday night, payday, the hour after the kids were asleep. Those hours still come when you stop, and they come empty. Plan something for each of them before it arrives: a meeting, a call, a walk, a meal with someone, a long shower, an early night.

Today: Write down your two hardest hours and what you will do in each.

Ask yourself: Which hour today is most likely to be hard?

More Than One Way

Some people go to twelve-step meetings. Others go to SMART Recovery, Recovery Dharma, LifeRing, Women for Sobriety, a faith group, a counselor, or a doctor who prescribes medication. Many people use more than one. Try one this week. If it is wrong for you, try another. Some people in some groups and faith communities say that taking medication means you are not really in recovery, and some meetings limit how much people on medication can share or serve. Some sober houses push residents to come off medication too. Taking a prescribed medication as directed is treatment, and it does not reset your count. You and your prescriber decide about your medication, and a house rule or a meeting does not. If a meeting or congregation makes you feel bad about your medication, try a different meeting or group, and find people who will support your treatment. Book 3 lists free meetings, and Book 12 covers finding a house that allows your medication.

Today: Look up one meeting or group and write down when it meets.

Ask yourself: What kind of help would I actually show up to?

Medication Is Treatment

For opioid use disorder and alcohol use disorder there are medicines a doctor can prescribe. Taking a prescribed medicine as directed is treatment. If you want to know whether medication fits you, ask a doctor, a clinic, or the SAMHSA National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357. Book 4 in this library, Medications for Addiction, Explained, covers the options and how to pay for them.

Today: Write down one question you would ask a doctor about medication.

Ask yourself: What have I heard about medication, and who told me?

Saying One Thing Out Loud

Shame says that if anyone knew what you had done, they would leave. So you keep it hidden, and hiding it takes energy you need for staying stopped. You do not have to tell everyone, and you do not have to tell anyone this week. When you are ready, you can tell one safe person one thing you have been carrying: a counselor, a sponsor or mentor, a member of the clergy, or a trusted friend. You choose how much to say, and you can stop partway. If what you carry is something that was done to you, it was not your fault, and a counselor is a good first person to tell. If you have a case, or what you carry involves a crime, tell your attorney first, because what you tell a sponsor, friend, or group is usually not legally private, and clergy rules vary by state. If you feel exposed the day after you tell, call the person you told or someone else you trust.

Today: Choose who you could tell, even if you do not tell them yet.

Ask yourself: What am I spending energy hiding?

When You Are Angry

Anger comes up often in the first weeks. Some of it is old and some of it is about today. Anger can show you what matters to you. It can also carry you to a decision you did not plan to make. When you are angry, put time and distance between you and the other person before you say or decide anything. Walk, write it down, or call someone who will listen without taking sides.

Today: Name one thing that made you angry this week and what you did with it.

Ask yourself: Who can I call when I am angry?

When the Evening Is Empty

If the people you spent time with were people you used with, stopping can leave whole evenings with nobody in them. You can fill some of that time on purpose: a meeting, a library, a gym, a place of worship, a volunteer shift, or a phone call at the same time every night. None of it will feel like the old company at first. Keep going anyway, and give it a few weeks. A new romance can fill an evening fast and pull you away from your plan just as fast. If you start one, tell someone you trust.

Today: Put one thing with other people on your calendar this week.

Ask yourself: Who did I enjoy being around before I was using?

Two Weeks

Look at the plans you wrote over the last seven days. Which plans did you follow, and which did you skip? Look at the skipped ones without blame. Usually the plan was too big, too vague, or set for the wrong time. Make next week's plans smaller and more specific, with a name, a time, and a place in each.

Today: Rewrite one plan you skipped so it is smaller.

Ask yourself: What did I do this week that I did not think I could do?

Where the Money Was Going

Drinking or using cost money, and some of that money is now staying in your pocket. Some of it may already be going to old debts or new bills. Write down roughly what you spent on drinking or using in a normal week. You do not have to do anything with that number yet. Book 10 in this library, Money in Early Recovery, covers budgets, debts, and what to do when a bill is about to be shut off.

Today: Write down the weekly number, as honestly as you can.

Ask yourself: What would I do with that money over a month?

Plan Payday Before It Comes

Payday puts cash in your hand on the same day the old habit says to celebrate. Before your next payday, decide where the money goes: rent, food, bills, and a small amount for something you enjoy. If you get paid every day, as day labor often is, make the plan once and use it every evening: how much goes to rent, how much to food, and how much you carry. Pay the big bills first, the same day the money arrives. If carrying cash is the problem, keep less on you, or ask someone you trust to hold some of it.

Today: Write down when your next payday is and what you will pay first.

Ask yourself: Who could I call on payday evening?

Moving Your Body

Walk, stretch, lift something, dance in the kitchen. If your work is hard on your body, ten minutes of stretching after a shift counts. Moving your body can make a hard hour easier to get through and can help you sleep that night. You can do it at home or outside, a few days a week at first. Pick something that costs nothing and start with ten minutes.

Today: Move for ten minutes.

Ask yourself: What kind of moving did I like as a kid?

Small Lies

In active addiction, small lies become a habit: where you were, how much you spent, whether you slept. The habit does not stop by itself when the using stops. Today, notice the small ones. When one comes out, correct it if you can, with something like "Actually, that is not right." It is awkward the first few times.

Today: Correct one small untruth, out loud or in writing.

Ask yourself: Where do I still say what is easier instead of what is true?

Places and People

Some places and some people make using more likely: a street, a bar, a friend's apartment, a group chat. For now, go around them. Take a different route home. Mute the chat. Tell the friend you are busy. You can decide later which of them come back into your life, and on what terms.

Today: List three places or people to avoid this week, and your way around each one.

Ask yourself: Which of them will be hardest to avoid, and why?

A List for Seven O'Clock

Using filled time. Without it, an evening can stretch a long way, and boredom can be hard. Make a list of things you can do in under an hour that cost little or nothing: a library book, a puzzle, a show you have not seen, cooking a real meal, fixing something, calling someone. Keep the list by your bed or in your phone, where you will see it at seven o'clock at night.

Today: Write a list of ten things to do on an empty evening.

Ask yourself: What did I enjoy doing before using took up the time?

Three Weeks

Look back at the hardest day of the last week. Look for what happened just before it got hard, such as hunger, a phone call, a payday, a fight, or a place. After a few weeks of writing things down, patterns start to show. When you can name what comes before the hard part, you can plan for it.

Today: Write down what came before your hardest moment this week.

Ask yourself: Does it look like anything from the weeks before?

The People You Live With

The people you live with have been through some of this with you, and they may not trust the change yet. Their trust comes back through what they see you do over time. You cannot talk them into it. You can keep showing up, keep your word on small things, and let them have their own feelings about the past. If you live in a sober house, trust with housemates and staff is built the same way: chores done, rent paid on time, and being where you signed out to be.

Today: Keep one small promise to someone at home, on time.

Ask yourself: What would show the people I live with that something has changed?

The First Hour of the Day

Before you look at your phone, drink a glass of water, eat something, and read your plan for the day. Know where you will be during your hard hours. If you dose at a clinic in the morning, put the trip and the line in the plan, and decide the night before who gets any children to school if the line runs long. Some people also read, pray, sit quietly, or write a few lines. Give the first hour of the day a shape you chose the night before.

Today: Write down the first three things you will do tomorrow morning.

Ask yourself: What did my mornings look like when I was using?

See a Doctor

If you have not seen a doctor in a while, now is a good time. Years of drinking or using can affect the liver, the heart, the teeth, the skin, and sleep, and a checkup can find problems early. Community health centers charge on a sliding scale, and you can find one at findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov or by calling 211. Tell the doctor what you used and for how long, because the doctor needs it to treat you.

Today: Find the nearest community health center and write down its number.

Ask yourself: What health problem have I been putting off?

Feelings Come Back

After you stop, feelings that were numbed can come back strong. You may cry at a commercial or snap at a coworker. Name the feeling when it comes, out loud or on paper: "this is sad," "this is fear." Naming it gives you a second before you act on it. If a feeling turns into thoughts of hurting yourself, call or text 988 at any hour.

Today: Name three feelings you had today.

Ask yourself: Which feeling is hardest for me to sit with?

Doing Something for Someone

Doing something for another person gets you out of your own head for an hour. Walk someone to the bus stop. Help a neighbor carry groceries. Set up chairs at a meeting. Answer the phone for someone newer than you.

Today: Do one thing for someone without being asked.

Ask yourself: Who in my life could use a small hand this week?

If You Used

A slip since yesterday does not erase the days before it or what you learned in them. Get safe first. If you have been drinking heavily or taking benzodiazepines regularly, call a doctor before you stop, and call 911 for a seizure, confusion, or seeing or hearing things that are not there. After a break from opioids, the amount you used to take can kill you, and street drugs can contain fentanyl even when they are sold as something else. Do not use alone, and keep naloxone nearby. If someone overdoses, call 911, give naloxone, and stay with them. If children are in your care, get another adult to take over their care before you do anything else. A child is never the person who watches over you. If you are thinking about hurting yourself, or part of you did not care whether you woke up, call or text 988. Then tell one person and go back to your plan.

Today: Tell one person and do one thing from your plan.

Ask yourself: What happened in the hour before I used?

Four Weeks

Read Day 1 again. Compare what you wrote then with what your days look like now. Some things may be better, some the same, and some worse. Write down one thing that is better, however small. Keep the page where you can find it on a bad day.

Today: Mark the page so you can find it on a bad day.

Ask yourself: What do I want the next four weeks to look like?

The Next Hard Date

Birthdays, holidays, the anniversary of a loss, the date you used to celebrate, a court date, a family event: some dates are harder than others. Look at the calendar for the next two months and mark the ones that could be hard. For each one, write down where you will be, who will be with you, and how you will leave if you need to.

Today: Mark the next hard date and write your plan for it.

Ask yourself: Who can I be with on that day?

What You Count

Some people count days, some count hours, and some do not count at all. If you take a prescribed medication for addiction, taking it as directed does not reset your count, and your days count the same as anyone's. A count can help you see how far you have come. It can also make a slip feel like everything is lost, even though the days before the slip still happened. Use the count if it helps you. Drop it if it makes you want to give up. Keep the plan for today either way.

Today: Decide whether counting helps you, and write down why.

Ask yourself: What do I want to remember about this first month?

The Second Month

Some people feel unusually good in the first weeks, and the second month can feel flat by comparison, as the first push of effort fades and the people around you stop checking in as often. Keep the parts of your plan that worked: the call, the meeting, the meals, and the bedtime. Add one new thing next month, such as a group, a class, a doctor's appointment, or a person.

Today: Choose the one new thing for next month.

Ask yourself: Which part of my plan do I most need to keep?

Month 2. People

Practice Asking When It Is Easy

People often wait to ask for help until they are desperate. By then the words are hard to get out, and the other person hears the panic before the request. Practice on small things while the day is calm. Ask a neighbor which day the trash goes out. Ask a coworker to show you a task again. Ask someone at a meeting or a group how their second month went. Each small request gets you used to the sound of your own voice asking. On a bad night you will need that sound to come out easily.

Today: Ask two people for one small thing each before dinner.

Ask yourself: What do I tell myself right before I decide not to ask?

A List You Can Read in the Dark

When a hard hour comes, you will not want to scroll through your contacts deciding who is safe to call. Make that decision now. Write down the names and numbers of two people you could call at eleven at night. Under them, write 988, for a crisis at any hour, and the SAMHSA National Helpline, 1-800-662-4357, for finding treatment. Keep one copy in your wallet and one by your bed. Tell both people they are on the list, so a late call does not surprise them. Book 2 in this library, the Wallet Crisis Card, is a printable card of numbers to call.

Today: Write the list and tell both people they are on it.

Ask yourself: Who on my list would I actually call at eleven at night?

When Someone Offers

People will offer help you did not ask for: a ride, a meal, a couch for a night, a number to call. The habit from using is to say "I'm fine" before the offer is finished. Today, when an offer comes, say yes, or say "Can I take you up on that later?" and then follow up. Write down who offered and what. If an offer comes with a drink or a drug in it, turn down that part and keep the person if you can.

Today: Say yes to the next reasonable offer of help.

Ask yourself: Which offers have I turned down this month, and why?

Five Weeks

Go through last week's answers. Count how many times you asked someone for something, and how many times you thought about asking and did not. For each ask you did not make, write down what stopped you: pride, the hour, not wanting to bother anyone, or not knowing what to say. Pick the reason that showed up most and plan around it next week. If the problem was the hour, find a person or a line that answers at that hour.

Today: Write down what stopped you from asking, and how often.

Ask yourself: Who did I ask this week, and how did it go?

The People You Used With

Some of your old friends will be glad you stopped. Some will want you back the way you were. You do not have to decide about all of them today. Notice who asks how you are doing and who asks when you are coming out. For now, see the second group in daylight, somewhere public, with your own way home, or not at all.

Today: Write two lists: people who ask how you are, and people who ask when you are coming out.

Ask yourself: Which old friend do I miss, and what did we do together besides using?

Being the New Person

Walking into a room full of strangers is hard sober, especially if you used to walk into rooms already drunk or high. Arrive five minutes early, when the room is quieter and people are setting up. Ask whoever is there whether you can help. Setting out chairs or making coffee gives your hands a job while you talk. Learn one name and use it before you leave. Next time, look for that person first.

Today: Go somewhere new, arrive early, and learn one name.

Ask yourself: What do I usually do with my hands when I am nervous in a room?

Calling Before You Need To

A call made at four in the afternoon, when you are fine, is easier than a call made at midnight, when you are not. Call one person on your list today with nothing to report. Tell them what you ate, how work went, and what is coming up this week. Ask how their day was and listen to the answer. Ordinary calls build the habit and the friendship. When the hard call comes later, it goes to someone who already knows your voice and your week, and who does not need the first five minutes explained.

Today: Make one call on a break or on the way home, with nothing wrong to report.

Ask yourself: Who have I only called when something was wrong?

When You Cannot Say It Out Loud

Some things are easier to type than to say. If a call feels like too much, send a text. Keep it short and specific, such as "Rough night. Can you talk at 9?" or "Day 39. Still here." The other person does not need a full report to show up for you. If you are thinking about hurting yourself, call or text 988 at any hour and you will reach a crisis counselor.

Today: Send one short, true text to someone on your list.

Ask yourself: What would I want someone to text me if they were where I am?

Saying No Without a Speech

Recovery brings invitations you will need to turn down: the birthday at the bar, the cookout where everyone drinks, the friend who wants to hang out at the old place. You can say no in one sentence: "I can't make it, but I'd like to see you for lunch next week." You do not owe anyone an explanation of your recovery.

Today: Write one sentence you can use to turn down an invitation.

Ask yourself: Which invitation coming up do I need that sentence for?

One Honest Conversation at Home

The people you live with may tiptoe around the subject, or bring it up at the worst time. Pick a time when nobody is tired or in a hurry, and tell them what you want them to know. Keep it to the present: what you are doing to stay stopped, and one thing they can do that helps. Leave the past for another day, or for a counselor's office. Book 14 in this library, For Families, is written for the people around you, if they want something to read.

Today: Choose a time this week for one conversation at home.

Ask yourself: What is the one thing I want my family to know right now?

Six Weeks

Look at the last week's pages. Write down each person you spoke with about your recovery, even for a minute. Next to each name, write whether you came away steadier or shakier. Leave the names alone for now. Over the next few weeks this list will show you who to call first and who to see less. If the list has fewer than three names, put adding one at the top of next week's plan.

Today: List the people you talked to, and how you felt after each.

Ask yourself: Who left me steadier this week?

Someone Who Has Been at It Longer

Some paths pair a newer person with someone who has more time. Twelve-step groups call that person a sponsor, and Recovery Dharma calls that person a mentor. Some faith-based programs use an accountability partner. SMART Recovery has no sponsors, and members there lean on the group. On any path, a counselor, a peer specialist, or a friend with more time can fill the same place. Look for someone who has been stopped longer than you, answers the phone, and tells you the truth. In a twelve-step group, also look for someone who has worked the steps with a sponsor of their own. A good sponsor or mentor leaves your medication to you and your prescriber. You can ask for a trial month. If it does not work, ask someone else.

Today: Write down the name of one person further along whom you could ask.

Ask yourself: What do I want from someone further along, and what am I afraid they will ask of me?

A Room Where People Drink

Sooner or later you will be somewhere people are drinking: a wedding, a work dinner, a holiday. Plan it before you go. Bring your own drink and keep it in your hand. Some religious services and holidays include wine. If yours do, ask ahead whether there is grape juice or another choice. Know how you are getting there and how you will leave on your own. If someone else is driving, make sure that person is not drinking, or line up a second ride before you go. Where there is no bus or cab, settle the ride home before you say yes. If you live in a sober house, check your curfew and pass rules before you say yes, and plan to be back in time. Tell one person you trust that you are going, and call them when you get home. If the event is optional and you are early on, staying home is a plan too.

Today: Pick the next event where people will be drinking and write your plan for it.

Ask yourself: How will I leave if I need to?

Apologies Can Wait

You may want to apologize to everyone you hurt, all at once, this week. Some apologies go better after you are steadier and have talked them over with someone you trust. A rushed apology can turn into a fight, or into a promise you cannot keep yet. For now, write down the names. Next to each, write what you would want to say. If someone has asked you not to contact them, or a court order limits contact, do not contact them in any way, and ask your attorney before you do anything that involves them. In a few months you will know more about how and when.

Today: Start the list of people you want to make things right with.

Ask yourself: Which apology on the list is for them, and which is to make me feel better?

Trust Comes Back Slowly

The people you hurt may watch you closely for a long time. They may check your phone, ask where you were, or bring up things you did a year ago. That stings, and it is how trust gets rebuilt: through months of small things they can check. Answer their questions plainly. Be where you said you would be, when you said. If the checking comes with threats, if the person controls your money, your phone, or who you can see, or if you are afraid of the person, that is a safety problem. Talk to a counselor, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or text START to 88788, and call 911 if you are in danger.

Today: Tell someone where you will be tonight, and be there.

Ask yourself: Which small promise can I keep this week that someone will notice?

Children in the House

If there are children in your home, you do not need to tell them everything. Tell them the truth at their level: that you had a problem with drinking or drugs, that you are getting help, and that it is not their fault. If you are raising a grandchild or another relative's child, the child may have already lived through a parent's using. Answer the child's questions briefly and truthfully, and ask the child's doctor or a counselor for help with the harder ones. If you dose at a clinic, plan who has the child during your visit. Do not ask a child to keep your using a secret, to check on you, or to watch for a slip, because those are jobs for adults. Then keep showing up for ordinary things, like dinner, homework, and the ride to practice. If a child asks a question you cannot answer, say you will find out, and then do. Book 14, For Families, has more for the adults around a child.

Today: Do one ordinary thing with a child in your home, on time.

Ask yourself: What does the child in my home most need from me this month?

Who Knows

You get to decide who knows you are in recovery and how much they know. Some people tell everyone. Some tell almost nobody. Make the choice on purpose, before the moment comes, so you are not deciding at a dinner table. Write down the people who will know and the people who will not, at least for now. Work is its own question. Book 11 in this library, Work and Recovery, covers what to tell an employer.

Today: Write down who will know and who will not.

Ask yourself: Who am I most afraid of telling, and why?

Seven Weeks

Look over last week's answers about people. Pick one relationship that is better than it was a month ago and write down what changed. Pick one that is worse and do the same. Look at whether each change came from one big moment or from something small, done over and over, like a weekly call or a promise kept. If something small helped the better one, plan to do it again this week, on a day and at a time you write down now.

Today: Plan to repeat one small thing that helped a relationship.

Ask yourself: Which relationship do I most want to be better a month from now?

Saying Your Number

This is the fiftieth reading in this book. Tell one person how long you have been stopped, whether the number is fifty days, five days, or five hours. Taking a prescribed medication for addiction as directed does not reset your count. Once someone knows the number, they can ask about it next week, and that question helps on a hard day. If your count started over this month, the days before it still happened, and what you learned in them is still yours.

Today: Tell one person your count.

Ask yourself: Who would I like to tell my count to next month?

Going Back When It Was Awkward

A first meeting or group can be awkward: a long silence, someone who talks too long, a room where everyone else seems to know each other. In most meetings you can say only your first name, or pass when it is your turn to talk. Meeting lists often mark a meeting open, for anyone who wants to come, or closed, only for people who want to stop drinking or using. If a meeting is for a different substance than yours, look for one that fits, or ask whether everyone is welcome. Go back at least twice more before you decide about it. By the third visit, a few faces will be familiar and you will know where to sit. If it is still wrong after that, try a different group or a different path. Book 3, the Free Help Directory, lists free meetings, in person and online.

Today: Choose one group to go back to this week, and write down when it meets.

Ask yourself: What did I decide about the last group after one visit?

Listening All the Way Through

At a meeting, in a group, or on the phone, try listening until the other person finishes before you think about your answer. Notice one thing they said that you recognize from your own days. Tell them afterward, in one sentence, such as "What you said about Sundays, that's me too." Then ask them one question about it.

Today: Tell one person what you recognized in what they said.

Ask yourself: Whose story this week sounded like mine?

Help Through a Screen

If you cannot get to a meeting in person because of work, children, no car, or a small town, you can join one online. Several of the paths named in this book run online meetings, some by video and some by voice or chat. Some online meetings also give a phone number, so you can join from any phone without internet. Keep your camera off the first time if that is easier. Type one line in the chat, even if it is only hello and your first name. Book 3, the Free Help Directory, lists online meetings.

Today: Find one online meeting and write down when it starts.

Ask yourself: What keeps me from getting to a meeting in person?

The Person Closest to You

A spouse or partner lived through the using from the inside. On one afternoon they may be relieved, and on the next angry or worn out. They need their own support, separate from yours. Some groups are for family members only, and a counselor can see the two of you together or apart. If there has been violence or fear between you, start apart. If your partner has asked you not to contact them, or a court order limits contact, do not contact them in any way, and ask your attorney before you do anything that involves them. You can keep your plan and tell your partner what the plan is. Your partner's own recovery from what happened is theirs to carry. Book 14, For Families, is written for them.

Today: Tell your partner one part of your plan for this week.

Ask yourself: What does my partner need that I cannot give right now?

When Someone Says Something Cruel

Somebody will say something about your using that hurts: a relative at a holiday, or a stranger online. Some of it will be unfair, and some may be partly true. Some people will tell you that medication is not real recovery. Your treatment is for you and your prescriber to decide, and you do not have to defend it at a holiday table. You do not have to answer in the moment. Walk away or end the call. Later, tell someone on your list what was said. Then decide whether any part of it is worth keeping, and let go of the rest.

Today: Decide what you will do the next time someone says something cruel.

Ask yourself: Whose words from this month am I still carrying?

Eight Weeks

Look at the names you have written down over the last month: the people you call and the people you are seeing less. Cross out anyone who turned out to be a mistake. Add anyone new, including the person from a group whose name you learned and the coworker who asked how you were. Then copy the names and numbers onto a clean page and keep the page with your wallet card. A list from two months ago may send you to the wrong person.

Today: Rewrite your people list so it matches this week.

Ask yourself: Who is on my list now who was not there on Day 1?

An Hour by Yourself

You also need to be able to spend an hour alone without using. Start with one planned hour at home, with the phone in another room, doing one thing you chose: a meal, a book, a walk. If the hour gets hard, stop and call someone. Write down how the hour went and what you did when it got hard. Next time, try the hour again.

Today: Spend one planned hour alone, and write down how it went.

Ask yourself: When is being alone hardest for me?

Being Somebody's Call

After a couple of months, someone newer may start looking to you. You do not need years to help. You can answer the phone, walk someone in the door, or tell them what your first week was like. Keep to what you know from your own days, and send them to a doctor, a counselor, or the SAMHSA National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357 for anything past that.

Today: Give your number to one person newer than you.

Ask yourself: What did someone do for me in my first week that I could do for someone else?

The Third Month

Month 3 is about cravings and hard hours. Before it starts, plan time with the people you found this month. Cravings in the third month often come when the routine slips and the calendar empties. When a craving comes next month, the list you built this month is where you will start, and the calendar is how you will know who to call.

Today: Put two things with other people on next week's calendar, with a day and a time.

Ask yourself: Who do I want to keep close in the next month?

Month 3. Cravings and Hard Hours

Cravings in the Third Month

Some people expect cravings to fade steadily after the first weeks. For many, they come back in the second or third month, sometimes stronger, often without warning. That does not mean you are going backward. It usually means the routine has loosened and the early fear has worn off. This month is about the hard hours: what sets them off, how long they last, and what gets you through. Start by keeping a small notebook or a note on your phone for every craving this week.

Today: Write down every craving today, with the time and what you were doing.

Ask yourself: When did my last strong craving come, and what was happening?

What Sets It Off

A craving rarely comes from nowhere. It usually follows something: a smell, a song, a street, a payday, a fight, a certain time of the evening, being hungry or tired. These are called triggers. Some you can avoid for now, and some you cannot. Knowing yours means you can see the hard hour coming and have a plan ready before it starts. Look at yesterday's notes and circle anything that came right before a craving.

Today: List five things that tend to come right before a craving.

Ask yourself: Which of my triggers can I avoid this week, and which can I not?

Fifteen Minutes

Many cravings ease within a short time if you do not feed them. When one starts, tell yourself you will wait fifteen minutes before you decide anything. Set a timer. Use the fifteen minutes to do something that takes your hands: wash dishes, walk around the block, take a shower, call someone. Some people use the fifteen minutes another way: they sit still and watch the craving, noticing where it sits in the body and how strong it is as it rises and falls. This is sometimes called urge surfing. If watching your body that closely stirs up old memories, use the busy-hands way instead. When the timer goes off, check how strong the craving is now. If it is still strong, set the timer again.

Today: Use a fifteen-minute timer on the next craving.

Ask yourself: How strong was the craving when the timer ended?

Nine Weeks

Read your craving notes from the last few days. Count how many cravings you had and how long each one lasted, roughly. Look for the time of day that shows up most. Then look for what helped, even a little. Write the time of day and the thing that helped on the same line. That line is one row of a plan you can use every week from now on.

Today: Write down your hardest time of day and the thing that helped most.

Ask yourself: Is there a pattern in my cravings I did not see before?

Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired

Many people in recovery check four things when a craving hits: am I hungry, angry, lonely, or tired? Any one of them can feel like a craving, and all four make a real craving harder to ride out. Before you decide anything, eat something, drink water, call someone, or lie down for twenty minutes. Some cravings ease once you have eaten, rested, or talked to someone.

Today: When the next craving comes, check all four before anything else.

Ask yourself: Which of the four shows up most often before my cravings?

The Voice That Makes the Case

A craving often comes with an argument: just one, you have earned it, nobody will know, you can stop again tomorrow. That voice sounds reasonable in the moment. Write down the exact words it uses. Then, next to each one, write what actually happened the last time you believed it. Read the list on a calm day, so you know the argument when it comes back on a hard night.

Today: Write down three things the craving tells you, and what happened last time.

Ask yourself: Which argument has worked on me most often?

Past the First Drink

When a craving pictures the first drink or the first use, it stops there. The picture leaves out the rest of the night and the next morning. Play the whole thing forward in your head or on paper: where you would be at midnight, how you would feel at seven the next morning, who you would have to call, what you would have to explain. Do it slowly, all the way to the next afternoon.

Today: Write out what the next morning would look like if you used tonight.

Ask yourself: What does the craving leave out of the picture?

The Hours After Dark

For many people the hardest stretch runs from early evening to bedtime. Work is over, the house is quiet, and the old routine used to start right about now. Plan those hours in pieces: what you will do at six, at seven, at eight, and at nine. Put a phone call in one of them and something with your hands in another. Go to bed earlier than you think you need to for a while. If you work nights, your hard hours are the ones after your shift ends. Plan those hours the same way.

Today: Write a plan for tonight in one-hour pieces.

Ask yourself: Which evening hour is the hardest for me right now?

The Empty Weekend

Weekends can be harder than weekdays. There is no work to fill the hours, and Friday night may have been when using started for years. Plan the weekend on Thursday. Put at least one thing with other people on Saturday and one on Sunday. Put an early-evening activity on Friday. Leave some time free, but not all of it. If you work weekends, your days off are your weekend, so plan them the same way, the day before they start.

Today: Plan this weekend, with one thing with other people each day.

Ask yourself: What did my weekends look like when I was using?

Calling in the Middle of It

The time to call someone is during the craving, not after you have decided. Many people wait until it passes, or until it wins, and then call. Try calling while it is happening, even if you do not know what to say. "I'm having a craving and I wanted to hear a voice" is enough. You do not need the other person to fix anything.

Today: Call or text someone the next time a craving starts, before it passes.

Ask yourself: What stops me from calling while the craving is still going?

Ten Weeks

Look back over the last week's cravings. Which ones did you ride out, and what did you use? Which ones were the closest calls? For the closest call, write down the minute-by-minute: where you were, what you thought, and what you did next. If you used this week, write that down too, and what happened in the hour before.

Today: Write the minute-by-minute of your closest call this week.

Ask yourself: What was the turning point in that close call?

The Route Home

You may walk, ride, or drive past the old store, the old bar, or the old corner every day. Each pass is a small test you did not choose. Change the route, even if it takes five more minutes. Take a different bus, a different street, a different exit. If you cannot avoid a place, plan what you will do as you pass it: a call, a song, a reminder written on a card. You can go back to the old route later, if you want to.

Today: Change one route you use every day.

Ask yourself: Which place on my daily route pulls at me most?

Out of Reach

If there is alcohol in the house, or a way to get drugs saved in your phone, a craving has a short trip to make. Lengthen the trip. Ask the people you live with to keep alcohol out of the house for a while, or locked away. If you live in a sober house, the house rules ban alcohol and drugs in the house, but a rule does not keep you out of the store. The steps left for you are your phone, your pockets, and your route home. Delete the numbers and the apps. Keep less cash on you.

Today: Put one more step between you and using.

Ask yourself: What in my reach right now makes a craving easier to act on?

When Feelings Feel Like Cravings

Sometimes what feels like a craving is a feeling underneath: grief, fear, shame, anger, or plain loneliness. Using used to cover those feelings, so the body reaches for the old answer. When a craving comes, ask what you were feeling just before it. If you can name the feeling, you can do something about it directly: talk to someone, write it down, cry, take a walk. Book 6 in this library, the Cravings and Hard Hours Workbook, has pages for working through this.

Today: When a craving comes, write down the feeling that came just before it.

Ask yourself: Which feeling most often hides behind my cravings?

Cravings on Good Days

Cravings do not only come on bad days. A raise, a good test result, a birthday, a win at work: for years, good news may have meant a drink or a use. Plan a way to mark good days that does not involve using. A meal out, a call to someone who will be glad, a small thing you buy yourself, an extra hour of something you like. Decide now, so the good day has a plan of its own.

Today: Write down how you will celebrate the next good day.

Ask yourself: When did good news last turn into a reason to use?

Using Dreams

Many people dream about drinking or using in early recovery, sometimes so clearly that they wake up shaken or guilty. A dream about using is not a slip. It can still leave a craving behind in the morning. When it happens, get up, drink water, eat something, and tell someone about it early in the day. Write down what you can remember. Some people find the dreams fade over months.

Today: If you had a using dream, tell one person about it before noon.

Ask yourself: How do I want to handle the morning after a using dream?

Medication and Cravings

For some people, prescribed medication makes cravings far easier to manage. Some medicines for opioid use disorder and for alcohol use disorder ease cravings or lower the risk of a return to use. Methadone and buprenorphine also lower the risk of dying from opioid use. If cravings are wearing you down, ask a doctor or a clinic whether medication could help. If you already take a medication and cravings are increasing, tell your prescriber. Book 4 in this library, Medications for Addiction, Explained, covers the options.

Today: Write down one question about cravings to ask your doctor or prescriber.

Ask yourself: Which cravings have I been carrying alone that I could tell a doctor about?

Eleven Weeks

Look at your craving notes from the last two weeks. Compare the number this week with the number two weeks ago, and how long they lasted. The numbers may be going down, staying the same, or going up. If they are going up, add one more support this week: a meeting, a call, a doctor's appointment, a change in your evening plan.

Today: Compare this week's cravings with two weeks ago and write down what changed.

Ask yourself: What do I need more of in the next two weeks?

A Card for the Worst Moment

When a craving is strong, it is hard to think. Make a card now, while you can, and keep it in your wallet. On one side, write three things you will do, in order. On the other side, write two phone numbers, then 988, and one sentence you wrote to yourself on a good day. When the next strong craving comes, take out the card and do the first thing on it.

Today: Make the card and put it in your wallet.

Ask yourself: What sentence would I want to read in my worst moment?

When the Day Piles Up

Stress builds through a day: a hard boss, a bill, a late bus, a phone call. By evening the pile is high, and a craving finds it easy to get in. Take the pile apart before it gets that high. Somewhere in the middle of the day, stop for five minutes. Breathe slowly, walk, eat, or write down the one thing bothering you most.

Today: Take a five-minute break in the middle of the day.

Ask yourself: What is on my pile today, and what can I set down?

When Someone Near You Is Using

If someone you live with or see every day is still drinking or using, every day carries a trigger you did not choose. You cannot make them stop. You can make some rules for yourself: not in the same room and not in your space. You can spend more time away. If they are using opioids, keep naloxone in the house, and if they overdose, call 911, give naloxone, and stay with them. If you live in a sober house and someone there is using, tell the house manager or staff today, and keep your naloxone where you can reach it. If you are not safe where you live, Book 12 in this library, Finding a Safe Place to Live, covers what to do next.

Today: Write down one rule you will keep about other people using around you.

Ask yourself: Who near me makes staying stopped harder, and what can I change?

Physical Pain

If you have chronic pain, a pain flare can bring a strong craving, especially if pills or alcohol were how you handled pain before. Pain still needs treatment. Tell your doctor about your recovery, and ask about pain treatment that fits it, including options with less risk of misuse. People in recovery, including people on medication for addiction, can still have their pain treated. Do not take someone else's pills for pain, even once.

Today: Write down what you will do the next time pain flares up.

Ask yourself: Has my doctor heard about my recovery, and if not, when will I tell them?

The Long Flat Afternoon

Boredom can be its own trigger. A flat afternoon with nothing to do gives a craving room to grow. You do not need to fill every hour, but you can keep a list of things to reach for. Add to the list you made in the first month: a repair you have put off, a recipe, a library visit, a walk somewhere new, a call to someone you have not talked to in years. Keep the list where you will see it.

Today: Add five new things to your list for empty afternoons.

Ask yourself: When am I most likely to be bored this week?

When Money Lands

Cash in hand can set off a craving: payday, a tax refund, a gift, money from a sale. Before money arrives, decide where it goes. Pay the rent and bills first, the same day. Move savings somewhere that is hard to reach in a hurry. Keep only what you need for the week in your pocket, or only what you need for tomorrow if you are paid every day. Book 10 in this library, Money in Early Recovery, has a page for payday.

Today: Write down the next date money will arrive and where it will go.

Ask yourself: What did I used to do on the day money came in?

Twelve Weeks

Read your plan from Day 63. Which parts did you use this month, and which did you forget? Add anything new that worked: the timer, the card, the change of route, the call during a craving. Cross out anything that did not help. Write the plan out clean on one page. This is your craving plan now, and you can change it any week.

Today: Put the clean craving plan where you can reach it on a hard night.

Ask yourself: Which part of my plan works best when a craving is strong?

The Days Before a Slip

A slip often starts days before the drink or the use. People stop calling, skip meetings, stop eating at regular times, stay up late, pick fights, or start spending time with old friends. Write down the warning signs you have seen in yourself before. Give the list to someone you trust and ask them to tell you if they see one. You may notice the signs in yourself later than other people do.

Today: Write your warning signs and give the list to one person.

Ask yourself: Which of my warning signs have shown up lately?

When a Craving Will Not Let Go

Most cravings pass. Some stay for hours or come back all day. If that happens, treat it as a reason to get help today, not a reason to wait it out alone. Go to a meeting, call your counselor or prescriber, call the SAMHSA National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357, or ask someone to stay with you. If the craving comes with thoughts of hurting yourself, call or text 988.

Today: Write down who you will call if a craving lasts all day.

Ask yourself: How long would I wait before asking for help with a craving?

Every Craving You Rode Out

You have ridden out a lot of cravings this month. Each one you got through is a time you made a choice under pressure. Count them from your notes, even roughly. That number is evidence about what you can do. On a bad night, when the craving tells you that you cannot get through it, read that number.

Today: Count the cravings you rode out this month and write the number down.

Ask yourself: What did I learn about myself from the cravings I got through?

Telling Someone How You Got Through

Tell someone what has worked for you this month. Say it at a meeting, in a group, to a counselor, or to a friend in recovery. Saying it out loud helps you remember it, and it may help someone who is a few weeks behind you. Keep it short: one craving, one thing you did, one thing that happened.

Today: Tell one person one thing that helped you get through a craving.

Ask yourself: Who in my life is a few weeks behind me and could use what I have learned?

On the Days It Was Close

Some days this month may have been very close, and some may have ended in a slip. Being hard on yourself does not make the next day easier. Talk to yourself the way you would talk to a friend who had a hard month: honestly, and without putting them down. Then go back to the plan. If you used, Book 5 in this library has a chapter called After a Slip, and Month 9 of this book is about starting again.

Today: Write two sentences to yourself the way you would write to a friend.

Ask yourself: How do I talk to myself after a close call?

Ninety Days

This is the ninetieth reading in this book. Many twelve-step groups give a chip or keytag at ninety days, and some people mark the day on their own. However your count stands, and whether or not you take a prescribed medication for addiction, you have three months of practice now: a people list, a craving plan, a better idea of your hard hours. Month 4 turns to honesty. Keep your craving plan where you can see it as the new month starts.

Today: Do something to mark ninety days of this book, whatever your count is.

Ask yourself: What do I want to carry from the first ninety days into the next ninety?

Month 4. Honesty

Thirteen Weeks

As this month starts, read your answers from Day 18, the day about small lies. Write down whether those small lies have become less frequent, more frequent, or stayed about the same. This month is about honesty: with yourself, with the people around you, and with the people who can help you. Pick one area where honesty is hardest for you right now and name it at the top of this page.

Today: Name the area where honesty is hardest for you right now.

Ask yourself: Who in my life gets the least honest version of me?

The Story You Tell Yourself

Everyone tells themselves a story about why they drank or used and why things went the way they did. Parts of the story are true. Parts of it are there to make the past easier to live with. Write down the short version of your story in five sentences. Then read it again tomorrow and mark any sentence that leaves out somebody else's side or your own part. If part of your story is something that was done to you, you do not have to find your part in that sentence.

Today: Write your story in five sentences.

Ask yourself: Which sentence in my story was hardest to write?

Telling the Doctor the Truth

Many people leave out the drinking or the drugs when they see a doctor, out of shame or fear. A doctor who does not know cannot treat you well. Medicines can interact with alcohol and other drugs. Symptoms can be misread. At your next appointment, tell the doctor what you used, how much, and for how long, and that you have stopped. If you take methadone or buprenorphine, say so, and give the doctor your clinic's or prescriber's number. The clinic may ask you to sign a release before it can talk with that doctor. You can write it down and hand it over if saying it is too hard.

Today: Write down what you need your doctor to know.

Ask yourself: What have I left out of my medical history?

Telling Your Counselor the Hard Part

If you see a counselor, therapist, or peer specialist, they can only help with what they know. People often talk about the safe things and save the hard thing for the last five minutes, or for never. Start your next session with the hard thing. Say "I want to start with something difficult," and then say it.

Today: Write down the hard thing you will say first at your next session.

Ask yourself: What have I been saving for the end of the session?

Honest About Money

Money is one of the places where hiding lasts longest. Hidden debts, borrowed money not paid back, bills you stopped opening. Open the envelopes today. Write down every debt you know about, who it is owed to, and how much. You do not have to pay any of it today. Book 10 in this library, Money in Early Recovery, covers what to do next with the list.

Today: Open the unopened mail and write down every debt.

Ask yourself: Which debt have I been avoiding most?

Saying Where You Were

"Where were you?" is a hard question for people who spent years answering it with a cover story. Answer it plainly now, even when the true answer is boring or awkward. If you were somewhere you should not have been, say so to someone you trust.

Today: Answer every "where were you" today with the plain truth.

Ask yourself: When did I last give a cover story out of habit?

Making It Bigger or Smaller

Making things bigger than they were, or smaller, is a kind of dishonesty that can stay after the using stops. "I barely drank." "Everyone was against me." "It was only once." Notice today when you round a story up or down. Try saying it at its real size.

Today: Catch one story you made bigger or smaller and tell it at its real size.

Ask yourself: Which way do I usually round the truth, up or down?

Fourteen Weeks

Go over this week's pages. Write down each time you told the truth when it would have been easier not to. Write down each time you did not. Next to the ones you did not, write what you were afraid would happen. Many fears about honesty are about someone's reaction. Look at whether the reaction you feared actually came when you were honest.

Today: List this week's honest moments and the ones you avoided.

Ask yourself: When I was honest this week, what actually happened?

Honest With the People Who Supervise You

If you are on probation, parole, or in a court program, honesty has a second side. Some things you must report. What you say can also be used in your case. Tell your attorney everything first, before you tell anyone else in the system. In an emergency, call 911 first. Book 13 in this library, Court, Probation, and Recovery, explains how to handle both, and how to reach an attorney if you do not have one now.

Today: If you have a case, write down what your attorney does not know yet.

Ask yourself: Who needs to hear the truth first in my situation?

One Hundred Readings

This is the hundredth reading in this book. If you have read every day, that is a hundred days of stopping to think about your recovery, whatever your count says. Tell one person about it. Then write down one thing about yourself you know now that you did not know a hundred days ago.

Today: Tell one person you reached Day 100 in this book.

Ask yourself: What do I know about myself now that I did not know on Day 1?

Your Part

In most of the things that went wrong, other people played a part, and so did you. Pick one situation from the past year that still makes you angry, such as an argument, a lost job, or a broken promise. Write down what the other person did. Then write down what you did. Keep both lists, and stay with your own list for a while. If what happened was abuse or violence done to you, you have no part to list. Leave it off this page and take it to a counselor. If you do not have a counselor, the SAMHSA National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357 can help you find one.

Today: Write down your part in one situation that still makes you angry.

Ask yourself: What is the hardest thing for me to admit about that situation?

Smaller Promises

People in early recovery often make big promises: never again, everything will be different, I will pay it all back. Big promises are easy to make and hard to keep, and every broken one costs trust. Make smaller promises you can keep this week: a call at a certain time, a payment on a certain date, being home by a certain hour. Then keep them.

Today: Make one small promise and keep it today.

Ask yourself: Which big promise have I made that I need to make smaller?

"I Do Not Know"

During active addiction, many people learned to sound sure when they were not. Saying "I do not know" or "I made a mistake" can feel like losing. It is often the start of getting it right. Practice saying both today, at work, at home, or in a group, where it is true.

Today: Write down where you said one of them, and what happened next.

Ask yourself: Where do I pretend to know things I do not?

An Apology Without "But"

An apology that ends with "but" is usually an explanation. "I am sorry I yelled, but you were late" asks the other person to accept part of the blame. A clean apology says what you did, says you are sorry, and says what you will do differently. The other person may not accept it, and they do not owe you forgiveness. Leave their answer to them. If someone has asked you not to contact them, or a court order limits contact, do not contact them in any way, and ask your attorney before you do anything that involves them. If you are ready for one of the apologies on your list from Day 45, write it out first and read it to someone you trust.

Today: Write out one clean apology, without "but."

Ask yourself: Which apology am I most ready to make?

Fifteen Weeks

Read your five-sentence story from Day 92. Rewrite it now, adding anything you left out. Compare the two versions. The second may be less flattering, or it may be kinder to you than the first. Keep the version that is closest to what happened.

Today: Rewrite your five-sentence story.

Ask yourself: What changed between the first version and the second?

Honest About How You Are

"I am fine" is the most common answer to "How are you?" It is also, for many people in recovery, the most common untruth. You do not owe everyone a full report. With the people on your list, try a true answer: "Tired, and a little worried about Friday."

Today: Give one person a true answer to "How are you?"

Ask yourself: Who in my life actually wants to know how I am?

The Version You Post

What you show online can drift far from what is happening. You do not have to post about your recovery at all. Notice whether what you post is a cover for a hard week. If posting makes it harder to tell the people close to you the truth, take a break from it for a while. Keep other people's recovery off your page: no names, photos, or stories from a meeting or group.

Today: Look at what you posted this month and ask whether it is true.

Ask yourself: Does what I post help me or hide me?

Honest at Work

At work, honesty means doing what you said, reporting mistakes when they happen, and not covering for yourself or others. Whether you have to tell an employer about your recovery depends on the job and the state. Book 11 in this library, Work and Recovery, covers that decision. Today, focus on the work itself: if you made a mistake, say so early, and say what you will do to fix it.

Today: Report one mistake at work early, with your fix.

Ask yourself: What at work have I been hiding?

The Secret That Still Weighs

Some people carry one secret that weighs more than all the rest. It may be about something they did, or something done to them. Carrying it alone for years can keep the old patterns going. When you are ready, consider telling one safe person: a counselor, a member of the clergy, a sponsor or mentor, or a trusted friend. If you have a case, or the secret involves a crime, tell your attorney first, because what you tell a sponsor, friend, or group is usually not legally private, and clergy rules vary by state. Before you tell, ask the person what they keep private and what they would have to report. If the secret involves harm done to you, a counselor is a good first call. You decide when, and how much. You can stop partway.

Today: Decide who would be the safest person to tell.

Ask yourself: What would change if one other person knew?

Honest Without Hurting

Honesty leaves room to keep some thoughts to yourself. Telling a family member every hurtful detail of the past can do more harm than good. The question to ask is whether what you are about to say helps the relationship and the other person, or only relieves you. Some details belong in a counselor's office rather than at the kitchen table.

Today: Before a hard conversation, ask whether each detail helps the other person.

Ask yourself: When have I used honesty to hurt someone?

If You Slip, Say So

If you drink or use, the pull to hide it is strong. Hiding it usually leads to more using, because the secret keeps you away from the people who help. Tell one person within a day. Say it plainly. If you are on supervision, call your attorney first, before you tell anybody in the system. In an emergency, call 911 first. Staff at some sober houses report drug tests and rule breaks to your officer or the court. If yours does, talk to your attorney before you tell staff about a slip, but follow the house safety rules. If you do not have an attorney now, Book 13 covers who to call and why the order matters.

Today: Decide now who you would tell first if you slipped.

Ask yourself: What would make it hard for me to tell someone about a slip?

Sixteen Weeks

Look at the last two weeks of pages. Choose the honest conversation that went best. Write down what you said and what happened. Then choose one you avoided, and write down what you would say if you had it now. Plan when you will have that conversation, or decide on purpose that it should wait.

Today: Plan one conversation you have been avoiding.

Ask yourself: What did the best honest conversation of the last two weeks teach me?

When Someone Tells You the Truth

When someone tells you a hard truth about yourself, the first reaction is often to defend or argue. Try listening all the way through, then saying "Let me think about that." You do not have to agree. Think it over for a day, and talk it through with someone you trust before you decide.

Today: The next time someone tells you a hard truth, say "Let me think about that."

Ask yourself: What hard truth have I heard recently that I brushed off?

"I Can Handle It"

"I can handle it" is one of the most common things people say right before a slip: going to the party, keeping the bottle in the house, seeing the old friend. Sometimes it is true. Often it is the craving talking. Before you put yourself near a risk, write down what you hope to get from it and what it could cost you. Then run the plan past someone further along. If they hesitate, listen to the hesitation.

Today: Run one risky plan past someone further along before you do it.

Ask yourself: Where am I telling myself I can handle something?

What You Are Owed, and What You Owe

Honesty about money runs both ways. Some people are owed money by people they used with. Some owe money they borrowed and never repaid. Write down both lists. If collecting a debt would mean seeing someone you used with, let that debt go for now. Then decide which debts you owe to start repaying, a small amount on a regular date.

Today: Write down what you owe and what you are owed.

Ask yourself: Which debt would mean the most to repay?

Asking Plainly

Instead of asking for what they need, many people hint, complain, or wait for someone to notice. Asking plainly is a form of honesty. "I need a ride to my appointment Thursday at ten." "I need you to not keep beer in the fridge for a while." Say the need, the time, and the place.

Today: Ask one person plainly for one thing you need.

Ask yourself: What do I need right now that I have only hinted at?

Saying Where You Are

After a few months, there can be pressure to look like everything is fixed: for family, for work, for a court. Claiming more progress than you have can push you to hide the hard days. Tell the people on your list where you are. "Better than last month, and still struggling on weekends" is a true and useful answer.

Today: Tell one person how you are doing, good parts and hard parts.

Ask yourself: Who expects me to be further along than I am?

The Daily Check

Some people end each day with four questions: Was I honest today? Did I hurt anyone? Is there anything I need to set right? What did I do well? Try it tonight. Write one line for each. If there is something to set right, decide when you will do it.

Today: Answer the four questions before bed.

Ask yourself: What would I need to set right from today?

Seventeen Weeks

Read the area you named on Day 91 as the hardest place for honesty. Write down what has changed in that area this month. If not much has changed, choose one small step for next month. If a lot has changed, write down what made it possible.

Today: Tell one person what changed in that area this month.

Ask yourself: What made honesty easier this month?

Time

Month 5 is about time: mornings, evenings, weekends, and the hours that used to belong to using. Honesty carries into it, because many people find they lied most about where their time went. Before the new month starts, write down roughly how you spent your waking hours yesterday, hour by hour.

Today: Write down how you spent your waking hours yesterday.

Ask yourself: Where did my time go yesterday, honestly?

Month 5. Time

Where the Hours Went

Drinking or using took more time than most people realize: getting it, using it, recovering from it, covering it up. When it stops, those hours come back, and they do not come with instructions. Look at what you wrote yesterday about how you spent your day. Circle the hours that felt empty or hard. This month is about filling those hours on purpose.

Today: Circle the empty or hard hours from yesterday's list.

Ask yourself: How many hours a week did using take, counting everything around it?

A Morning That Holds

The first hour of the day sets up the rest. Reread the morning you planned on Day 23, and keep the parts that help: water, food, a look at the plan. Add one thing if you are ready, such as ten minutes of reading, a short walk, prayer or quiet, or writing three lines. Get up at the same time on weekdays and weekends for a while.

Today: Write your morning routine down and post it where you will see it.

Ask yourself: What part of my morning makes the rest of the day easier?

Closing the Day

How a day ends matters as much as how it starts. A loose evening with nothing planned leaves room for a craving. Give your evening a shape: dinner at a set time, one activity, a call, and a wind-down time with the screens off. Go to bed at about the same time each night.

Today: Set a time for dinner and a time for bed, and keep both.

Ask yourself: What does my best evening look like?

A Weekend With a Spine

A weekend needs a few fixed points to hold it up: something with other people on each day, a meal at a set time, a meeting or a group, an activity you look forward to. Between those points you can rest. Plan them on Thursday. If weekends are still the hardest part of your week, add one more fixed point.

Today: Put three fixed points on this weekend's calendar.

Ask yourself: Which part of the weekend is still hardest?

Sleep, Revisited

Sleep often improves over the first months, and for some people it stays rough. Keep the same wake-up time. Keep caffeine out of the afternoon. Keep the phone out of the bed. If poor sleep is wearing you down, tell your doctor now. Say that you are in recovery and name any medicine for addiction you take, because some sleep and anxiety medicines are dangerous to take with methadone or buprenorphine. Loud snoring or waking up gasping is also worth telling a doctor about. Nightmares that keep waking you are worth telling a doctor or counselor about too, because they can be treated. Do not use alcohol or someone else's pills to sleep.

Today: Move caffeine earlier in the day and keep the phone out of the bed tonight.

Ask yourself: How has my sleep changed since Day 1?

Eighteen Weeks

Look over this week. Which hours went the way you planned, and which did not? Look at the hours that went wrong. Often the plan was missing, or it was too vague, or another person canceled. Make next week's plan more specific for those hours, with a backup if someone cancels.

Today: Add a backup plan for your hardest hour next week.

Ask yourself: Which hour went better this week than it used to?

Part of You Misses It

Many people miss drinking or using, sometimes for months: the relief at the end of a day, the people, the ritual, the way a bad night went quiet. Missing it is not a sign that you are failing. Divide a page into four boxes. In the first, write what you got from using. In the second, write what using cost you. In the third, write what staying stopped gives you. In the fourth, write what staying stopped costs you, such as old friends or evenings with nothing in them. SMART Recovery calls this a cost-benefit analysis. Be honest in all four boxes, and keep the page. The fourth box is a list of problems to solve. When missing it gets loud, read the whole page.

Today: Fill in all four boxes.

Ask yourself: What do I miss most, and how could I get some of it without using?

Trying One New Thing

Recovery gives you time to try things you never had room for. A class at a library, a team, a craft, an instrument, a language, a garden, cooking. You do not have to be good at it. Pick one that costs little or nothing and try it once this month. Many libraries and community centers offer free classes.

Today: Look up one free class or activity and write down when it meets.

Ask yourself: What did I want to try before using took the time?

Things You Used to Like

Before using took over, you probably liked doing things: fishing, drawing, ball games, fixing cars, reading, music. Some of those may still be there. Make a list of five things you enjoyed before. Choose one and do it this week, even for an hour. It may feel different at first, so give it more than one try.

Today: List five things you used to enjoy and pick one for this week.

Ask yourself: Which old interest do I miss most?

Where the Phone Takes the Hours

Phones can fill empty hours, and they can also empty them. Scrolling late at night can keep you up, and some apps and contacts still connect to the old life. Check how much time your phone shows you spent on it this week. Pick one hour a day to keep it in another room, and see what you do instead.

Today: Keep the phone in another room for one hour.

Ask yourself: What do I reach for on my phone when I am restless?

A Week on One Page

Write out next week on one page: work, appointments, meetings, meals, calls, sleep. Use a paper calendar if that helps. Seeing the whole week at once shows you the gaps before they arrive. Fill the biggest gap with something you chose. Leave smaller gaps as rest.

Today: Write next week on one page and fill the biggest gap.

Ask yourself: Where is the biggest gap in my week?

Planned Rest

Some people in recovery keep so busy that they wear themselves out, which is a risk of its own. Rest is time you planned for doing little: a nap, a long shower, a walk with no place to be, a show you enjoy. Empty time is time that nobody planned. Put one hour of rest on your calendar this week, and treat it like an appointment.

Today: Schedule one hour of rest this week.

Ask yourself: Am I too busy or not busy enough right now?

Nineteen Weeks

Look at your week on one page from Day 131. Which parts did you keep? Which fell apart, and why? Write down one change to make next week's plan easier to keep. If the plan broke because it was packed too tight, leave more room. If it broke because it was too loose, add a time and a place.

Today: Make one change to next week's plan.

Ask yourself: Was my plan too tight, too loose, or about right?

Waiting Rooms and Lines

Recovery comes with a lot of waiting: in the dosing line at a clinic, at offices, at the pharmacy, for a call back. Waiting can bring on restlessness and cravings. Bring something with you: a book, a notebook, a list of calls to make, this book. Use waiting time on purpose.

Today: Pack one thing to use the next time you have to wait.

Ask yourself: Where do I spend the most time waiting?

Showing Up on Time

Being on time is a small, daily way to rebuild trust: at work, at appointments, for the people waiting on you. Buses and work vans run late, so leave earlier than you think you need to. If you will be late, call before the time, not after. If you dose at a clinic, know when its dosing hours start and end, and plan the rest of the day around them. If you are going to miss a dose, call the clinic before the hours end and ask what to do, because a missed dose can bring on withdrawal. If you have missed more than one day, tell the clinic staff before you dose, because your body may not handle your usual dose after a break.

Today: Leave ten minutes earlier for one place you need to be.

Ask yourself: Who is affected when I am late?

Looking Ahead on the Calendar

Look at the next three months on a calendar. Mark holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, and any dates connected to using or to a loss. For each, write down one person you could be with and one place you could go.

Today: Mark the next three months' hard dates and plan one.

Ask yourself: Which date in the next three months am I most worried about?

The Middle of the Workday

For some people, the middle of the day was a using time: lunch with a drink, a break behind the building. If that is you, plan your break now. Eat a real lunch, take a walk, make a call, or sit somewhere different from where you used to go. Bring your lunch if the old place is the problem.

Today: Plan what you will do on your next break.

Ask yourself: What did my breaks used to look like?

If You Work Odd Hours

If you work nights or rotating shifts, your hard hours may not match anyone else's. If your schedule changes every week, as it often does in stores and restaurants, plan your hard hours, meetings, and calls the day the new schedule comes out. Meetings and calls can be harder to fit. If you go to a clinic, check whether its dosing hours fit your shift, and ask the clinic what it can do if they do not. Look for online or phone-in meetings at your hours, and ask one person on your list if you can call them at your hard time. Protect your sleep, because broken sleep makes cravings harder.

Today: Find one meeting or person available at your hardest hour.

Ask yourself: When do I get home from work, and what do I do next?

Away From Home

Travel breaks routines: a trip for work, a visit to family, a funeral. If you get medication at a clinic, call the clinic the day you learn about the trip. Ask how it handles travel, such as extra take-home doses or dosing at a clinic where you are going, and how much notice it needs. Know where each dose will come from before you leave, and keep any take-home doses in the clinic's containers and locked box, with you. If you live in a sober house, get an overnight pass before you book anything, and give the house the address where you will stay. Before you go, find a meeting or group where you are going, in person or online. Pack your plan, your list of numbers, and this book. Choose where you will stay, if you can, and keep away from any bar where you stay. Call someone on your list each day you are away.

Today: If travel is coming, tell your clinic or prescriber the dates, and find one meeting where you are going.

Ask yourself: What part of my routine would be hardest to keep while traveling?

Twenty Weeks

Look over the month so far. Which new thing did you try? Which old interest came back? Which hours are still empty? Write down the one hour of the week that still feels most dangerous, and give it a fixed plan for the next four weeks.

Today: Give your most dangerous hour a fixed plan for four weeks.

Ask yourself: What new thing am I glad I tried?

Things Take Time

Recovery moves slower than most people want. Trust, money, health, and work can take many months to improve. Write down three things you want to be different a year from now. Next to each, write the smallest step you can take this week.

Today: Take the smallest step toward one thing you want in a year.

Ask yourself: What am I impatient about right now?

The Calendar of the Past

Some dates mark things that happened while you were using, or things that were done to you: an arrest, an overdose, an assault, a loss, the day you stopped. They can bring back strong feelings. If you served, dates from your service count too, such as the day someone in your unit died, and holidays such as Memorial Day, Veterans Day, or the Fourth of July. If a date like this brings thoughts of hurting yourself, call or text 988. If a date like this is coming, plan it like any hard date. If the date is an overdose, yours or someone else's, keep naloxone where someone can reach it that week, and tell one person the date is coming. If someone overdoses, call 911, give naloxone, and stay with them. Some people mark the day they stopped with a small ritual or a call to someone who helped. Others let the day pass quietly.

Today: Write down any past dates that still affect you, and how you will spend the next one.

Ask yourself: Which date from the past still has a hold on me?

Trading One for Another

This page is about what you take on your own. A medicine prescribed to you for addiction or for mood, taken as directed, is treatment. Some people stop one substance and lean harder on another: more drinking after stopping pills, more weed after stopping drinking, or a friend's pills to get through a bad week. The new one can feel like a smaller problem, and for some people it leads straight back to the first one. Some people also start hurting themselves on purpose, such as cutting or burning, to get through a feeling. If that is happening, tell a counselor or doctor, and call or text 988. Write down everything you took this week that was not prescribed to you, including alcohol, cannabis, and nicotine. Show the list to your counselor, your prescriber, or someone further along, and ask what they see.

Today: Write down everything you took this week, and show the list to one person.

Ask yourself: What do I reach for now on a hard night?

Moving as a Habit

Moving your body can help your mood, your sleep, and how you handle stress. By now you may be ready to make it a habit: the same walk at the same time, a class, a team, a gym. Start small and keep it regular. If your job already works your body hard, stretching after a shift can be your movement.

Today: Choose a time for movement three days this week.

Ask yourself: When in my day is moving most likely to happen?

When Everything Feels Slow

Some weeks, nothing seems to change and recovery feels like hard work for little return. Keep the routine anyway. Look back at your notes from Day 1 or Day 31 to see how far you have come. Tell someone on your list it has been a slow week.

Today: Reread a page from the first month.

Ask yourself: What has changed that I stopped noticing?

Protecting Your Hours

As life fills up again, people will ask for your time: extra shifts, favors, family plans. Some of those will crowd out the meetings, the calls, and the sleep that keep you steady. Say no when a request would crowd out your recovery time. A meeting or a call is a commitment, so "I have a commitment that night" is a true answer.

Today: Protect one recovery commitment from something that would crowd it out.

Ask yourself: Which recovery commitment slips first when I get busy?

Twenty-One Weeks

Compare how you spend your hours now with what you wrote on Day 120 and with your week on one page from Day 131. Which hours have changed most? Which still feel empty? Write your week on one page again. Notice which parts have become habit and no longer need planning.

Today: Write your week on one page again and compare it with Day 131.

Ask yourself: Which parts of my week have become habit?

Time That Belongs to Someone Else

Some of your time now belongs to other people: children, a partner, a parent, a friend who needs help. Spending time with them was often the first thing using took away. Put one block of time this week with someone you love, with your phone away and nothing else planned.

Today: Plan one block of time with someone you love.

Ask yourself: Who has been missing my time the most?

Learning Something on Purpose

Some people use the time recovery gives back to finish school, earn a certificate, or learn a trade. If that interests you, look at one option this week: a GED program, a community college class, an apprenticeship, a free online course. Book 11 in this library, Work and Recovery, covers training and finding work.

Today: Look up one learning option and write down the first step.

Ask yourself: What would I like to be able to do a year from now?

One Goal for the Next Month

Pick one small goal for the next thirty days that uses the time recovery has given back. It should be specific and something you control: walk three times a week, read one book, cook dinner four nights a week, call a family member every Sunday. Write it down, and tell one person.

Today: Write down one small goal for the next thirty days.

Ask yourself: How will I know if I reached it?

Money and Work

Month 6 covers money and work. Time and money are connected: the hours you spend, the hours you work, and where the paycheck goes. You do not need exact numbers yet.

Today: Write down roughly what comes in and goes out each month.

Ask yourself: How do I feel when I think about money right now?

Month 6. Money and Work

Looking at the Numbers

Many people avoid looking at money in early recovery because the numbers are frightening. Not looking makes them worse. Take the rough list from yesterday and turn it into a simple page: money coming in each month, rent or housing, food, transportation, phone, treatment or clinic fees, debts, and everything else. Do not judge it yet. Book 10 in this library, Money in Early Recovery, has a budget page that works for this.

Today: Write a one-page budget, even if the numbers are rough.

Ask yourself: Which number on the page surprised me?

The Bill That Is About to Be Shut Off

If a bill is close to being shut off, such as power, water, phone, or rent, deal with it first. Call the company before the shutoff date and ask about a payment plan or assistance. Call 211 and ask about utility help and rent help in your area. Ask even if you think you will not qualify.

Today: Call about the most urgent bill, or call 211.

Ask yourself: Which bill have I been afraid to call about?

Twenty-Two Weeks

Read your budget page from Day 152. Did anything change this week, such as a bill paid, a call made, or a new number? Write down one thing you did about money this week, even if it was only opening the mail.

Today: Write down one thing you did about money this week.

Ask yourself: What is one thing I can do about money next week?

When Spending Feels Like Using

Some people find that spending starts to fill the space using left: shopping, gambling, buying things they do not need. A rush from spending can feel like the old rush. Notice if you are buying more than usual or hiding purchases. If gambling is becoming a problem, call or text the National Problem Gambling Helpline at 1-800-697-3738 (1-800-MY-RESET).

Today: Look at what you spent this week and notice anything you bought for the rush.

Ask yourself: Has spending started to fill the space using left?

A Plan for Debts

Look at the debt list from Day 95. Sort it into three groups: debts that can hurt you soon (rent, utilities, court fines, child support), debts with collectors, and debts that can wait. Start with the first group. Pay something on a regular date, even a small amount. Book 10 covers talking with collectors and what to watch for.

Today: Sort your debts into the three groups.

Ask yourself: Which debt, if ignored, would cause the most harm soonest?

Help You May Qualify For

You may qualify for help you have never applied for: food assistance, health coverage, help with utilities, help with phone service. Applying can feel like a lot of paperwork, and it can make a big difference. Call 211 and ask what you may be able to get. If you served in the military, ask a veterans service officer about VA benefits too. Ask a peer specialist, counselor, or case manager to help with the forms.

Today: Call 211, and write down one program they name and the first step to apply.

Ask yourself: What help have I assumed I would not get?

Work and Recovery Together

Work gives structure, money, and a reason to get up. It can also bring stress, long hours, and coworkers who drink. If your job has you stocking or selling alcohol, notice whether it pulls at you, and if it does, ask whether you can work a different area for a while. If you are working, notice what parts of work help your recovery and what parts make it harder. If you are looking, Book 11 in this library, Work and Recovery, covers finding a job, keeping it, and what to tell an employer.

Today: Write down one part of work that helps and one that makes recovery harder.

Ask yourself: How does my work schedule fit with my recovery?

One Step Toward a Job

If you are looking for work, the search can feel endless. Break it into one step a day: update a resume, ask one person if they know of openings, fill out one application, call one workforce center. Write down each step you take. If you served in the military, or you are the spouse of a veteran, say so at the workforce center, because job programs funded by the U.S. Department of Labor give veterans and eligible spouses priority. Many people find their job through someone they know, so tell people you are looking.

Today: Take one step toward a job.

Ask yourself: Who do I know who might hear about an opening?

The Gap on the Application

You can prepare a short, true answer about a gap in your work history, such as "I took time to deal with a health issue, and I'm ready to work now." Practice it out loud. Whether you have to tell an employer about your recovery depends on the job and the state. Book 11, Work and Recovery, covers how to answer and what you may have to tell an employer.

Today: Write and practice your answer about a gap.

Ask yourself: What am I most afraid an employer will ask?

Twenty-Three Weeks

Read back over your money and work notes from the past week. Write down the step you are most glad you took. Write down the one you avoided. Plan a time this week to take the one you avoided, and tell someone you will do it.

Today: Plan the money or work step you avoided.

Ask yourself: Why did I avoid that step?

Payday, Revisited

Look at your payday plan from Day 16 and change what is not working. Pay the big bills first, the same day. Move a small amount to savings if you can, even five dollars. Carry only the cash you need. Plan your payday evening with someone or something you chose.

Today: Write down your plan for the next payday evening.

Ask yourself: How has payday changed since the first month?

A Small Cushion

A small amount of savings makes a crisis less likely to turn into a slip. A broken phone or a missed shift hurts less with a cushion. Start with a small amount every time you get paid, even five dollars, and keep it somewhere you cannot reach in a hurry.

Today: Decide on a small amount to save each time you get paid.

Ask yourself: What crisis would a small cushion help me handle?

Coworkers Who Drink

If people at work go out for drinks, you will get invited. You can go and order something else, go for a short time and leave, or say no. You do not have to explain. "I'm heading home tonight" is enough. If work events always center on drinking, skip some, especially early on.

Today: Decide your answer to the next after-work invitation.

Ask yourself: Who at work could I spend time with outside of drinking?

A Hard Day at Work

A bad day at work can make the evening hard. Before you leave work, take five minutes to set the day down: write down what went wrong and one thing you will do about it tomorrow. Then do something on the way home that separates work from evening, such as a call, a walk, or a meeting.

Today: Set the workday down for five minutes before you leave.

Ask yourself: What did I do after a bad workday when I was using?

Doing the Work Well

Show up on time, do what you said, ask when you do not know, and finish what you start. Good work gets you called back, whether you have one boss or a new one every week.

Today: Do one task at work better than you need to.

Ask yourself: What would the person I worked for this week say about my work?

If Your Schedule Conflicts With Treatment

If work conflicts with treatment, a group, or an appointment, ask for a change early. Some employers can adjust a schedule. If you dose at a clinic every day, write down its dosing hours and look for shifts that fit them. Ask the clinic whether it has early or late hours, and whether take-home doses could cover days when work takes you out of town. If you work day labor, pick the days and times you can take work around your appointments, and tell the dispatcher which days you are not available. If you live in a sober house and a shift runs into curfew or the house meeting, show the house manager your work schedule before you take the shift. How much you have to say depends on the job and the law where you live. Book 11 covers how to ask and what you may be required to say.

Today: If you have a conflict, write down the change you would ask for.

Ask yourself: Which appointment is hardest to fit around work?

Twenty-Four Weeks

Look at the goal you set on Day 150 and write down one thing that is helping and one thing getting in the way. If the goal was too big, make it smaller. If it is going well, keep it.

Today: Check your thirty-day goal and adjust it if needed.

Ask yourself: What is helping me stick with my goal?

Fines and Fees

If you owe court fines, fees, or money the court ordered you to pay back, those payments can feel crushing. Do not let them go unpaid in silence. Ask the clerk of court about payment plans and what happens if you cannot pay. Keep every receipt. Book 13 in this library, Court, Probation, and Recovery, covers what to do and who to call.

Today: Gather your receipts for any court payments in one folder.

Ask yourself: What exactly do I owe the court, and when is each payment due?

Your Credit Report

You can check your credit reports for free at annualcreditreport.com, or call 1-877-322-8228 and get them by mail. Look for errors and for debts you do not recognize. Write down what you find. You do not have to fix everything at once. Book 10 covers what to do next.

Today: Request your free credit report online or by phone.

Ask yourself: Is there anything on my report I have been afraid to see?

Paying It Forward Without Paying Too Much

When things start to improve, some people want to make up for the past by giving money away or lending it to anyone who asks. Pay the rent and bills before you give anything away. Decide on an amount you can afford to give each month, and stick to it. You can also give time or help in place of money.

Today: Decide how much, if anything, you can afford to give each month.

Ask yourself: What am I hoping my money will do for the people I hurt?

Wanting More

As recovery steadies, you may start wanting more: a better job, more money, a bigger place. Rushing it can bring stress that puts recovery at risk. Write down one thing you want in two years. Then write down the first step that would not overload you right now.

Today: Write down a two-year goal and one manageable first step.

Ask yourself: What am I trying to rush right now?

Working Too Much

Some people replace using with working: double shifts, no days off, always busy. It can look like progress and still wear you down until a slip comes. Watch for missed meetings, missed sleep, and skipped meals because of work.

Today: Check whether work has crowded out sleep, meals, or meetings.

Ask yourself: What feeling shows up on the days I am not working?

If You Lose Work

Losing a job is a common trigger. If it happens, tell someone on your list the same day. Keep your morning routine. Apply for unemployment benefits if you qualify. Spend part of each day looking and part of it on recovery. If you are on supervision, report the change as your conditions require.

Today: Write down what you would do the first day after losing work.

Ask yourself: Who would I call first if I lost my job?

Twenty-Five Weeks

Read your budget from Day 152 and write a new one for this month. Compare them. Some numbers may be better, some the same. Write down the biggest change.

Today: Write this month's budget and compare it with Day 152.

Ask yourself: What money habit has changed most?

What Money Means to You

Many people learned about money in homes where there was never enough, or where money was used to control. Those lessons shape how you spend now. Write down one thing you learned about money as a child. Decide whether it still serves you.

Today: Write down one money lesson from childhood.

Ask yourself: Does that lesson help or hurt me now?

Asking for What You Have Earned

If you have been doing good work for a while, it is fair to ask about a raise or more hours. If you work day labor, ask the crew lead whether the company hires full time, or whether you can be asked for by name. Prepare: write down what you have done, how long you have been there, and what you are asking for. Ask at a calm time. A no now may become a yes later if you ask what it would take.

Today: Write down what you have done at work that you could point to.

Ask yourself: What would it take for me to earn more where I work?

Money at Home

Money can cause fights and suspicion at home, especially if you used to take or hide money. Being open about money with family helps rebuild trust. If someone at home takes your money or keeps you from having any, that is a safety problem. Call 911 if you are in danger, or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233. In a sober house or a shared rental with people who are not family, keep your own money private, and do not lend what you need for rent.

Today: If you share expenses with someone, agree on who pays what and when. If you do not, show your budget to one person you trust.

Ask yourself: What would rebuild trust about money at home?

What Is Working

Write down three things about money or work that are better than they were six months ago. They can be small: a bill on time, a resume finished, a coworker who is kind.

Today: Put the list where you will see it on a hard money day.

Ask yourself: Which change am I most grateful for?

Halfway

This is the halfway point of this book. Whatever your count, you have six months of practice behind you. Read your answers from Day 1 and Day 90. Write a short note to the person you were on Day 1, telling them what you know now.

Today: Write a short note to the person you were on Day 1.

Ask yourself: What would I tell myself on Day 1?

Home and Family

Month 7 is about home and family: the people you live with, the people you are related to, and the people you are rebuilding with. Before it starts, write down the names of the family members you think about most, and one word for how things stand with each.

Today: Write the family names and one word for each.

Ask yourself: Which family relationship do I most want to work on?

Month 7. Home and Family

Twenty-Six Weeks

Read the family names and words you wrote yesterday. Choose one relationship to focus on this month, with someone who is open to contact with you. If someone has asked you not to contact them, or a court order limits contact, do not contact them in any way, and ask your attorney before you do anything that involves them. Leave anyone like that off this page for now. A reading later this month, Day 208, covers that kind of distance. Write down what the relationship you chose looks like now, what you would like it to look like in a year, and one thing you can do this week.

Today: Do the one thing for this week, or put it on your calendar.

Ask yourself: What would one small step toward that person look like?

What It Was Like for Them

The people close to you lived through your using too. They may have been scared, angry, embarrassed, broke, or worn out. Write down what you think it was like for one family member. You may not know all of it. When they are ready to tell their side, listen.

Today: Write down one question you could ask that person, when they are ready, about what it was like.

Ask yourself: What did my family carry that I did not see at the time?

Letting Them Talk

When a family member wants to talk about the past, the urge to defend, explain, or change the subject is strong. Try listening without interrupting. Say "Thank you for telling me." You do not have to agree with every word. Their feelings about what happened are theirs, and listening is a way of taking those feelings seriously. If the family member is someone who hurt you, you do not have to sit through blame or threats. You can end the talk and leave.

Today: If someone talks about the past, listen without defending yourself.

Ask yourself: What is hardest for me to hear from my family?

Their Boundaries

Family members may set rules: no money, no staying over, call before you come. Those rules can feel like punishment. Usually they are how people protect themselves after being hurt. Respect them. Keeping someone's boundary is one of the clearest ways to show you have changed.

Today: Write down one boundary a family member has set, and how you will respect it.

Ask yourself: Which boundary is hardest for me to accept?

Your Own Boundaries

You may need boundaries too: with a relative who still drinks heavily, one who brings up the past to hurt you, or one who offers you drugs. You can limit time, change where you meet, or step away from someone who puts your recovery at risk. Say it calmly and keep it short. If a family member hits you, threatens you, or takes your money, you need more than a boundary. Call 911 if you are in danger, or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233.

Today: Write down one boundary you need with a family member.

Ask yourself: Which family member makes staying stopped harder?

Showing Up for Children

Children tend to remember what you do more than what you say. Show up for the ordinary things: meals, homework, bedtime, rides, games. Keep promises small and keep them every time. If you are not living with your children, follow the arrangements exactly, and show up on time for every visit or call. If a court order limits contact, follow it exactly, and ask your attorney before you change anything. If a child welfare agency has an open case, follow your case plan, and talk with your attorney or caseworker before you change anything.

Today: Keep one promise to a child, exactly as you made it.

Ask yourself: What do the children in my life need most from me now?

The Other Parent

If you share children with someone, that relationship may be strained. Keep conversations about the children short, respectful, and focused on schedules and needs. Do not use the children to carry messages, and do not talk with them about the case or about what the other parent did wrong. If talking is hard, use text or a co-parenting app so there is a record. If there is a protective order, a custody order, or a parenting plan, follow it exactly, and contact the other parent only in the ways the order allows, even if the other parent reaches out first or says it is fine. If the other parent has asked you not to contact them, do not contact them in any way. In any of these cases, ask your attorney before you change anything or answer in any other way. If you are afraid of the other parent, ask a domestic violence program about safe ways to hand off the children, such as a supervised exchange center.

Today: If contact is allowed, keep one conversation with the other parent focused on the children.

Ask yourself: What would make co-parenting easier this month?

Twenty-Seven Weeks

Look over this week's pages. Write down one moment with family that went well and one that went badly. For the one that went badly, write down what happened just before it went wrong. Plan how you might handle that moment differently next time.

Today: Plan a different response to one hard family moment.

Ask yourself: What usually happens right before a family conversation goes wrong?

Family Holidays

Holidays can bring together old family patterns, alcohol, and high expectations. Plan before you go: how long you will stay, how you will get there and leave, what you will drink, who you will call. Have a reason ready to leave early if you need one. If you live in a sober house, check your curfew and pass rules before you say yes, and plan to be back in time. If a gathering is not safe for your recovery yet, skip it. If someone who will be there has asked you not to contact them, or a court order limits contact with them, do not go, even if the family invites you, and do not contact that person in any way. Ask your attorney before you do anything that involves that person.

Today: Write a plan for the next family gathering.

Ask yourself: Which family gathering am I most worried about?

Rebuilding With a Partner

A partner may want things to be normal right away, or may not trust you yet. Talk about what each of you needs. Couples counseling can help some people. If there has been hitting, threats, or fear between you, each of you should see a counselor alone first, and leave couples counseling until a counselor says it is safe. If your partner has asked you not to contact them, or a court order limits contact, do not contact them in any way, and ask your attorney before you do anything that involves them. Keep your own recovery plan separate from the relationship, so a hard week together does not become a hard week for your recovery.

Today: Ask your partner one thing they need from you right now.

Ask yourself: What do I need from my partner, and have I said it?

Your Parents

Relationships with parents can carry years of history. Some parents blame themselves, some blame you, and some do not want to talk about it at all. You do not have to sort out the whole history now. Start with the present: a regular call, a visit, a kept promise. If your parents have died, or you now look after one of them, write down what you would want them to know about your recovery.

Today: Make one call or visit to a parent, if it is safe to do so.

Ask yourself: What do I want my relationship with my parents to look like?

Siblings

Brothers and sisters may have taken on a lot while you were using: helping your parents, covering for you, being compared to you. They may be the most guarded family members. If a sibling is open to contact, reach out without asking for anything. If a sibling has asked you not to contact them, or a court order limits contact, do not contact them in any way, and ask your attorney before you do anything that involves them.

Today: If a sibling is open to contact, send a short message asking how they are.

Ask yourself: What did my siblings lose because of my using?

When Family Still Drinks or Uses

If people in your family still drink heavily or use, family time can put your recovery at risk. You can love them and still limit time with them, choose where you meet, and leave when you need to. If someone you love uses opioids, keep naloxone and learn how to use it. If someone overdoses, call 911, give naloxone, and stay with them. If the person still using is your grown child, and you are raising their child, keep naloxone where you can reach it and the child cannot. Follow any court order or agency plan about the parent's visits, and ask your attorney or caseworker before you change it. A family group or your own counselor is a place to take the worry.

Today: Decide how you will handle time with family members who still use.

Ask yourself: Who in my family do I need to see differently for now?

Making Things Right

Some paths include making amends. On any path, you may want to repair harm you did. Look at your list from Day 45. For one person, decide what making things right would mean: an apology, paying back money, a change in behavior. Talk it over first with a sponsor, mentor, counselor, or someone else you trust, including whether the whole truth would hurt the person or someone else. If making it right means admitting something you could be charged with, talk to your attorney first. If someone has asked you not to contact them, or a court order limits contact, do not contact them in any way, and ask your attorney before you do anything that involves them. If hearing from you could frighten or hurt the person, stay away. If the person also hurt you, or you are afraid of them, do not meet alone, and talk with a counselor before any contact. In those cases you make things right by changing how you live.

Today: Choose one person and write down what making things right would mean.

Ask yourself: Is making this right for them, or mainly for me?

Twenty-Eight Weeks

Read back over the last two weeks of family notes. Write down one sign that trust is coming back, even a small one. Write down one area that is still raw. Decide whether to keep working on the raw area or give it more time.

Today: Write one sign of returning trust and one raw area.

Ask yourself: Where do I need to give a relationship more time?

Safe at Home

Your home should support your recovery. If you live with people who use, that is worth changing when you can. If moving is not possible right now, make one part of the home better for your recovery: one room, one shelf, one rule. Book 12 in this library, Finding a Safe Place to Live, covers what to check before you move. If someone at home hits you, threatens you, controls your money or your phone, or will not let you leave, call 911 if you are in danger. The National Domestic Violence Hotline, 1-800-799-7233, is free and open all day and night, and you can also text START to 88788. Call from a phone the person hurting you does not check. You can also call 211 to find a shelter near you.

Today: Make one change at home that supports your recovery.

Ask yourself: Does my home help or hurt my recovery right now?

Living in a Sober House

If you live in a sober house or other recovery housing, the rules, the drug tests, the curfew, and the house meetings are there to keep the house safe for everyone in it. Read the house rules again this week. Find the parts on curfew, overnight passes, medicines, visitors, and what happens if a resident uses, and ask the house manager about anything unclear. Do your chores before anyone has to ask. If a housemate is using, tell the house manager or staff. Keep your naloxone where you can reach it. If someone overdoses, call 911, give naloxone, and stay with them. If you are at risk of losing your bed, talk to the house manager before it happens, and call 211 if you need a place to go. If you take medication for addiction and are looking at a new house, ask before you move in whether the house allows it. If you live somewhere else, pick one chore at home and own it.

Today: Read your house rules and write down what happens if a resident uses, or do one chore at home without being asked.

Ask yourself: What part of where I live is hardest for me right now?

Eating Together

A meal together is a simple way to be present. If you live with family, aim for one shared meal a few times a week, with phones away. If you live alone, invite someone to eat with you once this week.

Today: Plan one shared meal this week.

Ask yourself: When did I last sit at a table with people I care about?

Two Hundred Readings

This is the two hundredth reading. Write down one person in your family, or someone who feels like family, who has stood by you. Tell them thank you today, in person, by phone, or in writing. Be specific about what they did.

Today: Thank one person who stood by you, specifically.

Ask yourself: Who has stood by me without being asked?

The Family You Choose

Not everyone has family they can safely be close to. Some people build a chosen family: friends in recovery, a mentor, neighbors, a faith community, coworkers. Those relationships count. Write down the people who feel like family to you now.

Today: Write down your chosen family.

Ask yourself: Who has become like family to me in recovery?

When a Fight Starts

Family fights can get big fast, and anger can lead to old behaviors. On a calm day, agree with the people you live with on how anyone in the house can take a break during a fight. When a fight starts, say you need a break and name a time to come back: "I need twenty minutes, and then I want to finish this." Walk away, breathe, call someone if you need to. Then come back at the time you said, if it is safe to come back. In a sober house, a fight with a housemate can cost you your bed. Take the break, and bring the problem to the house manager or the house meeting. If a fight turns physical or you are afraid, leave and call 911. If you have hit, shoved, or threatened someone at home, or you are afraid you might, tell a counselor this week and ask about a program for people who want to stop hurting a partner or a family member.

Today: Practice the sentence you will use to take a break in a fight.

Ask yourself: What do I do when I am angry at home?

Twenty-Nine Weeks

Look at how you spent time with family this week. Count the times you showed up as planned. Count the times you did not. Write down what got in the way. Plan one change for next week.

Today: Plan one change to how you show up for family next week.

Ask yourself: What got in the way of showing up this week?

The Role You Used to Play

In many families, people fall into roles: the problem one, the fixer, the one who keeps the peace. When you stop using, your family may keep treating you as the problem one, out of habit. You can step out of the role through what you do over time. You do not have to argue about it.

Today: Notice one moment when your family treats you in an old role.

Ask yourself: What role did I play in my family, and what role do I want now?

Help for Your Family

Your family may need their own support. There are groups for family members of people with addiction, and counselors who work with families. Book 14 in this library, For Families, is written for them. You can offer it to them. Whether they use it is up to them.

Today: Offer one family member a resource for themselves.

Ask yourself: Who in my family is carrying this alone?

What Was Lost

Families lose things to addiction: time, money, holidays, trust, sometimes people. Some of that cannot be given back. Write down one thing your family lost, and who in the family felt it most. You do not have to fix it. If thinking about what your family lost turns into thinking they would be better off without you, that thought is a warning sign. Call or text 988, and tell someone today.

Today: Write down one thing your family lost.

Ask yourself: What loss do I need to acknowledge?

New Memories

Recovery is also a chance to make new memories that are not about using. A day at a park, a game night, a birthday you remember clearly. Plan one small, good thing this month with family or chosen family who are open to seeing you. Take a picture if they are comfortable with it. Before you post a picture of a child online, check with the other parent. If there is a protective order or any worry about someone finding where a child lives, do not post it. If someone has asked you not to contact them, or a court order limits contact, do not contact them in any way, and ask your attorney before you do anything that involves them.

Today: Plan one small, good thing with people you love.

Ask yourself: What kind of memory do I want to make this month?

When Someone Is Not Ready

Some family members may not want contact yet, or ever. Respect their choice. If a court order or a protective order limits contact, or a family member has asked you not to contact them or has blocked your number, do not reach out in any way, even through other people or online. Ask your attorney before you do anything that involves that person. If there is no order and no request like that, you can let them know once, briefly, that you are doing well and would welcome contact when they are ready. Then leave the next move to them.

Today: If someone is not ready, write down what you would want them to know someday.

Ask yourself: How can I respect someone's choice to keep distance?

Addiction in the Family

Addiction often runs in families. You may have parents, grandparents, or siblings who struggled. Knowing your family history can help you understand your own. It can also help you watch out for the next generation. If you are raising a grandchild, tell the child's doctor what you know about addiction in the family.

Today: Write down what you know about addiction in your family.

Ask yourself: What do I want to be different for the next generation?

Thirty Weeks

Read your notes from Day 182 about the relationship you chose to focus on. Write down what has changed this month. If it has improved, note what helped. If not, decide whether to keep trying the same way, try something different, give it time, or step back if the other person wants distance.

Today: Write down what changed in your focus relationship.

Ask yourself: What helped most with family this month?

Who Is Still Here

Write down the names of everyone who is still in your life after everything. Next to each name, write one thing they have done for you. Keep this list for the hard days. If the list is short right now, add one person this month, such as someone from a group, a counselor, or a neighbor. On a day when it feels like nobody cares, call or text 988.

Today: Write the list of people still in your life.

Ask yourself: Who on this list do I take for granted?

Feelings

Month 8 is about feelings: anger, grief, shame, fear, and the others that come back when you stop numbing them.

Today: Write down the feeling that came up most this month.

Ask yourself: Which feeling do I most want to understand better?

Month 8. Feelings

Feelings Without the Numbing

For years, drinking or using may have been how you handled feelings. Without it, feelings arrive at full strength, and many people do not have names for them yet. This month is about learning to notice a feeling, name it, and get through it without using. Start today by checking in with yourself three times: morning, afternoon, and evening. Write one word each time.

Today: Write one feeling word in the morning, afternoon, and evening.

Ask yourself: Which feeling did I used to numb most?

More Words for It

Many people have only a few words for feelings: fine, angry, stressed. More words help you know what to do. Angry might be hurt, embarrassed, or scared. Stressed might be worried, overwhelmed, or rushed. When you notice a feeling today, try to find a more exact word for it.

Today: Replace "fine," "angry," or "stressed" with a more exact word at least once.

Ask yourself: What is underneath my most common feeling word?

Where You Feel It

Feelings show up in the body before the mind names them: a tight chest, a clenched jaw, a knot in the stomach, hot face, shaky hands. Notice where you feel things today. If paying attention to your body brings up old memories or makes you feel far away, open your eyes, look around the room, and move. You can check in with your body for a few seconds at a time. The body's signal can warn you that a feeling is building before it turns into a craving or an argument.

Today: Notice where in your body you feel the next strong feeling.

Ask yourself: Where in my body do I feel stress first?

Anger, Up Close

Anger can be useful. It tells you that a line was crossed. Acted on in the moment, it can cost a job, a relationship, or your recovery. When anger comes, get distance first: leave the room, walk, wait an hour. Then decide what, if anything, to say. Write down what made you angry and what line you felt was crossed.

Today: When anger comes, wait an hour before acting on it.

Ask yourself: What line was crossed the last time I got angry?

Thirty-One Weeks

Read your feeling words from the last few days. Which word showed up most? What was happening when it came? Write down one thing that helped with that feeling, and one thing that made it worse.

Today: Write what helps and what makes your most common feeling worse.

Ask yourself: Which feeling do I keep avoiding?

Grief

Grief is not only about death. People in recovery grieve lost years, lost relationships, lost chances, and sometimes the using itself, which was a constant companion. Let yourself feel it. Talk about it with someone you trust. If grief brings thoughts of hurting yourself, call or text 988. If grief stays heavy for a long time, a counselor can help.

Today: Write down one loss you are grieving.

Ask yourself: Who can I talk to about what I have lost?

Shame Versus Guilt

Guilt says you did a bad thing. Shame says you are bad. Guilt can lead to repair: you apologize, you change. Shame tends to lead to hiding, and hiding often leads back to using. When you feel bad about the past, ask which one it is. If the shame is about something that was done to you, it was not your fault, and a counselor is a good person to tell. For other shame, telling one safe person, when you are ready, can make it easier to carry. If you have a case, or the shame involves a crime, tell your attorney first, because what you tell a sponsor, friend, or group is usually not legally private, and clergy rules vary by state. You do not have to write the shameful thing on this page. A word only you understand is enough.

Today: Notice whether a bad feeling about the past is guilt or shame.

Ask yourself: Who is one safe person I could tell, when I am ready?

Fear

Recovery brings fears: losing a job, a court date, a health problem, a relationship ending, a slip. Some fears are about things you can act on. Write down your biggest fear today. Next to it, write one thing you can do about it this week. If there is nothing to do, write down who you can talk to about it.

Today: Write your biggest fear and one action next to it.

Ask yourself: Which of my fears is about something I can control?

When Worry Will Not Stop

Anxiety can feel like a constant hum or come in waves. Slow breathing can help: breathe in for four counts, hold for four, breathe out for six, and repeat for two minutes. If holding your breath makes you more anxious, skip the hold. Walking, cold water on the face, and talking to someone can also help. If you have chest pain or trouble breathing, call 911. If anxiety is severe or does not ease over weeks, tell your doctor, say you are in recovery, and name any medicine for addiction you take.

Today: Try two minutes of slow breathing the next time worry builds.

Ask yourself: When does worry hit me hardest?

Low Days

Some days are just low. You may feel flat, tired, or sad for no clear reason. Keep your routine on low days, even a small version: get up, eat, go outside, make one call. If low days run together for two weeks or more, or you lose interest in most things, talk to a doctor. If low days bring thoughts of not wanting to be alive, call or text 988 at any hour.

Today: On a low day, keep the smallest version of your routine.

Ask yourself: What helps me most on a low day?

If It Gets Dark

Some people in recovery think they would be better off dead, or think about hurting themselves. If that is you, tell someone today, and call or text 988. If you are in danger now, call 911 or go to an emergency room. If there is a gun in your home, lock it up, or have someone you trust hold it, following your state's law on handing over a gun. If you are on supervision, you may not be allowed a gun at all, so ask your attorney. Ask someone you trust, or the house manager in a sober house, to hold any extra or unused pills and anything else you have thought about using to hurt yourself. Tell your prescriber or clinic about these thoughts, and ask how to store your medicines, including take-home doses. On your craving plan page, write your early warning signs, such as feeling trapped, feeling like a burden, or using more, and two people you will call, and 988. These thoughts can be treated.

Today: If you have had these thoughts, call or text 988 or tell someone today.

Ask yourself: Who would I tell if things got dark?

Thirty-Two Weeks

Look back at this week. Which feeling was hardest? What did you do with it? Write down one thing you did this week instead of using to handle a feeling.

Today: Add that one thing to your craving plan.

Ask yourself: Which feeling am I getting better at handling?

Lonely in a Room Full of People

You can feel lonely even when you are not alone: at work, at home, at a meeting. Loneliness often means you are not being seen or known. If loneliness turns into a feeling that nobody would miss you, call or text 988 at any hour.

Today: Tell one person one true thing about how you are.

Ask yourself: Who in my life knows me best right now?

Good Feelings Count Too

Good feelings can be uncomfortable for people in recovery. Joy may feel unsafe, as if a crash will follow. Excitement can feel like the old high. Let good feelings be what they are. Notice a moment today when you felt good, and stay with it for a minute before moving on.

Today: Notice one good moment and stay with it for a minute.

Ask yourself: What made me feel good this week?

Carrying a Grudge

A resentment is anger you keep replaying. It can take up hours and keep you tied to the past. Pick one resentment that is not about abuse or violence done to you. Write down who, what they did, and how it affected you. Then write down how much time you spend thinking about it. Twelve-step groups write resentments into an inventory, often gone over with a sponsor. SMART Recovery uses an exercise called ABC to look at what you keep telling yourself about the person. A counselor can help too. Anger about abuse or violence done to you belongs with a counselor, and you do not have to let it go or forgive anyone on someone else's schedule.

Today: Write down one resentment and how much time it takes.

Ask yourself: What would I gain if I let this one resentment go?

Comparing

It is easy to compare yourself to others: people with more time sober, more money, better families. Comparing usually leaves you feeling worse. When you catch yourself comparing, write down one thing you have done this year that you could not do last year.

Today: Keep a running list this week of things you can do now that you could not do last year.

Ask yourself: Who do I compare myself to most?

Guilt You Can Use

Guilt can point to something you can repair. If you feel guilty about something specific, ask whether there is a way to make it right: an apology, a repayment, a changed habit. If making it right would mean contacting someone who has asked you not to contact them, or a court order limits contact, do not contact them in any way, and ask your attorney before you do anything that involves them. With that person, you make things right by changing how you live. If you have already done what you can, the guilt may be done with its work. Talk it over with someone you trust.

Today: For one guilt, write down whether there is something left to repair.

Ask yourself: What guilt am I still holding after I have already made it right?

Too Much at Once

Some days bring many feelings at once, and it feels like too much. When that happens, slow everything down. Sit. Put your feet on the floor. Name five things you can see. Then do one small thing: drink water, step outside, call one person. The flood usually eases after a few minutes. If you lose time, feel far away from your body, or feel as if an old event is happening again, tell a counselor. These happen to many people after trauma, and they can be treated.

Today: Practice the steps once today, while you are calm.

Ask yourself: What usually leaves me feeling overwhelmed?

Thirty-Three Weeks

Look back at the feelings you wrote about this month: anger, grief, shame, fear, sadness, loneliness, joy, resentment, and others. Which ones did you understand better by the end of the month? Which still catch you off guard? Plan to talk about one of them with someone.

Today: Choose one feeling to talk about with someone this week.

Ask yourself: Which feeling still catches me off guard?

Saying How You Feel

"I feel" sentences can help in hard conversations: "I feel hurt when plans change without notice." They describe your feeling without attacking the other person. After the feeling, say what you are asking for: "Next time, can you text me if plans change?" Practice one today with someone safe. Keep it short and specific.

Today: Use one "I feel" sentence with someone safe.

Ask yourself: Which feeling is hardest for me to say out loud?

Letting It Out

Many people learned not to cry. Crying can be a way to let a feeling out. If you need to cry, find a private place and let it happen. It may come at odd moments in early recovery.

Today: If tears come, let them come.

Ask yourself: What did I learn about crying growing up?

Writing to Get It Out

Writing about a hard feeling can help you see it more clearly. Pick one thing from this week that is bothering you. Set a timer for ten minutes and write about it without stopping or fixing anything. Nobody needs to see it. If you would rather nobody could ever find it, write on loose paper and throw the paper away when you finish. If the writing pulls you into an old hurt, such as abuse or violence, and you feel flooded or far away, stop. Put your feet on the floor, name five things you can see, and call someone you trust. Save that hurt for a counselor instead of working through it alone. If you reach the end of the ten minutes and feel steady, read the page once and write one sentence about what you notice.

Today: Write for ten minutes about one thing from this week that is bothering you.

Ask yourself: What did I notice while I wrote?

Old Hurts

Many people with addiction have been through serious hurt: abuse, violence, loss, or other trauma. Old hurts can surface in recovery, as memories, nightmares, or a body that stays on alert. Trauma is treatable. You do not have to tell the whole story to get help, and you can go at your own pace. If old memories are flooding you or keeping you from sleeping, ask a doctor or counselor about trauma-focused help, or call the SAMHSA National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357 to find one. When a memory floods you, use the steps from Day 230. If old hurts bring thoughts of hurting yourself, call or text 988. If someone is hurting you now, call 911 if you are in danger. The National Domestic Violence Hotline is 1-800-799-7233, or text START to 88788. Call from a phone the person hurting you does not check. For sexual assault, the National Sexual Assault Hotline is 1-800-656-4673, or text HOPE to 64673. Both are free, confidential, and open all day and night.

Today: If old hurts are surfacing, write down who you could ask about trauma help.

Ask yourself: Is an old hurt affecting how I feel today?

When Mood Needs Treatment

Depression and anxiety are common alongside addiction, and they are treatable. If your mood stays low or anxious for weeks, talk to a doctor. Medicines for mood are treatment too. Tell the doctor about your recovery and any medicine for addiction you take, so they can choose carefully. Take medicines as prescribed. If anyone, including someone at a meeting or a place of worship, tells you to stop a medicine, talk to your prescriber before you change anything.

Today: If mood has been low for weeks, schedule a doctor's appointment.

Ask yourself: Have I been treating a mood problem as if it were only a recovery problem?

Finding Calm

In recovery, people find calm through practice: a walk, prayer, meditation or quiet sitting, music, time outdoors, a hobby. Try one of these for ten minutes today. If sitting still or closing your eyes brings up old memories, keep your eyes open, or choose one that moves, like a walk. Notice whether your body feels any different afterward.

Today: Spend ten minutes on one thing that calms you.

Ask yourself: Where do I feel calmest?

Thirty-Four Weeks

Look at the last two weeks of pages. Write down one feeling you can now name that you could not name before. Write down one thing you do now when a feeling gets strong. Keep both lines on the page with your craving plan from Day 84.

Today: Add a feelings line to your craving plan.

Ask yourself: How has the way I handle feelings changed?

Feelings Take Practice

Learning to handle feelings without using takes time. You will still snap, shut down, or overreact sometimes. When you do, repair it if it affected someone, and try again.

Today: Repair one moment this week when you overreacted.

Ask yourself: How do I treat myself after I overreact?

The Link

By now you may see the link between your feelings and your cravings more clearly. Write down the three feelings most likely to lead to a craving for you. Next to each, write the first thing you will do when you notice it.

Today: Write your three riskiest feelings and the first step for each.

Ask yourself: Which feeling is most likely to lead to a slip for me?

Sitting With Someone Else

As you get better with your own feelings, you can be there for others. When someone tells you how they feel, you do not have to fix it. Listen, say "That sounds hard," and stay.

Today: Listen to someone's feelings without fixing them.

Ask yourself: Who in my life needs someone to listen?

Hope

Hope can feel risky after many disappointments. It can start small: a good week, a kept promise, a better night's sleep. Write down one thing you are hopeful about. Keep it realistic and specific. Then write one step you can take this week to move toward it.

Today: Take that step, or put it on your calendar.

Ask yourself: What makes hope feel safe for me?

Setbacks

Month 9 is about setbacks: slips, starting again, and the days after. Some readers will need it right away and some may not. Either way, it helps to read it before you need it.

Today: Write down who you would call first if you slipped.

Ask yourself: What do I most fear about a setback?

Month 9. Setbacks

Setbacks Happen

Many people in recovery have a slip or a return to use at some point. It does not erase what you have learned, and it does not mean recovery is impossible. This month is about what to do if it happens, what to do in the days after, and how to see one coming. If you have not slipped, read these pages anyway and keep them for later or for someone you know.

Today: Read Day 27 again, the page about a slip.

Ask yourself: What do I believe a slip would mean about me?

Thirty-Five Weeks

Read your warning signs from Day 85. Have any shown up lately? Ask the person you gave the list to whether they have seen any. If they have, take it seriously this week: add a meeting, a call, a doctor's visit, or a change to your evenings.

Today: Ask the person who has your warning signs list what they have seen.

Ask yourself: Which warning sign would I be least likely to notice in myself?

If You Used, Get Safe First

If you drank or used, get safe first. If you went back to drinking heavily or taking benzodiazepines regularly, call a doctor before you stop again, and call 911 for a seizure, confusion, or seeing or hearing things that are not there. After a break from opioids, an amount you used to take can kill you. Street drugs, including pills and powders sold as something else, can contain fentanyl, even if you never meant to use opioids. Mixing opioids, including methadone and buprenorphine, with alcohol or benzodiazepines raises the risk. Do not use alone. Keep naloxone where someone can reach it, and show them how to use it. If someone overdoses, call 911, give naloxone, and stay with them. If children are in your care, get another adult to take over their care before you do anything else. A child is never the person who watches over you. If part of you did not care whether you woke up, call or text 988 today, and tell one person.

Today: Make sure you know where naloxone is and how to use it.

Ask yourself: Who would know where I was if I used?

The First Call

After a slip, the hardest call is the first one. Make it within a day. Say it plainly: "I used last night." You do not need to explain everything. The person you call does not need to fix it. Saying it out loud breaks the secret, and the secret is what usually keeps the using going. If you are on supervision, call your attorney before you tell your officer or anyone else in the system. In an emergency, call 911 first and your attorney after. If you do not have one now, Book 13 in this library, Court, Probation, and Recovery, covers how to reach one.

Today: Write the exact sentence you would say on that first call.

Ask yourself: Who would I call first, and what would make that call hard?

The Morning After

The morning after a slip can bring shame, sickness, and the pull to keep going. If you drank heavily or took benzodiazepines regularly, withdrawal can start in the hours or days after you stop. If you are shaking or sweating, call a doctor, and call 911 for a seizure, confusion, or seeing or hearing things that are not there. If children are in your care, get another adult to take over their care before you do anything else. A child is never the person who watches over you. Otherwise, get through the morning with the basics: water, food, a shower, a call. Go to a meeting or group that day if you can. Do not make big decisions about your life on that morning. If the shame that morning turns into thoughts of hurting yourself, call or text 988. Get to tonight first.

Today: Write down what you would do the morning after a slip, hour by hour.

Ask yourself: What would I need most that morning?

What Happened Before

A slip usually has a story leading up to it. Once you are safe, write the story: what happened in the days before, the hours before, and the minutes before. Look for warning signs you missed and triggers you did not plan for. Leave blame off the page. If you are on supervision, read the note at the front of this book before you write down details of use.

Today: If you have slipped before, write the story of the days leading up to it.

Ask yourself: What was the first moment I could have turned around?

"I Already Blew It"

After one drink or one use, a voice may say: I already blew it, so I might as well keep going. That thinking turns a slip into a long return to use. One use is one use, and you can stop again today. If "I already blew it" turns into "there is no point," call or text 988. If you went back to drinking heavily or taking benzodiazepines regularly, call a doctor before you stop again, and call 911 for a seizure, confusion, or seeing or hearing things that are not there.

Today: Write down what you would say back to "I already blew it."

Ask yourself: What happened the last time I believed "I already blew it"?

If Your Count Resets

If you count days, a slip may reset the number. That can feel like losing everything. The days before still happened. The skills you built are still yours. Taking a prescribed medication for addiction as directed is not a slip, and it does not reset your count. Some people keep two numbers: days since the last use, and total days in recovery. Use whatever helps you keep going.

Today: Decide how you would think about your count after a slip.

Ask yourself: What does my count mean to me?

Thirty-Six Weeks

Look back at this week's pages about a slip: the first call, the morning after, the safety steps, and 988 for any thoughts of hurting yourself. Write it out clean on one page and keep it with your craving plan.

Today: Write your slip plan clean on one page.

Ask yourself: Is anything missing from my slip plan?

Shame After a Slip

Shame after a slip can be heavier than the slip. It tells you to hide, to skip the meeting, to avoid the people who care. That is usually the opposite of what helps. Hiding can also mean using alone, and using alone is when an overdose kills, because nobody is there with naloxone. If you use again, do not use alone, and keep naloxone where someone can reach it. If someone overdoses, call 911, give naloxone, and stay with them. Go where you would have gone anyway. Tell one person. If the shame brings thoughts of hurting yourself, call or text 988.

Today: Write down where you would go the first day after a slip.

Ask yourself: Who would I be most ashamed to face, and why?

When to Get More Help

If slips keep happening, or one turns into days or weeks of using, more help may be needed: a doctor, a treatment program, a change in medication, more meetings, a sober house. Asking for more help is not failure. Call the SAMHSA National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357 for treatment referrals. If you are not ready to stop, a harm reduction program can give you naloxone and new supplies, and can connect you to treatment when you want it. Call 211 to find one. Book 3, the Free Help Directory, lists more.

Today: Write down what more help would look like for you.

Ask yourself: What more help have I been putting off asking for?

Medication After a Slip

If you take medication for addiction and you slip, tell your prescriber. If you go to a clinic, tell your counselor there too, ask what the slip means for your take-home doses, and keep going every day you are due. If you signed a form that lets the clinic share your results with your officer or the court, call your attorney before you talk to the clinic about the slip, and keep dosing. Do not stop the medication on your own because you feel you failed. Stopping methadone or buprenorphine lowers your tolerance, which raises the risk of overdose if you use again. If you stop naltrexone or miss a dose or shot, you have little or no tolerance to opioids, and a small amount can kill you. If you take naltrexone, taking more opioids to get past it can kill you. If someone overdoses, call 911, give naloxone, and stay with them. If you do not take medication and keep slipping, ask a doctor whether it could help.

Today: Write down what you would tell your prescriber after a slip.

Ask yourself: What would I be afraid to tell my prescriber?

A Slip on Supervision

If you are on probation, parole, or in a court program, a slip has legal effects as well as health ones. Call your attorney before you talk to your officer or anyone else in the system. In an emergency, call 911 first and your attorney after. Staff at some sober houses report drug tests and rule breaks to your officer or the court. If yours does, talk to your attorney before you tell staff about a slip, but follow the house safety rules. Keep reporting, keep attending treatment, and do not disappear. Book 13 in this library, Court, Probation, and Recovery, covers how to reach an attorney if you do not have one now, and has a chapter on using again while on supervision. If fear about your case brings thoughts of hurting yourself, call or text 988.

Today: If you are on supervision, write down your attorney's number on your slip plan.

Ask yourself: What do my conditions say about reporting use?

When Others Are Disappointed

Family and friends may react to a slip with anger, fear, or tears. Their reaction comes from caring and from past hurt. Listen. Do not argue about whether they are overreacting. Tell them what you are doing to get back on track. Then let your actions over the next weeks do the rest. If anyone threatens you or hits you, or you are afraid of them, leave, and call 911 if you are in danger. The National Domestic Violence Hotline is 1-800-799-7233, or text START to 88788. If the slip could affect a custody case or a child welfare case, call your attorney.

Today: Write down what you would say to the person most likely to be upset.

Ask yourself: Whose disappointment would be hardest for me?

The Slip That Almost Happened

A close call is a warning without the cost of a slip. If you came close this week, treat it like a slip in one way: tell someone and study it. What happened before, what stopped you, and what you would do differently.

Today: If you had a close call, tell someone about it.

Ask yourself: What stopped me the last time I came close?

Thirty-Seven Weeks

Look over this month so far. Write down the most useful thing you learned about setbacks. If you have slipped this month, write down what you are doing differently now. If you have not, write down what has helped you avoid one.

Today: Add the most useful thing you learned to your slip plan.

Ask yourself: What has helped me most this month?

Day One Again

Starting again can feel harder than starting the first time. You know how much work it takes. You also know more: what helps, who to call, what your triggers are. Use what you know. If you go to meetings, go back to the same ones. Most people there have seen someone come back, and many of them have done it themselves. Go back to the basics from the first month: the next hour, food, sleep, one person, the plan.

Today: If you are starting again, reread Days 1 to 7.

Ask yourself: What do I know now that I did not know on my first Day 1?

How You Talk to Yourself

After a setback, the voice in your head can be cruel. Words like "worthless," "hopeless," and "always" do not help you get back on track. Write three lines. First, what happened. Second, what you told yourself about it. Third, how you felt and what you did next. The second line is the one you can change. Rewrite it the way a good friend would say it: honest, and without putting you down. SMART Recovery teaches a version of this called the ABC exercise. If the voice starts saying there is no point in going on, call or text 988 today.

Today: Write the three lines for one setback, and rewrite the second one.

Ask yourself: What would a friend say back to the harshest thing I told myself today?

When Life Falls Apart

Some setbacks are not about using: a breakup, a death, a job loss, an eviction, a health scare. These can shake recovery even without a slip. When a big setback hits, tighten your routine. Add meetings and calls. Tell your counselor. If a loss brings thoughts of hurting yourself, call or text 988. The weeks after a big loss are higher risk, so plan them carefully.

Today: Write down what you would add to your routine after a big setback.

Ask yourself: What setback, other than using, would shake me most?

If You Lose Your Place

Losing housing is one of the hardest setbacks. If it happens, call 211 right away for shelter and housing help. Keep your documents together. If you are asked to leave a sober house after using, ask before you go whether the house can refer you to detox or another house, and how long it will hold your things. Your body may not handle the amount you used to take, so do not use alone that first night, and carry naloxone. If someone overdoses, call 911, give naloxone, and stay with them. Keep going to treatment and meetings. If losing your place brings thoughts of hurting yourself, call or text 988. Book 12, Finding a Safe Place to Live, has more on finding a new place.

Today: Make sure your important documents are in one place.

Ask yourself: Where would I go tonight if I lost my place?

A Health Scare

A diagnosis, an injury, or a hospital stay can bring fear and pain, and sometimes prescriptions that carry risk. Tell every doctor about your recovery. Ask about pain treatment that fits it. If you take methadone or buprenorphine and you are admitted to a hospital, ask the staff to call your clinic or prescriber to confirm your dose, so you do not miss it. Have someone you trust help keep track of medicines if you are on anything that could be misused, and keep those medicines locked up.

Today: Write down what you would tell a doctor in an emergency.

Ask yourself: Does every doctor who treats me know about my recovery?

When a Relationship Ends

A breakup or divorce can be a big trigger. Feelings run high, routines break, and old friends may come back around. Keep your recovery plan separate from the relationship. Lean on the people on your list. If the end of a relationship brings thoughts of hurting yourself, call or text 988. Avoid making big decisions, such as moving or quitting a job, in the first weeks.

Today: Write down who you would lean on if a relationship ended.

Ask yourself: What did I do to get through breakups in the past?

Thirty-Eight Weeks

Look at your slip plan and your craving plan together, and update the names, numbers, and steps so they match your life now. Give a copy of the slip plan to the person you would call first, so they know what you asked them to do.

Today: Update both plans and give someone a copy of the slip plan.

Ask yourself: Who has a copy of my plans?

Losing Someone to Addiction

Many people in recovery lose friends to overdose, to drinking, or to suicide. That grief is heavy, and it can bring a strong pull to use. If you lose someone, tell your counselor and the people on your list. Go to a meeting. If you found the person or tried to save them, the pictures may come back for a long time. Tell a counselor, and use the steps from Day 230 when they come. Some people find comfort in a grief group, a faith community, or a talk with a member of the clergy. If the loss brings thoughts of hurting yourself, call or text 988. If people around you still use opioids, keep naloxone. If someone overdoses, call 911, give naloxone, and stay with them.

Today: If you have lost someone, write their name and one memory.

Ask yourself: Who can I talk to about the people I have lost?

Too Sure

Setbacks sometimes come after a stretch of feeling very sure: "I've got this now." Feeling that sure can lead people to drop meetings, stop calling, or test themselves around old triggers. If you feel very sure lately, keep your routine anyway.

Today: Keep one recovery habit you have been thinking of dropping.

Ask yourself: Which part of my routine have I skipped lately, and how did that week go?

Repair After a Setback

If a slip hurt someone, repair matters: an apology, keeping a promise, paying back money, being where you said. Repair is done through what you do over time. If someone has asked you not to contact them, or a court order limits contact, do not contact them in any way, and ask your attorney before you do anything that involves them. Pick one action you can take this week to repair harm from a setback.

Today: Take one action to repair harm from a setback.

Ask yourself: Who was hurt by my last setback?

The Same Setback Twice

If setbacks keep happening the same way, the same day, the same place, the same people, the pattern is information. Write down what your setbacks have in common. Bring the list to a counselor or someone further along, and plan around the pattern together.

Today: Make the list, and set a time to go over it with someone.

Ask yourself: What pattern have I been avoiding looking at?

People Who Came Back

Many people who are steady in recovery today had setbacks along the way. Ask someone further along whether they had a slip and what helped them come back. Hearing their story can make your own setbacks feel less final.

Today: Ask someone further along about a setback they came back from.

Ask yourself: What did I learn from someone else's comeback?

What Held

Even in a hard stretch, some things held: a person, a habit, a place. Write down three things that held during your hardest time in recovery so far. Next to each, write one way you will keep it going this month, such as a weekly call, a standing meeting, or a set bedtime.

Today: Do one of those things this week.

Ask yourself: What do I need to protect most?

Thirty-Nine Weeks

This is the last Look Back of the setbacks month. Read your slip plan one more time. Month 10 is about health: sleep, food, medication, doctors, and the body. Your body carries a lot of the cost of using, and it can recover a lot too.

Today: Write down one health question you have been putting off.

Ask yourself: How has my body changed since I stopped?

Month 10. Health

Your Body in Recovery

Drinking and using take a toll on the body, and much of that damage can heal after you stop. This month is about taking care of it: sleep, food, movement, doctors, dentists, and medication. Nothing here replaces a doctor. The pages are about getting to one, telling them the truth, and following through.

Today: Write down the last time you saw a doctor, a dentist, and an eye doctor.

Ask yourself: Which of those visits is most overdue?

Making the Appointment

If you have not had a checkup since you stopped, make the appointment this week. If you do not have a doctor, a community health center like the one you looked up on Day 24 can see you, and it charges on a sliding scale. Write down what you want to ask before you go. Tell the doctor what you used, how much, and for how long.

Today: Make one appointment you have been putting off.

Ask yourself: What do I want to ask the doctor?

Paying for Care

If you do not have health coverage, you may qualify for some. Call 211 and ask about health coverage options in your state, or ask a community health center to help you apply. If you served in the military, ask whether you can get care through the VA. A veterans service officer, at a county or state veterans office or a veterans group, can help you apply. If you have coverage, find out what it pays for: checkups, counseling, dental, prescriptions. Book 4, Medications for Addiction, Explained, covers paying for addiction medication.

Today: Find out what your coverage pays for, or call 211 about getting coverage.

Ask yourself: What care have I skipped because of cost?

Sleep, Nine Months In

Compare your sleep now with the first month. If it is still poor, keep the basics: same wake-up time, no caffeine late in the day, a dark room, the phone away. If poor sleep is wearing you down, tell your doctor, say you are in recovery, and name any medicine for addiction you take, so any sleep treatment fits.

Today: Write down how many hours you slept each night this week.

Ask yourself: What is the biggest thing keeping me from good sleep?

Regular Meals

Regular meals help mood, energy, and cravings. You do not need a perfect diet. Aim for three meals at roughly the same times, and keep simple food in the house. If cooking is new, start with a few easy meals you can make again and again. If money is tight, 211 can point you to food pantries and food assistance.

Today: Plan three meals for tomorrow.

Ask yourself: Which meal do I skip most often?

Water and Caffeine

Many people in recovery drink a lot of coffee, energy drinks, or soda. Too much caffeine can make anxiety and sleep worse. Notice how much you have in a day. Drink water through the day, and move caffeine earlier. If you cut back, do it over several days, because stopping caffeine all at once can bring headaches.

Today: Count your caffeine drinks today and add two glasses of water.

Ask yourself: How does caffeine affect my mood and sleep?

Forty Weeks

Look over this week. Did you make the appointment from Day 275? Did sleep or meals change? Write down one health habit that is going well and one that needs work. Pick one small change for next week.

Today: Write that small change on your calendar for a set day next week.

Ask yourself: What health habit am I proudest of?

The Dentist

Using can damage teeth, and dental pain can be a trigger, especially if pain pills were part of the past. Find a dentist, including low-cost options at dental schools and community health centers. Tell the dentist you are in recovery, and ask about pain control that fits it.

Today: Find one low-cost dental option near you.

Ask yourself: Have I avoided the dentist because of fear or shame?

Tobacco and Nicotine

Many people in recovery from alcohol or drugs still smoke or vape. Some decide to quit later, some sooner. If you want to quit, ask your doctor about help, or call the free national quitline at 1-800-784-8669 (1-800-QUIT-NOW). If you are not ready, that is your decision to make with your doctor.

Today: Decide whether you want to think about quitting tobacco, and write down why.

Ask yourself: How does smoking fit into my recovery?

Building Strength

Moving your body regularly can improve mood, sleep, and energy. If walking has become a habit, you might add something more: a longer walk, stretching, a free class, a team. Check with your doctor first if you have health problems. If your work is hard on your body, stretching after a shift counts. Start where you are, and build slowly.

Today: Add five minutes to your usual movement.

Ask yourself: What kind of movement do I enjoy most?

Living With Pain

If you live with chronic pain, managing it without risking your recovery takes planning. Work with a doctor who knows your history. Ask about options such as physical therapy, non-opioid medicines, and other approaches. Keep track of what helps. Take only medicine prescribed to you.

Today: Write down what helps your pain and what you want to ask your doctor.

Ask yourself: Does my doctor know how pain and recovery connect for me?

Taking Medicine as Prescribed

If you take medicine, for addiction or anything else, take it as prescribed. Do not stop or change it on your own. If side effects bother you, tell your prescriber. If your sober house tests you, give the house manager a copy of each prescription, or a letter from your clinic, before your next test. Use a pill box or phone alarm if you forget pills. Keep medicines locked up, especially if children live with you or visit, and keep take-home doses in the clinic's containers inside the locked box. If a dose is lost or stolen, call the clinic that day. Never give, sell, trade, or lend a dose, and in a sober house, follow its rules for medicines. A single dose of methadone or buprenorphine can kill a child. If a child gets into any medicine, call 911, even if the child seems fine. If the child is hard to wake or breathing slowly, give naloxone while you wait. A child who wakes up still needs a hospital.

Today: Set up a reminder for any medicine you take, or for your clinic's dosing hours.

Ask yourself: Which medicine is hardest for me to take as prescribed, and why?

Tests Worth Asking About

Years of drinking or using can affect the liver and can carry infection risks. Ask your doctor which tests make sense for you, such as liver tests and testing for hepatitis C and HIV. Ask also whether you need vaccines for hepatitis A and B. If you still inject sometimes, a syringe services program gives out new needles and other supplies, often free, along with testing and naloxone. Using new supplies every time lowers the risk of HIV, hepatitis C, and skin infections. Many of these conditions can be treated well.

Today: Write down which tests to ask your doctor about.

Ask yourself: What health worry have I been afraid to check?

Forty-One Weeks

Look back at your health notes. Did you make any of the appointments? Did any habit change? Write down what got in the way of the ones you did not do: cost, time, fear, transportation. For each, write one way around it.

Today: Write one way around each obstacle to care.

Ask yourself: Which obstacle to care is the biggest for me?

Mental Health Care

Recovery from addiction often goes better when mental health is cared for too. If you have depression, anxiety, trauma, or another condition, treatment can help. A counselor, therapist, or psychiatrist can be part of your team. Ask your doctor for a referral, or call the SAMHSA National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357.

Today: Write down whether you need mental health care and how to get it.

Ask yourself: What would change in my recovery if my mood, worry, or old hurts got treatment too?

Sexual Health

Using can lead to risks with sexual health. Recovery is a good time to get checked and to talk honestly with a doctor. Ask about testing, protection, and PrEP, a medicine that helps prevent HIV. These conversations are routine for doctors, even when they feel awkward to you.

Today: Add sexual health to your list of things to ask a doctor.

Ask yourself: What health question feels too awkward to ask?

Changes in Your Body

Many people's weight and appetite change after they stop. Some gain, some lose. Many people crave sugar early on. If changes worry you, talk with your doctor rather than trying a strict diet on your own.

Today: Write down one change in your body since you stopped.

Ask yourself: How do I feel about the changes in my body?

The Things People Skip

Eye and hearing problems often go untreated for years. If you squint to read or struggle to hear, get checked. Call 211 to find a low-cost eye or hearing exam near you.

Today: If you need it, look up a low-cost eye exam near you.

Ask yourself: When did I last have my eyes checked?

Keeping Track

Keep a simple health page: your doctors and their numbers, your medicines and doses, your allergies, and the dates of your last checkups. Keep it with your other important papers. It helps in an emergency and saves time at every appointment.

Today: Write your health page.

Ask yourself: Could someone else find my health information in an emergency?

Where Stress Lands

Long-term stress shows up in the body: headaches, stomach problems, tight shoulders, poor sleep. Notice where stress lands for you. Simple things can help: walking, slow breathing, stretching, a warm shower, time outside. If physical symptoms worry you, see a doctor.

Today: Notice where stress lands in your body and try one thing that helps.

Ask yourself: What does my body do when I am stressed?

Forty-Two Weeks

Read your health page from Day 292. Add anything missing from it. Write down one health improvement you have noticed since you stopped, such as better sleep, more energy, clearer skin, or fewer stomach problems.

Today: Finish your health page and write one improvement.

Ask yourself: What health improvement has surprised me?

When a Doctor Treats You Differently

Some people in recovery feel judged by doctors. If a doctor brushes you off, you can ask questions, bring someone with you, or find another doctor. You can ask for clear answers about your care. Write down your questions beforehand, and write down the answers.

Today: Write down your questions before your next appointment.

Ask yourself: Have I avoided a doctor because I felt judged?

In an Emergency

In a medical emergency, tell the staff about your recovery and any medication for addiction you take, especially before they give you pain medicine. Naltrexone blocks opioid pain medicine, and methadone and buprenorphine change how much pain medicine you need. Carry a card or a note on your phone with the name and dose of each medicine and the number of the clinic or prescriber who can confirm it, so staff can read the card even if you cannot speak. Ask your clinic for an after-hours number, if it has one, and add it to the card. Ask someone close to you to know it too.

Today: Put your recovery and medication information on a card or in your phone.

Ask yourself: Who would speak for me in an emergency?

Naloxone in the House

Naloxone can reverse an opioid overdose. Keep it at home, even if you never used opioids. You can buy it without a prescription at pharmacies and many other stores, and many health departments and harm reduction programs give it out free. Signs of an overdose: the person will not wake up when you shout and rub your knuckles on their chest, their breathing is slow, shallow, or stopped, they make choking, gurgling, or snoring sounds, their lips or fingernails change color, or their pupils are very small. Call 911 and give naloxone. If the person is not breathing, give rescue breaths if you know how, or follow the dispatcher. If they do not respond in 2 to 3 minutes, give another dose, and keep going until they breathe or help comes. Once they breathe, lay them on their side and stay with them. Naloxone can wear off and the overdose can come back, so they still need medical care. In a sober house, ask where the house keeps its naloxone.

Today: Make sure there is naloxone in your home, and that others know where it is.

Ask yourself: Who in my life might need naloxone someday?

Treatment That Works

If you have hepatitis C or HIV, or find out you do, treatment has improved a great deal. Most people with hepatitis C can be cured with a few months of pills, and being in early recovery is not a reason to put off treatment. Many people with HIV live long, healthy lives with treatment. Ask your doctor or a community health center about testing and care.

Today: If you have not been tested, write down where you can get tested.

Ask yourself: What have I assumed about these illnesses that might not be true?

Your Mind Clearing

Memory, focus, and thinking often improve over the months after you stop. For some people the change comes quickly, and for others it comes slowly. Be patient with forgetfulness and slow thinking early on. Use lists, calendars, and reminders. If memory or thinking is not getting better, tell your doctor. If you drank heavily and you have new confusion, trouble walking steadily, or problems with your eyes, call 911 or go to an emergency room.

Today: Write down one thing that is clearer in your thinking than it was.

Ask yourself: What do I use to help me remember things?

Three Hundred Readings

This is the three hundredth reading in this book. Write down how your body feels today compared with Day 1. Be specific: sleep, energy, appetite, skin, mood. Your body has been recovering while you did the daily work.

Today: Tell one person one change in your body since Day 1.

Ask yourself: What would I tell someone on Day 1 about what changes in the body?

Forty-Three Weeks

Look back at the month. Which appointments did you keep? Which habits changed? Write down the next three health steps for the coming months, with a rough date for each. Put each date on your calendar now and write the clinic's phone number next to it, so the step is one call when the day comes.

Today: Write the next three health steps with dates.

Ask yourself: Which health step matters most to me?

When You Are Sick

When you have a cold, the flu, or an injury, being sick can bring back old habits: cough syrup, leftover pills, a drink to sleep. Some liquid cold medicines contain alcohol, and some cough and sleep medicines can be misused. If your house or your court tests you for alcohol, hand sanitizer and other products with alcohol in them can show up on some tests, so ask whoever tests you before you use anything new. Products sold at gas stations and smoke shops, such as kratom, can act on the body like opioids. Large amounts of the anti-diarrhea medicine loperamide, taken to get through opioid withdrawal, can cause dangerous heart problems, so call a doctor about withdrawal instead. Before you buy anything, tell the pharmacist you are in recovery and name any medicine you take, especially disulfiram, naltrexone, buprenorphine, or methadone.

Today: Ask a pharmacist which common medicines to avoid.

Ask yourself: What did I use to take when I was sick?

Spending on Your Own Care

Some people feel guilty spending time or money on their own health, especially if they feel they still owe the people they hurt. Taking care of your body keeps you able to work, parent, and help others.

Today: Do one thing for your health without apologizing for it.

Ask yourself: What do I feel guilty spending on my own care?

Being Useful

Month 11 is about being useful: helping others, building skills, and making plans. Many people find that being useful steadies their recovery.

Today: Write down one skill you have that someone else could use.

Ask yourself: When did I last feel useful?

Month 11. Being Useful

Useful Again

During active addiction, many people stopped being able to help others. They were the one who needed help, borrowed money, or missed things. Being useful again can feel good, and it can steady your recovery. Start small.

Today: Do one small useful thing for someone today.

Ask yourself: When did I stop feeling useful?

Useful at Home

The first place to be useful is often home. Fix the thing that has been broken for months. Cook a meal. Take over a chore without being asked. Help a child with homework. These small acts rebuild trust and show the people you live with that you are there.

Today: Fix or finish one thing at home that has been waiting.

Ask yourself: What at home has been waiting for me?

The Person Behind You

By now you may know someone newer in recovery. You can help by answering the phone, going with them to a meeting, or telling them what helped you in your first month. Stick to your own experience and send them to professionals for anything medical or legal.

Today: Reach out to someone newer than you.

Ask yourself: What did I need most in my first month?

Forty-Four Weeks

Look over the last few days. Write down each useful thing you did and how you felt afterward. Notice whether helping steadied you or wore you out. If a kind of helping wore you out, do less of it next week.

Today: Write down how helping felt this week.

Ask yourself: Which kind of helping should I do more of?

Service at a Meeting

Many groups run on volunteers: setting up chairs, making coffee, greeting people. Taking a service role gives you a reason to show up and a way to meet people. Many people pick one meeting they go to every week and make it their regular meeting, and that is often where a first service job comes from. Ask what your group needs. Start with something small and regular. Some groups ask for a certain amount of time stopped before you lead a meeting or hold the group's money. In some, such as SMART Recovery and Women for Sobriety, leading a meeting takes training or certification.

Today: Ask your group what it needs and sign up for one task.

Ask yourself: What service role would I enjoy?

Helping Outside Recovery

You can also help outside recovery. Food banks, animal shelters, schools, places of worship, and community gardens often need help. A regular volunteer shift adds structure and people to your week. Look for one in your area that fits your schedule.

Today: Look up one place to volunteer.

Ask yourself: What cause do I care about?

What You Already Know

Everyone has skills: cooking, fixing things, driving, listening, organizing, computers, a trade. Some of your skills may have come from hard places. Write down ten things you can do well. Look at the list and circle the ones someone else could use.

Today: Show the list to someone who knows you and ask what you left off.

Ask yourself: Which of my skills do I take for granted?

A New Skill

Pick one skill you would like to learn or improve this year: a trade, a certification, cooking, budgeting, computers, a language. Find one free or low-cost way to start: a library class, a workforce center, an online course. Book 11 in this library, Work and Recovery, covers job training.

Today: Find one way to start learning a skill.

Ask yourself: What skill would make the biggest difference in my life?

Teaching What You Know

Teaching someone else what you know helps them and deepens your own learning. If you have a skill, offer to show someone: how to cook a meal, change a tire, fill out a form, use a computer. Keep it simple and patient.

Today: Offer to teach someone one thing you know.

Ask yourself: Who in my life could use a skill I have?

Helping Without Losing Yourself

Some people in recovery throw themselves into helping others and neglect their own recovery. Others try to rescue people who are still using. You can help without taking responsibility for someone else's choices. If helping someone puts your recovery at risk, step back and point them to other help.

Today: Check whether any helping is putting your recovery at risk.

Ask yourself: Who am I trying to rescue, and what is it costing my recovery?

Forty-Five Weeks

Read your list of skills from Day 311 and your learning plan from Day 312. Did you take a first step? Write down what you did, or what got in the way. Plan one step for next week.

Today: Put that step on your calendar with a day and a time.

Ask yourself: What is getting in the way of learning?

A Plan for the Next Year

Write down three things you want your life to include a year from now: maybe a job, a place to live, a relationship repaired, a skill, a level of health. Next to each, write one step you can take this month. Keep the plan simple enough to remember.

Today: Write a one-year plan with three goals and one step each.

Ask yourself: Which goal matters most to me?

A Coworker Who Is Having a Hard Time

You may notice a coworker who seems to be struggling: late every Monday, short-tempered, or always out of money. You do not need to name the problem or tell anyone about your own recovery. You can ask how they are doing and mean it, sit with them at lunch, or give them the SAMHSA National Helpline number, 1-800-662-4357, if they bring it up. Keep what they tell you to yourself. If they talk about hurting themselves, you can call or text 988 with them, or on your own for advice on how to help. If someone is in danger right now, call 911.

Today: Ask one coworker how they are doing, and listen to the answer.

Ask yourself: Who at work might be having a harder time than they show?

The People Next Door

Being a good neighbor is a quiet way to be useful: carrying groceries, shoveling a walk, checking on an older person, keeping your space tidy.

Today: Do one small thing for a neighbor.

Ask yourself: Which neighbor could use a hand?

Repaying What You Owe

Being useful can mean paying back what you owe, a little at a time. Look at your list from Day 115. Choose one debt to a person who is safe to contact and make a payment, however small. Leave anyone you used with off this list. If someone has asked you not to contact them, or a court order limits contact, do not contact them in any way, and ask your attorney before you do anything that involves them. When you pay someone, tell them the date of the next payment only if you know you can make it.

Today: Make one payment on a debt to a person.

Ask yourself: Whose money do I most want to repay?

When Your Story Helps

Some people find that telling their story helps others: at a meeting, in a group, to a young person, to a family who is struggling. You decide how much to share and with whom. Leave out names and details about other people, including anyone who hurt you. If you have a case, or your story involves a crime, talk to your attorney first, because what you say at a meeting or in a group is usually not legally private. If you speak to a group, ask first whether it will be recorded or posted online. Tell where you were and where you are now, even if the story is not finished.

Today: Write down three sentences of your story you would be willing to share.

Ask yourself: Who might need to hear my story?

Leading a Group

If you have been in recovery a while and feel steady, you might help run a group. Book 15 in this library, the Group Facilitator Guide, covers running free peer support groups. You do not need to be an expert. You need to show up, follow a simple format, and know when to send someone to professional help. If you want to run a meeting for a named program, such as SMART Recovery, LifeRing, or Women for Sobriety, ask that program what it asks of the people who run its meetings.

Today: If you are interested, read the first chapter of Book 15.

Ask yourself: What would I need to feel ready to help run a group?

Forty-Six Weeks

Look back at the month so far. Write down each way you were useful. Next to each, write whether it helped your recovery, had no effect, or made it harder. Keep doing the ones that helped.

Today: Mark which ways of helping supported your recovery.

Ask yourself: Which kind of helping fits me best?

Helpers Need Help Too

As you help others, keep asking for help yourself. People who become helpers sometimes stop calling their own support. Keep your calls, your meetings, and your counselor.

Today: Make one call for your own support.

Ask yourself: Have I stopped asking for help since I started giving it?

When They Are Not Ready

You may want to help someone who is still using, and they may not be ready. You cannot make anyone stop. You can tell them you care, give them the SAMHSA National Helpline number, 1-800-662-4357, and keep naloxone where you can reach it. If someone overdoses, call 911, give naloxone, and stay with them. If they talk about hurting themselves, call or text 988 with them. Then take care of yourself.

Today: If someone you love is still using, give them one resource.

Ask yourself: How do I take care of myself while caring about someone who is still using?

Being Part of Something

Being part of a group, such as a team, a congregation, a club, or a recovery community, gives you a place to belong and to contribute. Look at the groups in your life now. Choose one to show up for more often.

Today: Put the next meeting of that group on your calendar.

Ask yourself: Where do I feel I belong?

Your Own Work

Some people in recovery want to start their own small business someday. If that is you, write down the idea, what you would need to start, and one person who has done something similar. You do not need to start now.

Today: Write down a business idea and one person to ask about it.

Ask yourself: What work would I like to do for myself someday?

Thanking the People Who Helped

Write a note to someone who helped you in recovery: a counselor, a sponsor or mentor, a friend, a family member, a stranger at a meeting. Tell them specifically what they did and what it meant. Send it or give it to them.

Today: Write and send one thank-you note.

Ask yourself: Who helped me most this year?

Someone People Can Count On

Being useful depends on being reliable: showing up when you said, doing what you promised, calling if you cannot. Look at the last month. Write down the commitments you kept and any you missed.

Today: List this month's commitments and how many you kept.

Ask yourself: What would make me more reliable?

Forty-Seven Weeks

Read your one-year plan from Day 316. Update it if anything has changed. Write down one step you took this month toward each goal. Plan the next steps for the final month of this book.

Today: Update your one-year plan.

Ask yourself: Which goal moved forward this month?

The People Watching

Children, younger relatives, coworkers, and newer people in recovery watch how you live. They see the ordinary things: showing up, telling the truth, fixing mistakes, and keeping going.

Today: Write down who might be watching how you live.

Ask yourself: What example do I want to set?

Helping on a Bad Day

On a bad day, doing one small thing for someone else can shift your mood: holding a door, sending a kind text, doing a small favor. It will not fix the day, but it may make the next hour easier. Keep a few small helping ideas on your list for hard days.

Today: On a hard day, do one small thing for someone.

Ask yourself: What small thing could I do for someone on a bad day?

What You Bring

Write down what you bring to the people around you: patience, humor, a skill, honesty, steadiness, experience. Some of those you may not have had a year ago. Read the list when you feel like you have nothing to offer.

Today: Ask one person what they think you bring, and add it to the list.

Ask yourself: What have I gained this year that I can offer others?

The Next Hard Season

Read the hard-date plans you made on Day 29 and Day 136. Next to each date that has passed, write what happened and which part of the plan held. Then mark the hard dates in the next three months. For each one, plan one useful thing you can do that day, such as cooking for a gathering, going with someone to a meeting, or calling someone who will be alone.

Today: Choose one useful thing to do on the next hard date.

Ask yourself: Which coming date worries me most?

The Long Run

Month 12 is the last month of this book. It is about the long run: anniversaries, holidays, and what to keep after the first year. Before it starts, write down the three habits from this year that have helped you most.

Today: Write down the three habits that helped you most this year.

Ask yourself: Which habit do I most want to keep for years?

Month 12. The Long Run

After the First Year

The first year of recovery is busy with firsts: the first holidays, the first payday, the first hard date. After it, the work changes. Daily crises tend to ease, and the risk becomes forgetting what helped. This month is about what to keep, how to handle the long stretch, and how to mark the milestones. Start by reading the three habits you wrote down yesterday.

Today: Read your three habits and write down how you will keep each one.

Ask yourself: What might I be tempted to drop after the first year?

Forty-Eight Weeks

Read your answers from Day 1, Day 90, and Day 180. Write down three ways your life is different now. Be specific: a person, a habit, a number, a place.

Today: Keep the three changes with the plans you have built this year.

Ask yourself: Which change would I most want someone on Day 1 to know about?

Keeping the Routine

After many months, routines such as the morning plan, the evening plan, the calls, and the meetings can start to feel unnecessary. They may be part of why things feel steady. You can adjust them as life changes. Be careful about dropping them all at once because things are going well. If you take medication for addiction, a good year is not by itself a reason to stop it. Talk with your prescriber before any change.

Today: Review your routine and decide what stays.

Ask yourself: Which part of my routine have I already let slip?

When It Feels Easy

There may come a time when recovery feels easy. That can also be when people drop their guard. Keep checking your warning signs. Keep someone who can tell you the truth about how you seem. Ask them every few months.

Today: Ask the person with your warning signs list how you seem lately.

Ask yourself: How would I know if I was getting careless?

Your Recovery Anniversary

Many people mark the anniversary of the day they stopped. Some celebrate at a meeting, where many groups give a coin, chip, or keytag. Others mark it quietly or with family. If yours is coming, decide how you want to mark it. The weeks before a first anniversary can stir up more than people expect, so keep your plans close. If you take a prescribed medication for addiction, taking it as directed does not reset your date. If you have had slips, groups that give coins or chips have their own rules about dates. You can also mark a personal date privately, such as the date you started this book or any date that means something to you.

Today: Decide how you will mark your anniversary.

Ask yourself: Who do I want with me on that day?

Holidays Near the End of the Book

A holiday in the next few weeks may be your first one stopped, even this late in the year. If you stopped before you started this book, it may be your second, and a second holiday can be harder because you expect it to be easy. Plan it the way you planned the others: where, who, what you will drink, how you will leave. If someone who will be there has asked you not to contact them, or a court order limits contact with them, do not go, and ask your attorney before you do anything that involves that person.

Today: Write down what you learned from the holidays earlier this year.

Ask yourself: Which holiday this year was hardest, and what will I do differently at the next one?

What Comes Next

After a year, many people start looking further ahead: school, a better job, moving, a relationship, children or grandchildren in your care, a parent who needs looking after. Big changes bring stress, so plan them with your recovery in mind. If you live in a sober house and are thinking of moving out, line up the next place, a regular meeting or group near it, and one person to call before you give notice. Talk over a big decision with someone further along before you make it.

Today: Write down one big change you are thinking about.

Ask yourself: How would that change affect my recovery?

New Relationships

Some people and some groups suggest waiting a while before starting a new romantic relationship. In twelve-step groups, a common suggestion is to wait through the first year. Whether you have waited or not, a new relationship brings strong feelings that can shake recovery. Be honest with a new partner about your recovery when the time is right. Keep your own supports going. If a new partner pushes you to drink or use, checks your phone, or wants you to drop your meetings or your friends, tell someone on your list.

Today: Write down what you want a new partner to understand about your recovery.

Ask yourself: Which of my supports could slip in a new relationship?

Forty-Nine Weeks

Go back to your one-year plan from Day 316. Next to each goal, write done, started, or not yet. For each goal marked not yet, write the reason in one line: time, money, fear, or a goal that was too big. Then write a plan for the next year. Keep what still matters, cut what does not, and give each goal a first step with a date on it.

Today: Write a plan for the next year.

Ask yourself: What do I want to be true a year from now?

Staying Connected

After a year, some people go to fewer meetings or groups, and some go to more. Some paths expect meetings for life. SMART Recovery expects that many people will come for months or years and then move on. Whichever way you go, keep at least one regular weekly connection with someone who knows about your recovery and will tell you the truth.

Today: Write down your regular weekly connection.

Ask yourself: Who do I talk to every week who knows about my recovery?

The People From Before

After a year, you may be tempted to reconnect with people you used with, thinking you are strong enough now. Some of those relationships can be rebuilt. Some will pull you back. Before reconnecting, talk it over with someone you trust, and meet in a safe place with your own way home.

Today: Write down any old friend you are thinking of reconnecting with.

Ask yourself: Would this person support my recovery or test it?

What You Are Grateful For

Write down ten things you are grateful for that you did not have a year ago. They can be small: a clean kitchen, a full night's sleep, a phone that is not shut off, a person who answers.

Today: Put the list where you will find it on a hard day.

Ask yourself: Which of these did I think I would never have?

Becoming the Person Further Along

You are now further along than many people. Someone newer may look to you the way you looked to others. You can be the person who answers the phone at eleven at night, if you choose. If someone asks you to be their sponsor or mentor, talk it over first with your own sponsor, mentor, or counselor. Many twelve-step groups suggest that you finish working the steps yourself before you sponsor anyone. Keep to your own experience, and send people to professional help when they need it.

Today: Let one newer person know they can call you.

Ask yourself: What do I want to pass on to someone newer?

When Life Tests You

Life will keep bringing hard things: losses, money problems, illness, conflict. Your recovery does not protect you from them. It gives you tools to get through them without using. When a hard thing comes, go back to your plans from this year and use them.

Today: Put your craving plan, slip plan, and people list in one place.

Ask yourself: What would I do first if a big crisis came tomorrow?

A Yearly Checkup

Make the yearly checkup a habit, along with the dentist and the eye doctor. Keep your health page from Day 292 up to date. Tell every new doctor about your recovery and any medicine for addiction you take. Book next year's visit before you leave the office, and write the date on your calendar.

Today: Put next year's checkups on the calendar.

Ask yourself: Is my health page up to date?

Fifty Weeks

Look over the last two weeks. Write down what you want to keep from this book: a page you will reread, a plan, a habit, a question.

Today: Mark the pages of this book you want to come back to.

Ask yourself: Which page of this book helped most?

A Longer Money Plan

After a year, money may be steadier. Think about the longer run: an emergency fund, paying off debt, saving for something you want. Book 10 in this library, Money in Early Recovery, has pages for planning ahead.

Today: Write down one money goal for the next year.

Ask yourself: What would more money security change for me?

The Next Step at Work

Look at your work and write down the next step you want: a skill, a certification, a conversation with your boss, a new job search. Plan it with your recovery in mind.

Today: Write down your next step at work.

Ask yourself: What work would I like to be doing in five years?

Forgiving Yourself

Many people in recovery find it easier to forgive others than to forgive themselves. Forgiving yourself does not mean saying the past did not matter. It means you stop punishing yourself for it while you keep repairing what you can. If what you blame yourself for was done to you, such as abuse, it was never yours to forgive. A counselor can help you set that blame down. Talk this over with a counselor, someone further along, or a member of the clergy if it is hard. If punishing yourself has ever meant hurting yourself, tell your counselor, and call or text 988 if those thoughts come back.

Today: Write down one thing you are ready to stop punishing yourself for.

Ask yourself: What would forgiving myself make possible?

Thanking Them Again

Look at your list from Day 211 of people still in your life. Pick one and think of something specific they did for you this year.

Today: Thank one person again for something specific from this year.

Ask yourself: Who stayed with me this year that I have not thanked?

What Gives Your Life Meaning

Recovery can open room for meaning: faith, family, work, service, creativity, nature. Some people come back to a faith they grew up with, some find a new one, and some find meaning without one. Write down what gives your life meaning now, and number the items in order of importance. Then ask whether drinking or using ever moved you toward the top three. SMART Recovery has a tool like this called Define Your Values.

Today: Pick one thing on the list and put an hour of it on this week's calendar.

Ask yourself: Where do I feel most like myself?

What Is Still Hard

Some things are still hard after a year: some relationships stay broken, some debts remain, some health problems stay. Write down what is still hard. Then write down who can help with each, and what you can do this month.

Today: Do one thing this month about the hardest item on the list.

Ask yourself: What is still hard that I need to accept for now?

Fifty-One Weeks

Read your plan for the next year from Day 343. Add anything you have thought of since. Share it with one person you trust, and ask them to check in with you about it in three months.

Today: Share your plan for next year with one person.

Ask yourself: Who will check in with me about my plan?

The Place You Live, a Year Later

Look at your home with your recovery in mind, and make one improvement: a clean corner, a shelf for this book and your papers, a chair where you write in the morning.

Today: Make one improvement to your home.

Ask yourself: What would make my home feel more like mine?

If This Book Ends on a Slip

If this year included slips or a hard stretch, finishing this book is still worth something. You kept reading. You kept writing. You can start the book again from Day 1, or pick up at the month you need. If this stretch has you thinking about hurting yourself, call or text 988 today.

Today: Decide whether you will start the book again or pick a month to reread.

Ask yourself: What do I want the next year to look like?

A Letter to Someone on Day 1

Write a short letter to someone who is on their first day: what to expect, what helped, what you wish you had known. You do not have to give it to anyone. If you know someone who is starting, you can.

Today: Write a letter to someone on their first day.

Ask yourself: What do I most wish someone had told me?

Keeping What You Wrote

This book now holds a year of your answers. Keep it somewhere private and safe. Some people reread a month when they need it. Some start a new copy and compare.

Today: Put this book somewhere safe where you can find it.

Ask yourself: When would I want to reread this book?

The Whole Year

Read your answers from the first Look Back, on Day 7. Compare those answers with this week's. Write down the biggest change between the person who wrote Day 7 and the person writing now.

Today: Tell one person the biggest change.

Ask yourself: What surprised me most this year?

Next Year's Calendar

Mark next year's calendar now: holidays, anniversaries, hard dates, and your recovery anniversary. For each, write one person and one plan.

Today: Mark next year's hard dates.

Ask yourself: Which date next year do I want to plan most carefully?

Fifty-Two Weeks

This is the last Look Back. Read your plans: the people list, the craving plan, the slip plan, the health page, the plan for next year. Put them all in one place, with this book.

Today: Put all your plans in one place.

Ask yourself: Which tool will I use most next year?

One Year of Readings

This is the last reading. Whatever your count is today, you read this book through, one day at a time, and you wrote a year of answers. The numbers at the front of this book still work: 911 in danger, 988 in crisis, and 1-800-662-4357 to find help. Tell one person you finished it. Then decide what tomorrow looks like: start again from Day 1, reread a month, or keep going with the plans you built.

Today: Tell one person you finished this book, and plan tomorrow.

Ask yourself: What will I do tomorrow morning?

People and Resources

Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number
Name	Number

Crisis: call or text 988
988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, 24/7. Chat at 988lifeline.org.

Emergency: 911

Treatment referrals: 1-800-662-4357
SAMHSA National Helpline, free and confidential, 24/7, English and Spanish. Text your ZIP code to 435748 or search FindTreatment.gov.

Free Support Groups

These groups are free to attend. Most meet in person and online. Try more than one until you find a room that fits.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) aa.org
12-step groups for people with a drinking problem.

Narcotics Anonymous (NA) na.org
12-step groups for recovery from any drug.

SMART Recovery smartrecovery.org
Skills-based groups with no religious content, for any addiction.

LifeRing Secular Recovery lifering.org
Secular peer support, in person, online, and by email.

Recovery Dharma recoverydharma.org
Peer-led groups based on Buddhist practices.

Celebrate Recovery celebraterecovery.com
Christ-centered 12-step groups, usually hosted by churches.

Women for Sobriety womenforsobriety.org
Support groups for women.

For family and friends al-anon.org
Al-Anon, Nar-Anon, and SMART Recovery Family & Friends.

Online Meetings

Online meetings run at every hour of the day and night. You can use a first name only and keep your camera off. Many also have a phone number you can dial in to with no internet at all.

In The Rooms intherooms.com
Free live video meetings every week for many recovery paths, 12-step and others. A free account with a username is all you need.

AA Online Intergroup aa-intergroup.org
AA meetings by video, phone, chat, and email, around the clock.

Meeting Guide app aa.org
AA's free app lists in-person, online, and phone meetings.

Virtual NA virtual-na.org
Narcotics Anonymous meetings online and by phone.

SMART Recovery Online smartrecovery.org
Online meetings, chat, and message boards.

LifeRing Online lifering.org
Video meetings, chat, forums, and email groups.

Some recovery websites show phone numbers that connect to treatment centers selling their services. For free, neutral referrals, call the SAMHSA National Helpline:

1-800-662-4357

Alder Creek Editions, LLC is not connected to any group or website listed in this book. Websites change. If one stops working, the SAMHSA helpline can point you to current options.

About the Authors

Stephen Deason has been in Recovery for more than eleven years and still begins and ends each day with meditation and gratitude. He writes The Mile Marker Library for people getting into recovery on their own, including people who cannot attend or afford a treatment program. He writes as a peer, from his own experience, and is not a physician, counselor, lawyer, or financial adviser.

He has spent more than thirty years building teams and companies in healthcare and technology, holds graduate degrees in business and accounting, and writes about recovery, economics, business, and social enterprise. You can find more of his work at aldercreekeditions.com and stephendeason.com.

Melissa Deason is also in long-term recovery, is a CPS-AD CARES Certified Peer Support Specialist for Addictive Disease, has been an attorney, and now spends her days wrangling tiny humans and working with women entering Recovery. She is Stephen's wife and the co-author of this book.



Also by Stephen Deason

The Paid Last Series

Volume One: *Residual Claimants: How to Think Like and Become a Business Owner*
Where it all begins. How the person paid last reasons about people, systems, and money, taught in order: seeing and supervising the work, making judgment hold through other people, and finally reasoning from the owner's side of the ownership line.

Companion: *The Realities of Ownership: A Handbook for Owners and the People They Develop*
The seventy-nine Realities from Volume One, set out on their own for the owner's desk, followed by the harsh truths of the owner's seat and what owning a company does to a life.

Volume Two: *The Owner's Arithmetic: Finance, Costing, and Valuation for the Owner-Operator* (forthcoming)

Volume Three: *Capital and Governance: Law, Tax, Outside Money, and Counterparties* (forthcoming)

The Residual Claimant Series

Four books on developing people for the owner's seat, one for each level of the company: *Depth of Field*, for first-time supervisors and managers; *Parallax*, for mid-level managers; *Latent Image*, for executives and owners; and *Refraction*, the theory underneath all three. (forthcoming)

Business and Ownership

Valued: How Purpose Driven Businesses Can Conquer Addiction and Marginalization in America

Complaints Log Book: Organize Concerns, Ensure Accountability, and Improve Service

Economics

Somebody Always Pays: Plain Words Economics for People Who Do Real Work

Laureates for Owners (forthcoming)

The Operational Reliability Series

Book I: *The Weakest Link: A Story About the Systems We Never See*

A family learns, one ordinary handoff at a time, that competence at every individual step is not the same thing as safety across the whole arc of a recovery.

Book II: *The Invisible Architecture: A Story About Senior Care as a System*

A shorter, quieter story, picking up where Book I leaves off. Frank and Elaine's turn, with the system itself doing more of the work and the emotion doing less.

Book III: *The Space Between: Institutional Architecture and Coordination Costs* (forthcoming)

Companion: *The Family Integrator's Handbook: Worksheets for Families Coordinating Care*

The Sitting Room Series

1. *When More Help Is Needed: A Guide for You and Your Family*
2. *Who to Contact: Free Help for Older Adults and Families*
3. *Emergency Information Sheet* (free download)

4. *Before It's Urgent: A Workbook for Papers, Decisions, and Conversations*
5. *Things I Want You to Know: A Journal of Stories, Wishes, and Words for Your Family*
6. *While You Can Still Decide: After a Diagnosis of Memory Loss*
7. *Arranging Care at Home: A Workbook for Arranging Care in the Home*
8. *Care Partner's Log: A Daily Record for the Person Giving Care*
9. *Grieving Someone Who Is Still Here: When Someone You Love Has Progressive Memory Loss*
10. *Visit Journal: A Shared Record for Everyone Who Visits*
11. *Choosing a Place to Live: A Workbook for Comparing Senior Living and Care*
12. *The Move and the First Months: For Families and the Person Moving*
13. *Before the Last Weeks: When Treatment Stops Working, for You and Your Family* (forthcoming)
14. *After a Death: The First Year, for You and the People Around You* (forthcoming)
15. *First-Year Grief Journal: Undated Pages for the Year After a Death*
16. *Worksheet Collection: Every Form in the Sitting Room Series* (forthcoming)

The Mile Marker Library

1. *Don't Panic: The First Hours After You Stop: What to Do When You Stop Drinking or Using*
2. *Wallet Crisis Card* (free download)
3. *Free Help Directory: Meetings, Helplines, and Low-Cost Care*
4. *Medications for Addiction, Explained: What They Are, How to Ask, and How to Pay*, with Melissa Deason
5. *Tools You Can Use on Your Own: A Guide to Self-Directed Recovery*, with Melissa Deason
6. *Cravings and Hard Hours Workbook: A Companion to Tools You Can Use on Your Own*, with Melissa Deason

7. *One Day at a Time, Written Down: A 90-Day Gratitude Journal for Adults in Recovery*, with Melissa Deason. Also in a Christian edition: *A 90-Day Gratitude Journal for Christians in Recovery*
9. *Worksheet Library* (forthcoming)
10. *Money in Early Recovery: Budgets, Debts, Benefits, and Credit*
11. *Work and Recovery: Finding a Job, Keeping It, and What to Tell Employers*
12. *Finding a Safe Place to Live: Sober Housing and What to Check Before You Move In*
13. *Court, Probation, and Recovery: What to Ask a Lawyer and What Records to Keep* (forthcoming)
14. *For Families: When Someone You Love Can't Get to Treatment*
15. *Group Facilitator Guide: Running Free Peer Support Groups with These Books*, with Ben Wilson
16. *Employer Guide* (forthcoming)

For Children

The Ladybug and the Butterfly, by Laine & Daddy

Free at aldercreekeditions.com

Care Complaints Log Book (family edition)

Care Coordination Grid

Next of Kin Box

Operational Reliability Resources

Companion Worksheet Library, for *The Weakest Link* and *The Invisible Architecture*

Contributor

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