MY REFLECTIVE COLLECTIVE

COMING BACK TO YOURSELF

A Whole-Life Recovery, Self-Worth & Growth Workbook

For trauma, grief, anxiety, depression, burnout, harmful patterns, difficult relationships, and major life change.

Not another workbook asking you to fix yourself. A place to understand what you carry, practice what truly helps, and build a life you want to stay present for.

Created with care by Michelle Elder, MSW, LMHC

myreflectivecollective.com

Progress does not require perfection. It requires the next honest, caring choice.

Immediate danger or medical emergency: call 911. In the U.S., call or text 988 for crisis support. Educational only - not medical care or treatment.

Created with Care by Michelle Elder, MSW, LMHC

Michelle Elder, MSW, LMHC created this workbook for anyone whose life has felt heavy, confusing, lonely, or harder than other people seem to understand. You are not weak and you are not behind. Many coping patterns began as ways to survive pain, fear, pressure, loss, or disconnection. You can appreciate what helped you survive while learning choices that care for you better now.

You do not need to complete every page, tell your whole story, feel motivated every day, or heal on anyone else's timeline. Starting again counts. Asking for help counts. Resting with intention counts. One honest answer and one safer choice can be meaningful progress.

The Purpose of This Workbook

This workbook is here to help you understand your patterns without reducing you to them; build practical coping skills; reframe painful thoughts without pretending everything is fine; create healthier habits through repetition; rebuild self-worth and self-trust; and connect with free support when carrying everything alone is too much. It is a place to practice - not a test you can fail.

Michelle Elder's Tips for Getting the Most From This Workbook

Build one healthy habit at a time.	Choose a small action you can repeat. Attach it to a reliable cue such as breakfast, coming home, or making evening tea.
Protect 20-30 minutes for recovery homework.	Aim for at least five days each week. On a hard day, complete the minimum: one honest sentence, one coping action, and one supportive contact.
Practice before the crisis.	Coping tools become easier to reach under stress when your body and brain have rehearsed them during calmer moments.
Reframe without pretending.	A helpful reframe is honest and believable: name what hurts, widen the view, and choose the next caring action.
Use support early.	Do not wait until distress reaches 10/10. Free remote groups and helplines are included near the end.
Track evidence, not perfection.	Count kept promises, honest conversations, boundaries, rest, and returning after a missed day.
Adapt every exercise.	Skip, shorten, move, keep your eyes open, or ask for help. A useful practice increases choice and safety.
Celebrate healthy repetition.	New habits grow through cues, manageable actions, and immediate acknowledgment: I showed up for myself today.

This workbook is educational and is not a replacement for medical care, therapy, detoxification, or emergency services.

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Tip: circle sections you want to revisit. You do not have to complete the workbook in order.

Before You Begin

This workbook supports recovery skills; it does not diagnose, detox, or replace medical or behavioral health care.

Important medical safety

Alcohol and benzodiazepine withdrawal can be life-threatening. Do not try to manage severe withdrawal alone. Seek urgent medical care for seizures, confusion, hallucinations, chest pain, severe vomiting, fainting, trouble breathing, or rapidly worsening symptoms. If you are unsure whether stopping suddenly is safe, call a medical professional or 911.

How to use this workbook

Circle what fits. Cross out what does not. Try one skill at a time. Rate whether it helped even 1 percent. Recovery is not a test of willpower; it is a process of building support, safety, flexibility, and repeated practice.

A lapse is information, not a verdict. If substance use occurs, return to safety: stop driving, avoid mixing substances, seek medical help when needed, contact support, and reduce access to more substances. Shame isolates; honest connection protects.

What would make this workbook feel useful and respectful to me?

What do I want recovery to make possible - not just remove?

My right to choose

You may skip any exercise, keep your eyes open during mindfulness, shorten a practice, move your body, or ask for support. A coping skill should increase safety, not force you to endure distress.

Recovery Can Mean More Than Substances

Use the parts that fit. Your recovery may be about sobriety, mental health, trauma, grief, relationships, habits, identity, or learning how to live after a hard chapter.

Substance recovery Reducing or stopping alcohol or other drug use, strengthening safety, support, and relapse-prevention skills.	**Emotional recovery** Learning to experience anxiety, depression, anger, shame, or numbness without abandoning yourself.
Trauma recovery Building present-day safety, choice, boundaries, regulation, and connection at a pace that respects your nervous system.	**Grief and loss** Making room for love, pain, change, and meaning without demanding a deadline for healing.
Burnout and survival mode Restoring capacity, daily structure, pleasure, limits, and a life that is not organized only around emergencies.	**Unhealthy or compulsive patterns** Interrupting behaviors that bring short-term relief and long-term cost, while meeting the underlying need more safely.
Relationship recovery Rebuilding boundaries, discernment, voice, trust, and connection after harm, instability, or self-abandonment.	**Identity and life transition** Discovering who you are after change, caregiving, illness, separation, loss, or a role that no longer fits.

What am I recovering from, moving through, or learning to live differently with?

What would being more alive - not merely less distressed - look like?

A flexible word

Where this workbook says 'urge,' you may substitute panic, shutdown, self-criticism, isolation, people-pleasing, avoidance, returning to an unsafe relationship, or another pattern you are changing.

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Today's Recovery Check-In

Use this page daily, during a craving, or before making a high-risk decision.

Body	Sleep: ___/10 Hunger: ___/10 Pain/discomfort: ___/10 Energy: ___/10
Emotions	Anxiety: ___/10 Sadness: ___/10 Anger: ___/10 Shame: ___/10 Hope: ___/10
Recovery	Craving: ___/10 Access to substances: Low / Medium / High Isolation: ___/10
Support	Last honest contact: _____ Next support contact/meeting: _____

What happened - facts only, without judging myself?

What am I feeling, and where do I notice it in my body?

What do I need most: safety, food, sleep, movement, comfort, truth, connection, medical care, or something else?

What is the next kind and recovery-supporting action I can take within 10 minutes?

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GROUNDING: RETURN TO RIGHT NOW

Try what fits your body, beliefs, access, and stage of recovery. One effective skill is better than ten unused ideas.

1. Name five things Name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, and 1 you taste.	**2. Orient to safety** Slowly turn your head and name three signs that you are in the present, not the past.
3. Feet and floor Press both feet down for 10 seconds, release, and notice the support beneath you.	**4. Cold sensation** Hold a cool washcloth or wrapped ice pack briefly; avoid extreme cold or skin injury.
5. Describe one object Study color, texture, shape, weight, and temperature as if explaining it to someone.	**6. Say the facts** State your name, date, location, and the next safe action out loud.
7. Count by threes Count backward from 60 by threes to give the mind a neutral task.	**8. Use a scent anchor** Smell coffee, soap, citrus, or another safe scent and name the memory or feeling it brings.
9. Trace and breathe Trace one hand with a finger; breathe in going up and out going down, if breath focus feels safe.	**10. Carry a grounding card** Write: 'An urge rises, peaks, and passes. I can ask for help.' Keep it in your wallet.

The two skills I will test this week - and when I will use them

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BODY & NERVOUS-SYSTEM CARE

Try what fits your body, beliefs, access, and stage of recovery. One effective skill is better than ten unused ideas.

11. Drink water Sip a full glass slowly; dehydration can intensify fatigue, headache, and irritability.	**12. Eat a balanced snack** Pair protein and carbohydrate, such as yogurt and fruit or crackers and nut butter.
13. Take a brisk walk Walk 5-15 minutes in a safe public area or with a supportive person.	**14. Stretch gently** Roll shoulders, unclench hands, and stretch without pushing into pain.
15. Shake out tension Gently shake hands and legs for 30 seconds, then pause and notice the change.	**16. Take a warm shower** Use comfortable water temperature and focus on the physical sensations.
17. Rest without disappearing Set a 20-minute rest timer, then check in with support rather than isolating all day.	**18. Use paced exhalation** Try an easy inhale and a slightly longer exhale for one minute; stop if dizzy or activated.
19. Reduce stimulation Dim lights, silence notifications, and choose one task when your system feels overloaded.	**20. Get medical support** Treat pain, sleep problems, withdrawal symptoms, and medication questions with qualified care.

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URGE SURFING & DELAY

Try what fits your body, beliefs, access, and stage of recovery. One effective skill is better than ten unused ideas.

21. Set a 10-minute timer Delay action while doing one safe task; reset the timer as needed.	**22. Chart the wave** Rate the urge every two minutes and watch it change rather than assuming it will stay fixed.
23. Play the whole tape Picture the likely next hour, next morning, and recovery cost - then picture choosing support instead.	**24. Change locations** Move away from the cue and toward a public, staffed, or recovery-safe setting.
25. Remove easy access Avoid cash, delivery apps, risky routes, and contacts when vulnerability is high.	**26. Use a competing action** Chew gum, shower, exercise, cook, draw, or clean while the urge moves through.
27. Name what the urge promises Write the promised relief, then list the likely cost and a safer way to meet the real need.	**28. Ride with support** Stay on the phone or in a virtual meeting until intensity drops.
29. Choose one hour Commit to sobriety for this hour, then renew instead of demanding certainty forever.	**30. Reward the choice** After the urge passes, mark the win and choose a healthy reward to reinforce recovery.

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EMOTION REGULATION

Try what fits your body, beliefs, access, and stage of recovery. One effective skill is better than ten unused ideas.

31. Name the emotion precisely Try disappointed, rejected, ashamed, restless, lonely, frightened, or grief-struck instead of 'bad.'	**32. Validate before solving** Say: 'This feeling makes sense because ___. I can care for it without using.'
33. Check HALT+ Ask whether you are hungry, angry/anxious, lonely, tired, in pain, or bored.	**34. Use opposite action** When depression says isolate, take one small connecting action; when anger says attack, pause and speak later.
35. Write an unsent letter Say everything on paper, wait, then decide what belongs in a safe conversation.	**36. Use music intentionally** Choose one song to match the feeling and one to guide your nervous system toward steadiness.
37. Contain the worry Schedule a 15-minute worry period; write concerns down and return at the set time.	**38. Let tears be information** Cry safely without treating emotion as failure; follow with hydration and connection.
39. Reduce the demand Change 'fix everything' into the smallest workable step for today.	**40. Ask for co-regulation** Sit with a trusted person, pet, support group, or calm voice rather than managing alone.

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THOUGHT FLEXIBILITY

Try what fits your body, beliefs, access, and stage of recovery. One effective skill is better than ten unused ideas.

41. Fact versus story Divide a page: observable facts on the left, interpretations on the right.	**42. Use 'and' language** Replace either/or thinking with: 'This is painful, and I can still choose my next action.'
43. Find the exception Ask when the feared pattern was even slightly less true and what helped.	**44. Use a compassionate witness** Write what a steady, honest person would say about the situation.
45. Shrink the timeline Replace 'always' and 'never' with 'right now' or 'this week.'	**46. Test the prediction** Ask what evidence supports it, what evidence does not, and what is still unknown.
47. Separate worth from behavior Say: 'I am responsible for my choices; my mistakes do not erase my human worth.'	**48. Choose workable over perfect** Ask which option improves safety or recovery by 5 percent.
49. Rename the setback Call it data, a warning, or a practice opportunity - not proof of failure.	**50. Borrow hope** If you cannot feel hope, act from another person's belief in your capacity to recover.

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CONNECTION & SUPPORT

Try what fits your body, beliefs, access, and stage of recovery. One effective skill is better than ten unused ideas.

51. Send a direct text Try: 'I do not need fixing. Could you listen for 10 minutes?'	**52. Attend a recovery meeting** Try more than one style; fit and safety matter.
53. Call before the crisis Make contact when the urge is 3/10, not only when it reaches 9/10.	**54. Use a buddy plan** Arrange daily check-ins with clear times and what to do if one person goes quiet.
55. Ask for practical help Request a ride, meal, child care, meeting company, or help removing substances.	**56. Tell one true sentence** Start with the smallest honest statement you can tolerate.
57. Spend time in safe public space Use a library, cafe, community center, or park to reduce isolation.	**58. Support someone appropriately** Offer encouragement without neglecting your own needs or taking responsibility for their recovery.
59. Build professional support Consider a counselor, physician, recovery coach, peer specialist, or treatment program.	**60. Practice receiving** When someone helps, try saying 'thank you' without minimizing your need or worth.

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ENVIRONMENT & BOUNDARIES

Try what fits your body, beliefs, access, and stage of recovery. One effective skill is better than ten unused ideas.

61. Create a substance-free zone Remove items and cues from your room, car, bag, and digital spaces.	**62. Change the route** Avoid familiar purchase locations and high-risk stops.
63. Block or mute risky contacts Protect recovery without debating your boundary in a vulnerable moment.	**64. Prepare an exit line** Use: 'I am leaving now. This environment does not support my health.'
65. Bring your own drink At events, keep a nonalcoholic drink in hand and plan transportation home.	**66. Set a time limit** Attend briefly with support instead of testing endurance.
67. Protect money access Use spending limits, accountability, or temporary help managing funds when needed.	**68. Curate social media** Unfollow content that glamorizes use; follow recovery, wellness, art, and humor.
69. Create a calm corner Keep water, a blanket, grounding objects, notes, and support numbers in one place.	**70. Leave unsafe conflict** Boundaries are not punishment; move to safety and return only when regulated.

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ROUTINE & BASIC NEEDS

Try what fits your body, beliefs, access, and stage of recovery. One effective skill is better than ten unused ideas.

71. Use a morning anchor Wake, drink water, take medication as prescribed, eat, and contact support.	**72. Plan the risky hours** Schedule structure for the times you most often crave or isolate.
73. Prepare easy meals Keep simple nourishing foods available for low-energy days.	**74. Use a three-task list** Choose one body task, one recovery task, and one life task.
75. Protect sleep timing Keep wake time consistent and reduce caffeine late in the day.	**76. Take prescribed medication** Use only as directed and discuss cravings, side effects, or misuse risk with the prescriber.
77. Pair habits After brushing teeth, read your recovery card; after lunch, text support.	**78. Reset the room** Spend five minutes clearing one surface to reduce visual stress.
79. Plan transportation Know how you will leave risky settings before you arrive.	**80. End the day with evidence** Record one choice that protected recovery, however small.

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MEANING, JOY & CREATIVITY

Try what fits your body, beliefs, access, and stage of recovery. One effective skill is better than ten unused ideas.

81. Make a sober playlist Choose songs that support energy, grief, courage, or calm without romanticizing use.	**82. Create without grading** Draw, paint, collage, write, dance, or make music for process rather than performance.
83. Go outside Notice weather, sky, trees, or street sounds for five present-moment minutes.	**84. Practice gratitude with truth** Name one hard thing and one thing that supported you; both can be real.
85. Help in a bounded way Volunteer for a specific task and time that does not drain your recovery.	**86. Reconnect with curiosity** Learn one small thing through a library book, class, tutorial, or museum.
87. Make a comfort ritual Tea, music, lotion, clean sheets, prayer, or candlelight can signal safe transition.	**88. Use humor** Watch or share something genuinely funny that does not shame you or others.
89. Mark sober milestones Celebrate days, honest conversations, appointments, and repaired routines.	**90. Choose a spiritual practice** Prayer, meditation, nature, service, music, or reflection can support meaning; no belief is required.

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LONGER-TERM RECOVERY BUILDING

Try what fits your body, beliefs, access, and stage of recovery. One effective skill is better than ten unused ideas.

91. Create a written recovery plan List triggers, warning signs, coping steps, people, meetings, and emergency options.	**92. Review what worked** Each week identify which actions reduced risk and repeat them deliberately.
93. Treat co-occurring needs Seek care for trauma, depression, anxiety, pain, sleep, or other concerns alongside recovery.	**94. Practice refusal skills** Rehearse: 'No thanks, I do not use,' and leave without overexplaining.
95. Build recovery capital Strengthen housing, health, relationships, work, purpose, community, and safe recreation.	**96. Make amends with guidance** Repair harm when safe and appropriate; do not use amends to demand access or forgiveness.
97. Learn relapse warning signs Track secrecy, romanticizing use, skipping support, sleep disruption, and returning to risky places.	**98. Create a lapse response plan** Plan medical safety, honest disclosure, support, and learning before a lapse happens.
99. Review medications safely Tell prescribers about recovery goals; never stop prescribed medicine abruptly without advice.	**100. Keep expanding identity** Develop roles beyond recovery: friend, learner, parent, artist, neighbor, worker, or community member.

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Build My Personal Coping Menu

Choose options that are realistic when your energy and concentration are low.

When the urge is 1-3/10

When the urge is 4-6/10

When the urge is 7-10/10

When I am lonely

When I am angry or ashamed

When I cannot sleep

Make the plan easier to use

Store this page where you can reach it. Add phone numbers now. A plan that depends on memory during distress is harder to follow.

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Trigger, Warning Sign & Protection Map

A trigger is not a failure. It is information that can guide earlier care.

Trigger or situation	Early warning signs	Protective response

The earliest sign that I am moving away from recovery is...

The person who has permission to tell me the truth is...

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Rebuilding Self-Worth

Worth is inherent. Self-trust grows through repeated, caring action - not punishment or perfection.

Worth is not a reward You do not have to become flawless, productive, forgiven, or admired before you deserve safety and care.	**Responsibility without self-erasure** You can name harm, make changes, and repair what is appropriate without reducing your entire identity to your worst moment.
Self-trust is behavioral Every kept promise - drinking water, making a call, telling the truth, leaving a risky place - becomes evidence that you can care for yourself.	**Boundaries protect dignity** A boundary says what you will do to protect wellbeing. It is not a demand that another person agree with your worth.
Belonging needs discernment Choose people who support honesty, accountability, consent, and recovery - not people who require you to abandon yourself.	**Growth can be quiet** Showing up, resting, trying again, and accepting help may be the bravest work you do today.

Five qualities I have that are not about achievement or approval

Three promises small enough that I can keep them this week

A boundary that protects my dignity and recovery

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Who I Am Beyond the Hard Chapter

Recovery is part of your story. It does not have to become the whole definition of you.

I feel most like myself when...

People who truly know me might describe my strengths as...

Roles I value or want to grow into...

Something I survived or learned that shows courage...

Values I want my choices to express...

A future version of me would thank me for...

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Shame to Responsible Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is not letting yourself off the hook. It helps you stay present enough to learn and repair.

Shame statement	Responsible reframe
I am a failure.	I made choices with real consequences. I can take the next responsible step.
I ruined everything.	Some things were harmed. I can identify what is repairable and stop adding new harm.
I should be over this.	Recovery has no moral deadline. What support does this moment require?
If people knew, nobody would care.	Some people may not understand. Safe people and recovery communities can still meet me with dignity.
Needing help makes me weak.	Using support is a recovery skill and a sign that I am protecting my life.
A craving means I secretly want to fail.	A craving is a learned body-brain response. I can notice it and choose a different action.
I lost time, so there is no point.	I cannot reclaim yesterday, but today still contains choices, connection, and meaning.
I do not deserve to feel good.	Pain is not repayment. Responsible living and repair are more useful than endless punishment.

A shame statement I am ready to rewrite

A responsible next action that protects my recovery

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Reframing Practice 1

A balanced thought should be believable, compassionate, and connected to action - not artificially cheerful.

Automatic thought	Balanced reframe	Next action
I cannot handle this feeling.	This feeling is intense, not permanent. I can handle the next two minutes with support.	Ground, delay, contact.
One drink/use will not matter.	My brain is minimizing risk. The first choice changes the choices that follow.	Leave and call.
Everyone is judging me.	I cannot know every mind. I can focus on acting according to my values.	Choose one safe person.
I already messed up today.	The next decision still matters. I can interrupt the pattern now.	Return to safety.
I have to do this alone.	Privacy and isolation are different. Support makes recovery more durable.	Send one honest text.
Nothing is changing.	Slow change is hard to feel. I will look for concrete evidence over a longer timeline.	Review weekly wins.
I need relief right now.	I need relief, and substances are not the only path to it.	Choose two safer comforts.
If I say no, they will reject me.	Anyone who requires me to risk recovery is not offering safe belonging.	Use exit line.
I am behind everyone.	Recovery is not a race. My next honest step belongs to me.	Name today's step.
I cannot trust myself.	Trust can be rebuilt through small promises I keep repeatedly.	Keep one promise.

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Reframing Practice 2

A balanced thought should be believable, compassionate, and connected to action - not artificially cheerful.

Automatic thought	Balanced reframe	Next action
I must feel motivated first.	Action can come before motivation. Tiny action may create momentum.	Do five minutes.
Rest is laziness.	Rest can be maintenance when it is intentional and paired with connection.	Rest with a timer.
My thoughts are facts.	Thoughts are mental events. I can examine them before acting.	Fact/story list.
I need everyone to forgive me.	I can repair responsibly; forgiveness and access belong to other people.	Respect boundaries.
If I cannot do it perfectly, why try?	A 5 percent safer choice still changes the direction of my day.	Choose workable.
This urge will keep growing.	Urges usually shift like waves. I can track it instead of predicting forever.	Rate every 2 minutes.
My past decides my future.	My past influences me, but present choices and support create new evidence.	Make one value-based choice.
I am too much for people.	My needs may require the right people and clear requests; they do not make me unworthy.	Ask specifically.
I should hide until I am better.	Safe connection is part of getting better.	Attend while imperfect.
I will never enjoy life sober.	My reward system and routines need time and new experiences. Enjoyment can be rebuilt.	Plan one sober pleasure.

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Write My Own Balanced Reframes

Do not argue with yourself. Acknowledge the pain, widen the view, and choose the next useful action.

Thought	Facts / missing information	Balanced reframe	Action

A believable formula

'It makes sense that I feel __ because __. The thought that __ is not the whole picture. What I know is __. The next recovery-supporting action is __.'

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Mindfulness Toolkit 1

Mindfulness means noticing with choice. Keep eyes open, move, shorten, or stop if a practice increases distress.

One-minute arrival Look around. Feel two points of contact. Name one sound. Ask: 'What is needed in the next minute?'	**Urge surfing** Locate the urge in the body. Describe pressure, heat, movement, or tightness. Rate it. Watch changes without feeding or fighting it. Re-rate after two minutes.
STOP Stop. Take a step back. Observe body, emotion, thought, and urge. Proceed with the action that best protects recovery.	**RAIN** Recognize what is present. Allow that it is here for now. Investigate gently: what does this need? Nurture with kind, firm care.
Leaves on a stream Imagine placing each thought on a leaf and watching it pass. If imagery is frustrating, write each thought and slide the paper aside.	**Mindful walking** Feel heel, sole, and toes. Notice pace, balance, air, color, and sound. Walk in a safe place; eyes stay open.

Practice I will try / duration / what I noticed

How I will adapt it so it feels safer or more accessible

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Mindfulness Toolkit 2

Mindfulness means noticing with choice. Keep eyes open, move, shorten, or stop if a practice increases distress.

Sound practice Listen for the farthest sound, nearest sound, and sound inside the body. Let sounds arrive without naming them good or bad.	**Compassionate hand** Place a hand where it feels supportive - or hold a blanket if touch is activating. Say: 'This is hard. I do not have to abandon myself.'
Three-minute breathing space Notice what is here. Gather attention around breath or another anchor. Expand awareness to the whole body and room.	**Mindful drink** Use water, tea, or coffee. Notice temperature, weight, smell, first sip, swallowing, and the pause before another sip.
Pendulation Move attention gently between a neutral/comfortable body area and a mildly tense area. Do not force attention into overwhelming sensations.	**Values pause** Before acting, ask: 'Which choice moves me one inch toward the person I want to be?'

Practice I will try / duration / what I noticed

How I will adapt it so it feels safer or more accessible

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Reflection: Present Awareness & Progress

Write a sentence, make a list, or discuss the question with a safe support person. You do not need a perfect answer.

Q1. What helped me get through the most difficult hour of this week?

Q2. What is one choice I made that protected my recovery?

Q3. Where did I notice even 1 percent more peace or steadiness?

Q4. What emotion have I been avoiding, and what might it be asking for?

Q5. What does my body need more consistently?

Q6. What is one trigger I understand better now?

Q7. When did I ask for help sooner than I used to?

Q8. What coping skill deserves another honest try?

Q9. What am I proud of that no one else may see?

Q10. What would make tomorrow 5 percent safer?

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Reflection: Self-Worth & Identity

Write a sentence, make a list, or discuss the question with a safe support person. You do not need a perfect answer.

Q11. Which qualities have helped me survive and begin again?

Q12. What does dignity mean in the way I speak to myself?

Q13. What small promise can I keep today to rebuild self-trust?

Q14. What label about myself am I ready to question?

Q15. Who am I when I am not performing for approval?

Q16. What do I value even when no one is watching?

Q17. What strength did I once call a flaw because others misunderstood it?

Q18. How can I hold myself accountable without humiliation?

Q19. What boundary would communicate that my life matters?

Q20. What evidence says I am capable of change?

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Reflection: Connection & Belonging

Write a sentence, make a list, or discuss the question with a safe support person. You do not need a perfect answer.

Q21. Who supports honesty rather than secrecy?

Q22. What kind of support is hardest for me to request?

Q23. What exact words could I use to ask for that support?

Q24. Which relationship feels calmer after contact, and which leaves me less safe?

Q25. Where could I build belonging that does not center substances?

Q26. How can I receive care without immediately trying to repay it?

Q27. What do I need from a sponsor, peer, counselor, or group?

Q28. What signs tell me a group is emotionally safe enough?

Q29. Who has earned the right to hear my vulnerable story?

Q30. How can I be supportive without abandoning my own recovery?

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Reflection: Accountability Without Shame

Write a sentence, make a list, or discuss the question with a safe support person. You do not need a perfect answer.

Q31. What harm is mine to acknowledge, and what shame is not mine to carry?

Q32. Is there a repair I can make without demanding forgiveness or access?

Q33. What would responsible action look like this week?

Q34. What consequence can I accept while still treating myself as human?

Q35. What did a setback teach me about timing, environment, or unmet needs?

Q36. What early warning sign will I respond to sooner next time?

Q37. How can I make honesty easier before fear takes over?

Q38. What would I say to someone I love in the same situation?

Q39. What am I willing to stop punishing myself for today?

Q40. What lesson can remain even if shame loosens its grip?

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Reflection: Hope, Joy & Future

Write a sentence, make a list, or discuss the question with a safe support person. You do not need a perfect answer.

Q41. What sober experience would I like to try for curiosity or joy?

Q42. What makes time pass in a nourishing way?

Q43. What did I enjoy before substances became central?

Q44. What is one beautiful, funny, or meaningful thing I noticed recently?

Q45. What part of my future feels worth protecting?

Q46. What role beyond recovery would I like to grow?

Q47. What can I create, learn, tend, or contribute?

Q48. How would I recognize a life that feels genuinely mine?

Q49. What will I celebrate at my next milestone?

Q50. If hope were a practice rather than a feeling, what would I do today?

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My Recovery Support & Safety Plan

Complete this before a crisis and share it with at least one trusted person.

My strongest reasons for protecting sobriety today

My early warning signs

People I can call - include numbers

Meetings, treatment, or safe places I can use

What others can do that genuinely helps

What does not help or makes things worse

How I will reduce access to substances, money, transportation, or risky contacts

If I cannot stay safe, I will call 911 / 988 or go to

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Seven-Day Skills Practice

The goal is not a perfect week. The goal is to notice what helps and build evidence.

Day	Risk / need	Skill I practiced	Helped 0-10	What I learned
Mon				
Tue				
Wed				
Thu				
Fri				
Sat				
Sun				

A pattern I noticed

One adjustment for next week

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Why New Habits Matter in Recovery

A habit is a repeated cue-action-reward loop. Repetition makes a safer response easier to access when stress narrows attention.

Small beats dramatic A 20-minute practice repeated most days usually builds more usable skill than one exhausting session followed by avoidance.	**Use a reliable cue** Attach recovery homework to something that already happens: after breakfast, after work, or before evening tea.
Make the action specific 'Work on recovery' is vague. 'Complete one prompt and text my support person' tells the brain how to begin.	**Lower the starting barrier** Keep the workbook, pen, meeting link, and headphones together. Begin with two minutes if 20 feels impossible.
Add an immediate reward Mark the tracker, play a favorite song, make tea, or acknowledge: 'I kept a promise to myself.'	**Repair, do not restart** A missed day does not erase learning. Notice the obstacle, adjust the plan, and return at the next available cue.

My 20-30 minute recovery homework

2-3 minutes: check in and rate urge/mood. 10 minutes: complete one worksheet or reflection. 5-10 minutes: practice one coping or mindfulness skill. 3-5 minutes: connect, schedule a meeting, or plan tomorrow. On a hard day, use the minimum version: one honest sentence, one coping action, one contact.

My usual cue, place, and time for recovery homework

My minimum version for low-energy days

A healthy reward that reinforces the habit

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My Weekly Recovery Plan

Schedule 20-30 minutes of recovery homework at least five days. Add support, rest, movement, and enjoyment so the week is sustainable.

Day	20-30 min homework	Support / meeting	Body care	Joy / meaning
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

This week's highest-risk time and my plan for it

The habit I am practicing - cue, action, reward

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Weekly Review & Reset

Review with curiosity. The purpose is to make next week easier, not to grade your worth.

How many 20-30 minute homework sessions did I complete? What helped me begin?

Which coping skill helped most, even slightly?

When were urges or emotions strongest? What happened beforehand?

Did I get enough connection, sleep, food, movement, and medical/clinical support?

What did I avoid or keep secret that needs safe attention?

What am I proud of? Be concrete.

One adjustment and one small promise for next week

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My 30-Day Recovery & Habit Plan

Choose one core habit. Practice it consistently enough to learn; change the plan when the environment, cue, or step is not working.

My 30-day focus: the habit I want to build and why it matters

My cue / exact action / immediate healthy reward

Week 1 - Make it visible Prepare materials, choose time and place, complete the minimum version, and notice obstacles without judgment.	**Week 2 - Make it repeatable** Aim for five 20-30 minute sessions. Keep the same cue when possible and ask for accountability.
Week 3 - Practice under stress Use the habit on one difficult day. Shorten it rather than skipping, and pair homework with live support.	**Week 4 - Make it yours** Review evidence, keep what works, remove what does not, celebrate progress, and choose the next 30-day focus.

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30-Day Habit Tracker

Mark the actions you practice. A missed box is information, not failure; return at the next cue.

Day	Homework	Skill	Connection	Day	Homework	Skill	Connection
1	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	16	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
2	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	17	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
3	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	18	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
4	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	19	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
5	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	20	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
6	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	21	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
7	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	22	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
8	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	23	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
9	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	24	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
10	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	25	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
11	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	26	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
12	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	27	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
13	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	28	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
14	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	29	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
15	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	30	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Mark Homework after 20-30 minutes (or your planned minimum), Skill after deliberate coping practice, and Connection after honest recovery-support contact.

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Monthly Review: Turn Practice Into Growth

The tracker measures actions, not human value. Use the results to improve the plan.

How many days did I complete recovery homework? What pattern do I notice?

Which time, place, cue, or person made follow-through easier?

What obstacle repeated, and how can I redesign around it?

What changes do I notice in cravings, mood, honesty, or self-trust?

What new evidence do I have that I can care for myself?

What support should I add, continue, or change?

My next 30-day focus and the smallest first step

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When Mental Health and Substance Use Overlap

Co-occurring disorders means that a mental health disorder and a substance use disorder are both present. Only a qualified professional can diagnose either one. You do not need a diagnosis to notice that anxiety, depression, trauma responses, sleep problems, grief, attention difficulties, mood changes, or other distress may interact with alcohol or drug use.

You are not "too complicated" for help

Using a substance to quiet pain, panic, memories, loneliness, sleeplessness, or emotional overload can make sense as an attempt to cope. That does not mean it is working safely now. It means the underlying need deserves attention along with the substance use - without shame and without making you choose which struggle is real.

How the cycle can reinforce itself

Distress or symptoms	Anxiety, low mood, trauma reminders, racing thoughts, numbness, insomnia, pain, shame, or disconnection.
Urge or substance use	A substance may promise fast relief, energy, sleep, confidence, escape, or belonging.
Short-term effect	The feeling may shift briefly, which teaches the brain to repeat the behavior.
Longer-term cost	Sleep, mood, medication effectiveness, relationships, health, safety, and self-trust may worsen - increasing distress again.
A new interruption	Earlier support, integrated care, safer regulation, medication review, peer connection, and practical changes can weaken the cycle.

SAMHSA recommends integrated care that addresses mental health and substance use together. Recovery can include therapy, medications, medical care, peer support, practical resources, and changes that match the person's goals and readiness.

Map My Personal Interaction Cycle

Describe patterns rather than blaming yourself. Look for places where support or a skill could interrupt the cycle earlier.

1. What happens before?

Situations, memories, conflict, pain, sleep loss, isolation, sensory overload, thoughts, body sensations, or symptoms.

2. What do I feel or need?

Name emotions and needs as precisely as possible.

3. What does the substance promise?

Relief, sleep, confidence, numbness, energy, connection, quiet, escape, or something else.

4. What happens right away?

Include both the relief and the immediate risks.

5. What happens later?

Mood, sleep, anxiety, health, money, relationships, responsibilities, safety, withdrawal, or shame.

6. Where can I interrupt the cycle?

Earlier contact, food, rest, medical care, grounding, leaving, a meeting, medication review, or reducing access.

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My Integrated Support Plan

Whole-person care means the people helping with mental health, substance use, physical health, medications, and daily life communicate when possible and with your consent.

What I want help with	Include symptoms, substance use, sleep, trauma, pain, housing, relationships, work, or safety.
People on my support team	Primary care, therapist, prescriber, substance-use provider, peer specialist, sponsor, trusted person, or case manager.
What every provider should know	Substances used, frequency, withdrawal history, prescriptions, supplements, sleep, pregnancy possibility, overdose history, and current safety concerns.
Questions I can ask	Can you screen for both mental health and substance use? How will the care be coordinated? What options fit my goals? What side effects or interactions require urgent help?
My early warning signs	Changes in sleep, secrecy, missing appointments, hopelessness, racing thoughts, panic, isolation, romanticizing use, or stopping medication.
My next whole-person step	One call, appointment, honest disclosure, meeting, refill question, transportation plan, or support request.

Medication safety: Tell prescribers and pharmacists about all alcohol, drugs, prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, and supplements. Do not stop psychiatric, seizure, alcohol-withdrawal, opioid-use-disorder, or benzodiazepine medication suddenly without medical guidance. Call 911 for severe withdrawal, overdose, trouble breathing, seizure, severe confusion, or immediate danger.

Free U.S. help: SAMHSA National Helpline 1-800-662-HELP (4357); FindTreatment.gov; call or text 988 for crisis support. Resources verified October 7, 2026.

Closing: Evidence That I Am Rebuilding

Self-worth grows when you collect honest evidence of care, courage, and responsibility.

Today I do not need to prove that I will never struggle again. I can prove that I am willing to notice, reach, choose, repair, rest, and begin again.

A difficult moment I survived without abandoning myself

A truth I told

A boundary I protected

A person or community I let support me

A mistake I learned from without turning it into my identity

A strength I see more clearly now

The next life-giving choice I will make

Keep going

You are not required to feel worthy before practicing self-respect. Let the next caring action become evidence. Let evidence become trust. Let trust make room for a life that is more than survival.

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Free Remote Whole-Life Support

Schedules and availability change. Check the official site before attending. Peer groups are not emergency services or a replacement for professional care.

NAMI Connection	Free, peer-led recovery support groups for adults with mental health conditions. Many are virtual: nami.org/program/nami-connection.
NAMI Family Support	Free peer support for family members, partners, and friends. Many groups are virtual: nami.org/support-groups.
NAMI HelpLine	Free mental health information and resources, Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. ET: 1-800-950-6264 or text NAMI to 62640.
DBSA Support Groups	Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance offers peer-led online support groups: dbsalliance.org online support groups.
Meetup	Search for virtual or local groups for grief, anxiety, mindfulness, sober activities, creativity, and life transitions: Meetup.com. Review privacy, cost, organizer history, and safety.
988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline	In the U.S., call or text 988 for 24/7 crisis support. Call 911 for immediate danger or a medical emergency.
FindTreatment.gov	Search U.S. mental health and substance-use treatment services: FindTreatment.gov.
Remote meeting safety	Use only the name you want displayed, review camera and microphone settings, protect links, and leave or report harassment. Try more than one group; fit matters.

Resources verified October 7, 2026.