

THE  
SCOTTISH  
RECOVERY  
WORKBOOK

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**SRC** SCOTTISH  
RECOVERY  
CONSORTIUM

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first Scottish Recovery Workbook. This workbook is a gift from the recovery movement in Scotland, to people in early recovery from addictions everywhere. Our gift, like recovery itself, is free to you.

We created this workbook together because we want to give something back to the communities that suffered from the effects of our addictions. We want to do that by helping you and more people like us to recover from addictions. Our recovery stories, experiences and reflections are just that; our stories. They are not meant to tell you what to do. If they give you ideas that you might want to put into practice in your own life then that's great. If they don't we hope you find something that does work for you.

The workbook has 11 sections and you can do the sections in any order that works for you. In general the issues tackled become more complex as you move from the front of the book to the back.

Each section begins with a current recovery story from someone in Scotland in recovery from addictions right now, and they are chosen for their relevance to the theme being tackled in each section.

In each section there are also exercises for you to develop your thinking and feeling and reflections around the themes. Write in the book- it is for you after all.

There is also a blog in every section which may bring some more food for thought around the theme, and to finish each theme there are some suggested actions and more space for you to write your reflections.

The section themes are drawn from our experience and understanding from practice based as well as research evidence of the factors that sustain recovery from addiction. Successful recovery journeys from addictions whether from alcohol, heroin, prescription and over the counter medications, food, gambling etc, are marked by strong and regular practice of each theme.

This book is in favour of the recovery path that works for you! We support 12 step meetings, SMART recovery meetings, treatment services, recovery communities, faith groups that contribute to recovery and arts and community groups that help. But most of all we support you and want you to enjoy your recovery!

# THE LIVED EXPERIENCE: RECOVERY

*The following recovery share focuses upon early recovery and the feelings that this can bring.*

“ I went into a treatment centre when I was still on methadone. I had used for a long time and I wanted to get stabilised. I didn’t want to let go of my benzos or my cannabis use but I did want to get off the heroin.

After a couple of weeks, pennies started to drop. I started being able to smell things again and was able to look in the mirror and really see myself. I became aware of things like grass growing and a sense of smell. It was really strange.

I’d say the best part of early recovery was just being able to laugh again. I was able to get up in the morning without the obsession to go and score drugs, sell drugs, steal from my parents, or do whatever else I had to do to get drugs for that morning.

I started doing things at the weekend. I went to recovery places like my local recovery café and recovery meetings where I could talk to people. It was just great to get up and have some structure about my day. I got a wee bit of hope as I saw people in recovery and was able to make eye contact with them. I realised there was a life outside of my home town! I could leave and get the bus myself!

The first three months were crazy and I tried to do too much too soon. I wanted to find a job and thought I needed a girlfriend now. I wanted to move out of my ma’s, tried to fix the world, tried to do voluntary work...I was just trying to make up for lost time and all the times I had messed up. I realised that I needed to pace myself.

I had real gratitude for the little things that you can do for yourself. Simple things like going food shopping and actually taking the food home rather than selling it. It meant a lot to go swimming or for a sauna, just little treats that I still do to this day.

The biggest part of my first 3 months in recovery was seeing some people from my own area who had got clean and were now working in the field of addiction. That’s what gave me hope, I clung onto that and always have done since. I have never looked back!”

## EXERCISE 1: RECOVERY

The following questions are designed to help you think about your recovery journey and what it could mean for you. Read through them and, if it feels right for you, write down your response to the following questions. If it is easier to leave this page blank for now, you can do that too.

1) What does recovery from addiction mean to you?

2) What hopes or ambitions do you have for your life in recovery?

3) Where could you meet more people who are also in recovery from addiction?

# RECOVERY

Have you ever wondered what makes people in recovery from addiction so effusively happy? If you spend a little time with a group of people in recovery from addiction you will find that they express gratitude for what can seem like unbelievably small things, apologise for themselves immediately if they do or say something less than kind and they seem to be genuinely interested in what you are saying.

Well I can let you in on a secret; this is called the 'better than well' effect. Very simply put, some researchers had a brilliant idea one day not so long ago. They decided to shift the focus of their academic attention away from the excruciating detail of the problems of drug use and moved it onto the experience of recovery from addiction. They found out at least two amazing facts about people and recovery from addiction:

- Most people DO recover from addiction.
- When people stay in recovery for five years and more, they report themselves to be happier, better adjusted citizens that achieve more of their potential than people who never had an addiction at all! Studies in the USA and the UK have shown that people in long-term recovery experience life as 'better than well'.

Five years in recovery may seem a long time away when you are at the start of your recovery journey and too much to even imagine right now, and you may well be very right in that. However, when the road to recovery gets tough, it's good to know that better things do happen to people who were in the same position as you are now.

So if you are just setting out on this amazing journey into an unknown world of self-awareness remember to take it one step at a time and:

- Look for help and support.
- Connect with other people in recovery from addiction like you.
- keep going!

## RECOVERY: SOME SUGGESTIONS

You may find the following suggestions useful as part of your recovery journey. Read over the list and think about which ones, if any, you would like to take action on.

- There are many recovery meetings in Scotland such as Alcoholics Anonymous Narcotics Anonymous/Cocaine Anonymous/SMART recovery. There are online meetings for many of these mutual aid organisations too. Would you be able to find the one nearest you and go along to one meeting?
- Find out what your local addiction treatment services can offer you.
- Get involved with your local recovery community. You can find more information on recovery communities in Scotland at the Scottish Recovery Consortium website [www.scottishrecoveryconsortium.org](http://www.scottishrecoveryconsortium.org)

The space below has been included for you to record any thoughts that you have on this section of your workbook. You could record a suggestion that you have decided to take action on, something that you have learned or a comment upon recovery in general. It may feel more appropriate for you to leave this space blank, this is entirely up to you.

“ A Journey of a thousand miles  
begins with a single step ”

– Lao-tzu, chinese philosopher –

# THE LIVED EXPERIENCE: ACCEPTING HELP

*A recovery share that talks about the importance of accepting help in your recovery.*

“ The biggest stumbling blocks to my recovery were my pride and my stubbornness. I could handle this. I mean, I am intelligent and can hold down a job and run a business, so I can handle this addiction thing – right? So wrong!

To my mind at that time it would have been utterly humiliating to be found out. Imagine people knowing that I couldn't manage my life. No-one could know that I locked the doors and spent the evenings and weekends with the TV and my drugs of choice. I could barely make it through the day without my wee 'treats'. Every New Year's resolution was that this year I will give up. Every January 2nd I was bang at it again. I tried everything I could think of like therapy, spirituality, exercise, controlled use – that was a laugh! Controlled use for me meant spending the whole day, and I mean the whole day, thinking about my drug of choice waiting for me when I got home. Once I had it, I immediately went back to counting the time till my next dose. Nothing else came close to mattering as much as that. I didn't grow out of it, no book I read changed my behaviour for more than a few days, no advice from the doctor, nor the words of therapists or spiritual teachers could move me from my devotion to my drugs of choice.

One day a good friend and colleague of mine at work who was open about being in recovery from addiction said to me 'there's a meeting for folk like you'. I felt a curious mixture of sadness, humiliation (I was her boss!) and surrender. I was ready to try

anything. So I reluctantly went to my first recovery meeting. I was sure I had nothing in common with all these people but I was wrong. I cried like a baby all the way home and didn't go back for six months.

I thought that I was a smart person that could do it myself. Wrong again! I did my own version of the programme at home, got abstinent for a few months and thought I had it sorted. Six months later, I was worse than I was before, only this time I knew I was sick. I was utterly fed up with this feeling of possession by addiction. I was ready to give in again. It was the day the Iraq war began. I was at a demo in the city centre and I was abstinent that day which was my first in a while. I went to a different recovery meeting and this time I took my jacket off, looked round the room and felt at home. I asked for help.

I started to go to meetings twice a week, every week and spoke to friends in recovery on the phone in between meetings. I read about recovery, breathed recovery and did what I needed to do every day to stay in recovery. I started to find my stubbornness and pride really funny and would tell everyone I met I was in recovery and how great it was! I became a recovery bore for a wee while but I was free of the stupid pride that was literally killing me. Asking for help and accepting it when it was offered has been the best thing I have done in my adult life. My stubbornness is now put to work in service of my daily recovery.”

## EXERCISE 2: ACCEPTING HELP

The questions below could help you to reflect upon how you feel about asking for help in your recovery. Read through the questions and, if it feels right for you, write down your response. If it is easier to leave this page blank for now, you can do that instead.

1) How do you feel about asking for help with your recovery journey?

2) What could another person offer as help with your recovery journey?

3) Would you like to help another person in their recovery journey?

“ I am because we are ”

– African proverb –

## ACCEPTING HELP

In the first section of this workbook we talked about the importance of getting the right help and support for you. So what different kinds of help are out there for people seeking to recover from addictions? In Scotland, local area Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (usually referred to as ADPs) have responsibility for creating free services to help people recover from addictions. While each area has a different set of services to treat people with addiction problems, in your area there could be:

- Community Addiction Services – where you can be assessed and matched with appropriate support such as physical or mental health interventions, social support and referral to other services.
- Community Alcohol and Drug Day Programmes – where you can undertake a programme of group work and individual support to develop your recovery from addiction.
- Residential Programmes – where you undergo a programme of recovery in a residential setting. There are also some private residential rehabilitation services available in Scotland that you need to fund yourself.

For more information on the support that is available in your part of Scotland you could ask your G.P. or look up your local ADP on the internet to see what they can offer.

Scotland also has a growing number of 'mutual aid' groups like; Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous and SMART Recovery. Mutual aid means that help is given by one human being to another, and this is offered

for free. Each group listed above will have a website and helpline numbers where you can find out more on your nearest mutual aid group meeting. Each mutual aid has its own programme of recovery, tools and individual mentors that could help you get better.

There's more! In Scotland over the last few years we have seen the rise of new recovery support groups and communities that organise café social nights, recovery support groups, activity groups, recovery meetings, events and celebrations. You can find out about many of these on the Scottish Recovery Consortium website: [www.scottishrecoveryconsortium.org](http://www.scottishrecoveryconsortium.org)

Different support works well for different people and it's important that you find what works best for you.



# THE LIVED EXPERIENCE: WITHDRAWAL

*A recovery share on what it was like to go through withdrawal as part of the recovery journey.*

“ For me, a lot of the times in the beginning, I didn't know what was wrong with me. I didn't know that the way I was abusing a lot of the drugs I was taking, especially diazepam, was affecting my nervous system. So when I finally had the will to get clean it affected my nervous system straight away. I was lifting cups and missing my mouth, I was going to smoke cigarettes and I had no sense of direction. I was jumping, I was twitching, it was really, really difficult.

I knew that I had stopped using heroin, that was the first thing I put down. I remember getting clean and getting off my methadone and thinking it was a horrible drug. Then I stopped buying diazepam. I was treating them like sleeping pills. That is where a lot of the abuse was done. If only I had been aware of what the 'blues' had done to me. I called them 'blues' or the 'yellow ones' when I bought them. If only I had been aware of the nature of it – what it was doing to my nervous system. As an addict everything was being repressed. I had been depressed and I didn't even know I was depressed. I can recognise that now, maybe five years later, how depressed I was. I remember doctors asking if I wanted to go on anti-depressants but straight away I said no. In my head at the time I thought that I wouldn't get a buzz off them, but I could have been doing with them.

I had that sense that everything was flat, no feeling, and then all of a sudden in recovery the feelings came. I was jumpy, I had insomnia not just for days but for

a good three months. My bones were affected and I was told that methadone doesn't do that. I don't know if it was just being older and not being aware of physical pain because a lot of the stuff had been suppressed.

How did I deal with it? One day at a time. I think in the beginning it was just that I wanted to stay clean. I had a lot of willpower for the first time in my life. I think that came from having a bit of belief that I could stay clean. I'd never had that before. I never had any hope.

In the beginning it was really difficult because I was getting loads of thoughts. I remember I was sitting writing, doing one of these classes in the community rehab and I remember writing about my thoughts and how they were crashing, I couldn't make sense of it! I didn't know what was happening to me. But what helped me then was reading, reading a lot and psycho-analysing myself.

Getting clean was just like a different world. I tried to take care of myself for the first time ever and that meant staying away from drugs, looking at triggers – all the stuff I learned in the community rehab programme. I just believed that no matter what, I do not take that drug and that was the way it was for me. It wasn't easy – it was the hardest thing I have ever done in my life!”

## EXERCISE 3: WITHDRAWAL

The following questions are designed to help you think about withdrawal and what it could mean for you. Read through the following questions and, if it feels right for you, write down your response. If it is easier to leave this page blank for now, you can do that too.

1) How do you feel about the idea of withdrawal?

2) How could you prepare for a detox? For example, what support would you need?

3) What additional support meeting could you find out about to help you through your detox?

# WITHDRAWAL

So you've decided to go for it, you are giving it up? Well done! Let's talk about what makes a successful detox (that's one where there is no relapse back to using).

The goals of a good detox are to reduce the unpleasant symptoms and to keep you safe. To achieve that, preparation is key. How many times have you decided to give up and then used again at the sight of the first hurdle? Well good preparation helps you over those hurdles. Talk to your prescriber to find out what symptoms you can expect to experience and to plan the rate at which you detox. Talk to your friends in recovery and ask their advice. Make a plan.

Withdrawing from opiates, benzodiazepines or alcohol is like turning the dial up on your nervous system. Everything will feel jangly and jaggy. Your pulse and blood pressure will pick up and you may feel tense, sweaty and shaky. Sleep is likely to be disrupted. You may have nausea or diarrhoea. With opiate withdrawal there will be aches and pains. Your prescriber can add other medications to treat some of those symptoms and advise whether an inpatient detox might be the best option for you.

Here's the deal: it's what you do alongside the detox that will determine your success with achieving your goal of a drug-free recovery. So many people think of the detox as being the important part. If recovery is the train journey from Glasgow to London, then detox is the time taken to call the taxi. You need to think about the rest of the journey. So what's the rest?

Ideally you have an intensive recovery programme running alongside your detox. Being in a treatment, residential or day programme, a mutual aid setting or a peer support group all increase your chances of success. The more help, the better! Remember when the going gets tough, the truly tough ask for even more help! Try increasing the number of recovery mutual aid meetings (AA/NA/CA/SMART etc) you go to as you reduce the levels of substance in your system.

Please don't forget those harm reduction messages on how quickly you lose tolerance to your substance of abuse and how vulnerable you are to overdose.

A treatment service can help you get stopped; but to stay stopped and have out of office hours and weekend support you need your friends in recovery. It's true, we really do get by (detox) with a little help from our friends!

## WITHDRAWAL: SOME SUGGESTIONS

You may find the following suggestions useful to help you to learn more about withdrawal and detox. Read over the list and think about which ones, if any, you would like to take action on.

- Learn to meditate/practice mindfulness based relapse prevention practice.
- Stay in very regular contact with someone who is abstinent from the substance you are coming off.
- Write about what you are experiencing. One day it may help someone else to know how it was for you.

The space below has been included for you to record any thoughts that you have on this section of your workbook. You could create a plan for your own detox or list any of the suggestions that you plan to take action upon. It may feel more appropriate for you to leave this space blank, this is entirely up to you.

“Treatment can help you with getting stopped. Staying stopped is a whole different ball game.”

– David, Recovery Activist –

# THE LIVED EXPERIENCE: TRIGGERS

*One person's experience of triggers in their recovery is shared below.*

“ Triggers in early recovery for me were of the emotional kind. In early recovery my circumstances included a relationship where there was still an active user in it. I was a mother to a young child and I had taken on college. I was overwhelmed with different tasks and responsibilities.

I guess I had a level of escape from myself within learning. My focus was firmly fixated on change, changing my existence in this world and the life of what felt like a consistent state of suffering, no matter what. I had a lot of escape in college work and I had worked out that I could remove myself when I found myself being emotionally overwhelmed. In early recovery I avoided the things that caused me the most difficulty. Certain people, particular places and particular things that I knew I couldn't deal with because these situations made me feel I had no control or ability to manage them.

This did work for a period of time although there were times when thoughts would just come from nowhere, 'I know what will make me feel better' or 'one won't matter' and so on. I found it really useful to acknowledge the thought but I wouldn't get caught up in trying to think my way out of what had just happened. Dissecting thought processes can come later or in the company of safe people preferably in long term recovery. I wouldn't dismiss it like it never happened, but I also wouldn't get caught up in the thinking part in my own company.

When I started to think that I didn't know

what to do, that was a sign that I wasn't coping. I had got into mindfulness and meditation through my good friend and guide, so I was doing mindfulness quite a lot. There was just a level of comfort and a safety in that for me. I had inadvertently stumbled across mindfulness and stumbled across some lovely, genuine, safe people who I knew I could fall into at times when I was consumed by extreme feelings or overwhelmed by emotional states. I began to learn how to treat, sooth and manage my feelings and emotional states for the first time in my life.

I knew when I was tested, but the combination of having that self-awareness and knowing what wasn't alright helped me. Maybe right away I didn't make all the connections but I knew when I had to change something and where it had to change. I didn't know what I was doing or where I was going but I learned to trust in that. I learned to trust that where I was in my journey of recovery was where I was supposed to be. I learned to trust my ability to make decisions again.

A mindfulness practitioner and mindfulness practice helped me to pay attention to myself. I had a level of awareness that could gauge my thoughts, my emotions and my body sensations. I had developed a level of insight, that I could recognise, and then gauge discomfort before it reached crisis point (which was old hat). Mindfulness practice helped me make good sound rational decisions. I learned to trust my decisions and ability to do what was right for me, my recovery, and those around me.”

# EXERCISE 4: TRIGGERS

The following questions are designed to help you think about triggers and what they could mean for you and your recovery. Read through the following questions and, if it feels right for you, write down your response to the following questions. If it is easier to leave this page blank for now, you can do that too.

1) What do you think could trigger a relapse for you personally?

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2) What situations are you most worried about being in without having a drink or drug?

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3) If you have relapsed, what do you think caused it to happen?

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# TRIGGERS

It can be depressing to realise how programmed some of our behaviours can be. We wander through life imagining we are freely choosing this and that and maybe we are, but sometimes we are reacting in habitual ways to triggers!

Everyone does this and it can be helpful when you are triggered to flee from danger, to run away from the sound of the big noise and to step away from the edge of the cliff! But people in early recovery need to be a tad more conscious than most other people when we are getting triggered into our old addiction behaviour.

So what's a trigger? Anything can be a trigger and we are all different in what triggers our desire to use. You can be triggered by, and these are in no particular order of importance:

- Feeling unhappy/happy.
- Being confused/certain.
- Feeling all powerful/desperately insignificant.

We can have internal states of emotional and physical health that trigger a desire to use although external 'places, people and things' can also do it. While shutting yourself in the house with a DVD box set might seem like a better option than dealing with all these triggers, deal with them we must! The good news about programming (yes there is good news!) is that if it can be programmed, it can be un-programmed!

We create triggers by repetition of the same behaviours in the same situations over and over again. So often, in fact, that we have created a brain pattern. We need to generate different responses to triggers so that we associate the cues with different, happier outcomes for us.

So instead of viewing Saturday night as a night where you have a drink or use drugs why not redraw what Saturday night means for the sober you. Instead of walking past the same streets every day like you used to on the way to score, create a new pathway through your neighbourhood for you in recovery. 'Different' can be a good way of breaking the linkages between trigger cues and using responses.

Be curious about your responses to things; notice them, write about them, talk to your recovery friends about them and become an alternative response generating machine. Find the free will to alter habitual patterns. Be creative in working with conditions you might find yourself in and always have a swift exit line ready in case triggers present themselves. You can kick that habitual addiction behaviour into touch. Go to it then!



# THE LIVED EXPERIENCE: HELPFUL RECOVERY ROUTINES

*A recovery share on the importance of recovery routines to support the recovery journey.*

“ I had been out of rehab and then I relapsed and began drinking again. I had quite a good background of working on my addiction, not that it stood me in any good stead given my relapse!

I made my mind up to stop in January 2011. I knew what I had to do. I was very fortunate because I had an abstinent friend, and when I had that terrible initial period of sickness and diarrhoea he took care of me. Then I got back in touch with the Community Addiction Team (CAT) in my area and I started talking to them. They suggested antabuse to begin with. Then two treatment workers were starting a ‘mutual aid’ type group and I was desperate to get in with them.

I think to begin with, I was basically under the care of my abstinent friend. He just didn’t let me out of his sight. I couldn’t even walk from here to there at first. I slept when I could and ate as and when I could and he kept me doing that. The withdrawal meant that my sleep and food routines were irregular, but he didn’t try to force me into any kind of regular pattern. If I needed to sleep, I slept and if I was able to eat, I did.

Having someone to take care of me without judgment was really important. You know how sometimes you get given a hard time for not doing things the way ‘normal’ people would do them? Sometimes I couldn’t sleep at all and had weeks and

weeks of not sleeping properly. My mum would give me a hard time for sleeping in the afternoon. My friend never did that. He always made sure there was plenty of food for me, if I was able to eat it. If I couldn’t, it wasn’t a problem.

I got to the stage that I could actually walk the length of myself and go out for a walk. I then needed something to do that was recovery orientated, with people that understood me and not people that kept asking why I had relapsed. I went to the mutual aid treatment group which ran 3 days a week. It was a huge thing for me and I liked it because we were just people that got on and we had this thing in common. I hadn’t really been around people like that before.

The group was made up of people who were at a certain stage of recovery. You were meant to have 3-6 months of recovery and then you would start this mutual aid programme with a whole host of useful supports; triggers, relapse and acupuncture at the end of every day. It was really important to me because I knew I had to DO something.

At first, I didn’t trust myself. I didn’t buy anything or go to the supermarket for about a year, because I would find myself in the wine aisle! I just stayed close to home and went to the mutual aid. That was the routine that supported my recovery.”

## EXERCISE 5: HELPFUL RECOVERY ROUTINES

The following questions are designed to help you think about your routines that could help your recovery journey. Read through the following questions and, if it feels right for you, tick each box that applies to your personal recovery.

- 1) I set personal positive goals for myself this week.
- 2) I attended at least one recovery support group this past week.
- 3) I had individual contact with my sponsor this week.
- 4) I applied recovery concepts to my daily life this week.
- 5) I spent leisure time with others in recovery this week.
- 6) I enjoyed time with friends this week who support my recovery.
- 7) I successfully avoided people, places and things I associate with my addiction.
- 8) I tried to do something positive to improve my relationship with my spouse/partner this week.
- 9) I had positive contact with my children this week.
- 10) I read recovery-related literature this week.
- 11) I carry one or more objects with me every day that remind me of my commitment to recovery.
- 12) I called or visited someone in recovery this week.
- 13) My diet and exercise this week has enhanced my physical health.
- 14) I tended to any physical problems I experienced this week.
- 15) I had a good week at school or work.
- 16) It was a good week emotionally for me.

This exercise has been adapted from the 'Recovery Tool Kit' which you can read more about on this website [www.williamwhitepapers.com](http://www.williamwhitepapers.com)

# HELPFUL RECOVERY ROUTINES

You may have functioned well in the world of your addiction and already know how to set routines to help you achieve your goals. If you feel that you have more to learn about the importance of routines in your recovery, then read on.

Our helpful recovery routines should include taking care of our physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. Maslow, a noted psychologist, studied what creates a healthy, happy, individual who can achieve their potential as a human being. His work suggests how to go about constructing our own helpful recovery routines. Another way is to ask people whose recovery you admire about how they are doing it and try their suggestions. Either way you experiment with building up a set of daily routines that keep you well, safe, and growing as a human being.

Maslow's advice is that you need to care for the following basic human needs:

- Biological needs; air, food, water, warmth, sleep, shelter and sex (though be extra careful of this one in early recovery!).
- Safety needs; security of body, employment, resources, family, health and property.
- Belongingness and love needs; friendship, family and sexual intimacy.
- Esteem needs; confidence, achievement, respect of others and respect by others.
- Self-actualisation needs; morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving and acceptance of facts.

You build your daily recovery routines around what is needed for your human survival and growth. The H.A.L.T. strategy could help you start, it's short for never let yourself get too hungry; too angry; too lonely or too tired. Why is that important? The process of change can take you out of your comfort zone and by adding any one of these to the mix, humans tend to head back into our old habits and comfort routines (which in the case of early recovery can be old using behaviours).

Think about what makes the day better for you in recovery. What time is a good time to get up, having slept enough? When and what is breakfast for you? Do you have time to reflect on your feelings and thoughts and actions every day? Where do you connect with other human beings and your recovery experience in the day? When do you do the housework; cooking, cleaning and attending to household bills? What makes for a healthy, safe and meaningful daily life for you? The answers to these questions can form the basis of your recovery routines.

## HELPFUL RECOVERY ROUTINES: SOME SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions might help you to think about recovery routines that could work for you. Read over the list and think about which ones, if any, you would like to take action on.

- Learn about food we humans need to build a healthy body, for example: protein, vegetables, fruit and fats. Try putting your learning on this into practice and plan your meals for the next week.
- Audit your wardrobe. Are your clothes clean? Are they right for the weather and fit for purpose?
- Look at yourself in the mirror like you are your own best friend – what would your friend say you need right now?

The space below has been included for you to record any thoughts that you have on this section of your workbook. You could record recovery routines that you already use. If this section has inspired you to take up a new routine you could write that here too. It may feel more appropriate for you to leave this section blank, this is entirely up to you.

“ The secret of your future is hidden in  
your daily routine. ”

– Mike Murdock, Author –

# THE LIVED EXPERIENCE: ABSTINENCE

*This recovery share focuses upon one person's journey with abstinence in their recovery.*

“ In early recovery I was on methadone and I was being prescribed intravenously because I was on a life support machine. I was in a high dependency unit and when the nurse came and handed me methadone for some strange reason, I refused it. One of the surgeons that worked there came along and asked if I wanted to be clean and I said ‘Yeah’ and from that time they withheld all addictive painkillers and sleeping pills from me. They stopped prescribing me anything and just gave me paracetamol. That sort of tided me through that time. I was staying at my mother’s and I never knew anything about recovery or abstinence at all.

After four months I ended up getting a house from the council. I had put down all the street drugs because I had been on heroin and crack but then I started to drink.

It was then that I first got in touch with Narcotics Anonymous (NA), because a member of my family was in another fellowship and he suggested going along to an NA meeting. I thought that there was no point in going along there because I wasn’t using drugs at that time. However, I went along and it was there that I heard about abstinence.

I was like ‘wow – does that mean no drink?’ That’s exactly what it means, its complete abstinence from all drugs. I have got to be honest; they suggested that I went along to an AA meeting. So I went to an AA meeting in January and I went to an ‘open’ meeting

so that I wouldn’t have to say that I was an alcoholic!

I got so much identification because I knew that if anything was going to take me back into the drugs, it was the drink.

Prior to that I never knew anything about abstinence. I genuinely didn’t think it was possible to go through your life, going to social events etc without drinking. Even weddings! My great thing of course was funerals. I thought you couldn’t go to a funeral and not drink.

From there I just completely withdrew from everything (drugs and drink wise). I found it more difficult to stop drinking than I did to put down all the drugs. I don’t know if it was just where my head was at. I found it so hard because I was reading things and all that was jumping out at me was alcohol like vodka and whisky. My head was racing and I thought that I really wanted a drink. I just kept going to meetings and speaking to people. People that were in at that time certainly looked as if they were living a good clean life in abstinence. I sort of knew that I have never been able to take one of anything in my life. I am an addict, I have never been able to take just one drink, one drug or one painkiller. So once all that knowledge was going in I thought maybe this is the path I should be on.

From that time I have never looked back.”

# EXERCISE 6: ABSTINENCE

The following questions are designed to help you think about abstinence. Read through them, and if it feels right for you, write down your response below. If it is easier to leave this page blank for now, you can do that too.

What am I currently abstinent from?	What could threaten my abstinence?	What can I do to support my abstinence?
What am I currently stable on?	What could I do to support my stability?	Under what conditions might I try for abstinence?
I am currently concerned about my use of?	What concerns me about it?	At what stage, if any, could I think about giving this up too?



# ABSTINENCE

They say that absence makes the heart grow fonder. In recovery we could say that abstinence makes your recovery heart grow stronger. Now before anyone feels oppressed or anxious by the thought of abstinence, breathe out!

The first thing about abstinence is that it's a developing practice which can be taken one step at a time. A recovery activist once said "I'm giving up my drugs in the order that they are killing me" which can be good advice. Remember though, everyone is unique and some people can be so unwell that other approaches may be advised.

It is true that people also want abstinence as a choice. In a national study of people accessing treatment more than half of the people studied said they wanted to become abstinent and that was why they came to treatment. The study was called DORIS (Drug Outcome Research In Scotland).

Looking at the new research in the benefits of abstinence, we find that people in recovery with at least one abstinent friend in their social circle have a greater chance of staying abstinent than those people in recovery with no such friends. There are literally hundreds of mutual aid meetings and recovery support groups across Scotland to help you maintain abstinence 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

What's not to love about it?

It can be annoying to have worked to give up one drug, whether that is alcohol/ heroin/valium/cocaine/etc, only to discover that you have developed a serious relationship with another substance.

It can be disappointing to find out that you are already addicted to other drugs and behaviours, besides the one that you know about. Researcher W. White (and many, many, people in recovery) found that;

"Addiction to one drug may be shared by, and may even increase one's vulnerability for, addiction to other drugs."

Nobody said this was going to be easy. Keep breathing! Consider what abstinence means for you? Talk with your recovery friends or treatment supporter about what behaviours and substances you might want or need to include in your early practice of abstinence.

## ABSTINENCE: SOME SUGGESTIONS

You may find the following suggestions useful to help you think about what abstinence means for you. Read over the list and think about which ones, if any, you would like to take action on.

- Try a substance specific recovery meeting live or online for any other substance you might be concerned about. Most 12 step fellowships have a 20 point questionnaire that you could try on their website.
- Talk with abstinent friends in recovery and find out how they developed their abstinence.
- Talk with your sponsor/treatment worker about how you might develop your recovery further or support your existing abstinence more.

The space below has been included for you to record any thoughts that you have on this section of your workbook. If you have learned something new about abstinence you could record it here or you could use the space to write down any action that you plan to take. It may feel more appropriate for you to leave this section blank, this is entirely up to you.

“ I got sober. I stopped killing myself with alcohol. I began to think: ‘Wait a minute - if I can stop doing this, what are the possibilities?’ And slowly it dawned on me that it was maybe worth the risk. ”

– Craig Ferguson, Comedian –

# THE LIVED EXPERIENCE: FEELINGS

*This recovery share on feelings talks about facing negative feelings and fears in recovery.*

“ Like most people in early recovery, I blamed other people and my circumstances for my own pain, as this was normal to me. I never knew I was responsible for my own feelings as it was easier to blame than it was to take responsibility and change.

Within a week of leaving treatment I began working with children at risk as a volunteer, for I knew I had to keep myself busy or listen to that voice of temptation all day and every day. I had never worked as a volunteer before or even thought about it, but what I got from my voluntary work and being clean was gratitude. I was grateful for what I now had and for not forgetting where I used to be. This was great for my selfishness and poor me attitude towards life.

Being grateful was new to me; but it opened my spiritual eyes and heart and helped me immensely in my early recovery. My higher power knew this and he knew my heart and because of this, he took me on an amazing journey and showed me how to change and love. I wanted this more than anything else, so I began to read spiritual books and personal development books, which helped considerably with my self-awareness. I found new friends, went to meetings and continued working as a volunteer. I got a second chance at life when others weren't as fortunate as me.

My negative feelings were caused by the way I reacted to what I saw and heard from others, but mostly by what I told myself in my own head. I had learned within my home and environment to gather false

evidence with no proof. In recovery I had to practice every day to challenge my own thought process and break these old habits, consciously challenging negative thoughts rather than feeding them. I am responsible for every thought, feeling and reaction. No more blaming others or my circumstances for how I felt. What I give out in thoughts, is what I get back in a feeling. That's recovery, that's change. I do not do what I used to do, so why should I feel the way I used to. Once I changed my thoughts and the way I reacted my life changed.

I dealt with my old ways of thinking and behaving. I took action, faced my fears, found new hobbies and interests and learned to trust in my higher power. No more expectations that other people should do as I do, but to live my life my way and let others do the same. I wanted this and I knew I had to get honest. I had read this quote from Buddha in early recovery, that there are only two mistakes to make along the road to truth; not going all the way, and not getting started.

Practice, practice, practice, for as you think, so shall you be. We always have a choice. Peace and love.”

# EXERCISE 7: FEELINGS

The following exercise is designed to help you think about your feelings. Read through each feeling and, if it feels right for you, tick everything that applies to you today. If it is easier to leave the boxes blank for now, you can do that instead.

### Uneasy

- flat
- tense
- anxious
- flustered
- insecure
- angry
- cross
- confused
- bored
- flat
- apathetic
- weak

### Angry

- frustrated
- cross
- irritated
- annoyed
- furious
- livid
- enraged
- hurt
- inadequate
- trapped
- tired
- scared

### Frightened

- uneasy
- weak
- insecure
- inadequate
- tense
- anxious
- nervous
- scared
- petrified
- threatened
- trapped
- horrified

### Happy

- pleased
- glad
- wonderful
- elated
- excited
- content
- surprised
- proud
- relieved
- satisfied

### Negative

- distrustful
- suspicious
- scornful
- disdain
- bitter
- stupid
- shame
- worthless

### Positive

- determined
- forgiving
- hopeful
- motivated
- inspired
- daring
- energetic
- loving
- eager
- excited

### Unhappy

- hurt
- upset
- lonely
- guilty
- miserable
- bereft
- despairing
- devastated
- lost
- down

### Upset

- angry
- frustrated
- sad
- tearful
- hurt
- miserable
- weepy

### Confused

- hurt
- upset
- lonely
- inadequate
- cross
- miserable
- shocked
- mixed-up
- nervous
- scared

# FEELINGS

Feelings and emotions sparked by memories of the past or by how you may have been treated by another human being do pass. Regardless of your present situation, you are a human being and subject to an army of feelings – it is normal to feel and feelings do pass!

Can you remember how you felt last week? Probably not. Can you remember how you felt on a big birthday or on hearing that someone close had died? Probably yes! Feelings can be intense and temporary or feelings may be locked inside you from your past i.e. the intense searing pain of losing a loved one. Indeed, this pain may even have been the catalyst that increased your drug/alcohol use. On the contrary you may also ask “why did I not feel anything when a person I loved during my addiction passed away?” Now you are in recovery (sometimes years after the event) you may feel the feelings associated with grief for a loved one who passed away some time ago.

A way of looking at this is that feelings will attach themselves to you. They are your feelings and you can detach from them and let them go by sharing them with another human being. These feelings are part of you and have been a part of you since childhood. To deny them will hurt your recovery. Your feelings need to be nurtured and this happens when you talk about them.

In early recovery your feelings can and will resurface at any time, sometimes without warning! But, if you search you will find their trigger. By following this process i.e. sharing with another human being about how you feel, the painful feelings can be decreased. A feeling just wants to be felt

and it is natural to then let it go, however painful or significant it has been. In time the more positive, happy and productive feelings also return. You can share with your counsellor, therapist, recovery sponsor or a person with insight into addiction and also recovery. Many people in recovery keep a journal and write down how they feel as part of their daily recovery routines.

The power that feelings and emotions have over people, especially in early recovery can be tough to handle, particularly when you are trying to stay off drink and drugs. However, feelings lose their power when you can name, own and discuss them.

Feelings do pass and you can recover!

## FEELINGS: SOME SUGGESTIONS

You may find the following suggestions useful as part of your recovery journey. Read over the list and think about which ones, if any, you would like to take action on.

- Take one or two of the feelings that you ticked at the start of this section and explore what triggered them. How do you react when you feel those feelings? What thoughts do you have about yourself that might drive those feelings?
- Share your feelings with another person today. You could speak to someone else in recovery, a sponsor, counsellor or treatment therapist/key worker.
- Take a bit of quiet time by yourself and notice how you feel right now.

The space below has been included for you to record any thoughts that you have on this section of your workbook. You could record a suggestion that you have decided to take action on, something that you have learned or a comment about recovery in general. It may feel more appropriate for you to leave this section blank, this is entirely up to you.

BB The good news about recovery is that your feelings come back. The bad news about recovery is that your feelings come back. DD

– Recovery community mantra –

# THE LIVED EXPERIENCE: BELONGING

*This recovery share focuses upon belonging and how important this can be to the recovery journey.*

“ Prior to getting into recovery I had experienced quite a prolonged period of time where I would describe myself as ‘shut in’ my house. I would avoid the phone; the classic shut the curtains, shut the door and shut out the world. Increasingly I didn’t believe anything nice that anyone said, so I didn’t want to hear anything nice that anyone said. I didn’t want to see the world; all I wanted to see was my couch, my TV and my bottle. That was just the way it was.

The first thing I did that got me into recovery was that I made a phone call. What I was told in that phone call was to go to AA. That gave me a sense of belonging immediately. At my first meeting I was told to stay away from the first drink and I would not get drunk and to go to plenty of meetings to find out how to get sober.

Immediately I would have to go to another meeting and another meeting for two reasons. One; this was going to keep me sober. I knew that because after the first meeting I didn’t take a drink that night and it was going to do the same for me again tomorrow. So very quickly, just the act of going to a meeting every day gave me a sense of belonging and that it was alright for me to be there.

By the time I had done 7 meetings in 7 days, I was already seeing familiar faces, people were already saying ‘hello, how are you doing?’ I don’t think you can underestimate the effect that somebody shaking your hand has when you hate yourself. In my first meeting somebody

really had to go out their way to shake my hand because I didn’t really want to see them. But the woman persisted holding her hand out until I took her hand. These wee things all made me feel ‘part of’ and made me feel very quickly that I belonged.

An extension of that feeling of belonging is that when I belong somewhere, I get to talk.

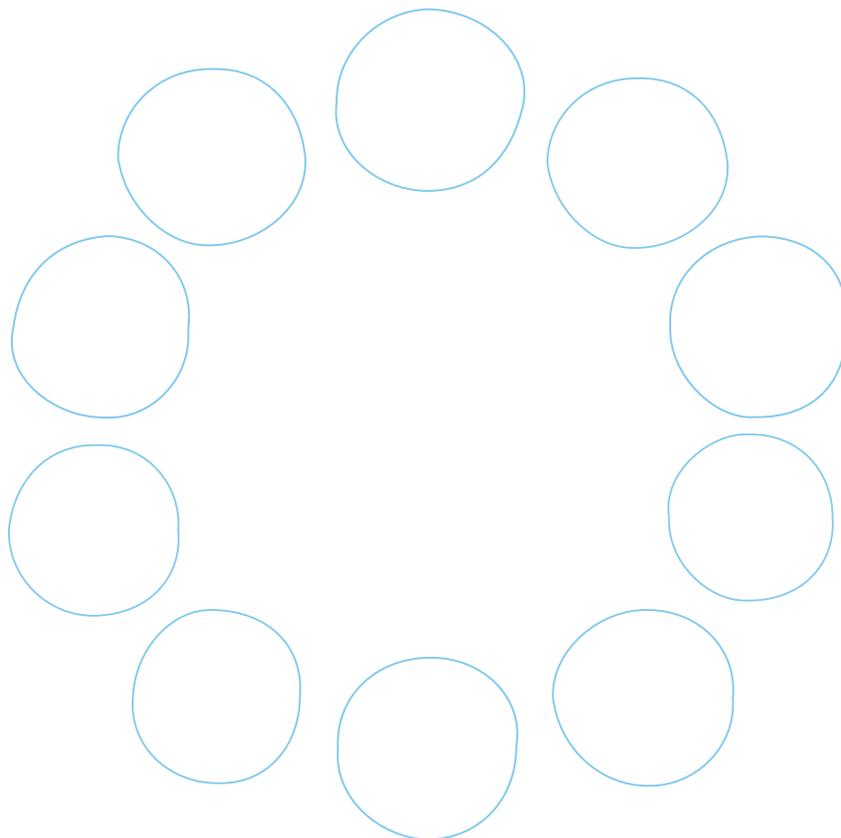
In order to do that I had to feel that I belonged. I told them that I was damn frustrated with my family, that I hated the shop keeper who irritated me that day because she happened to be standing in front of a row of bottles which were calling really loudly! I had to know that I was safe to be able to share that and that’s what a sense of belonging gave me, a place of safety.

Then I was six weeks in recovery and I walked into a meeting one night. It was one of the meetings I had been going to, my Sunday night meeting. One of the very long term sober members said to me ‘right you are not the new comer anymore, I need you to do something’. I looked at him and said ‘I’m only six weeks sober, come on geez a break!’ and he said ‘aye but there is a wee lassie coming in the door that you need to find something to give’. Again, this increases your sense of belonging. Not only have we given you something, you are now given the chance to give that something to somebody else. So very real show and tell if you like. You belong, that’s it. That’s what a sense of belonging is in my early recovery.”

## EXERCISE 8: BELONGING

The following exercise has been designed to help you reflect upon your sense of belonging. Read through the instructions and work through the page if it feels right for you to do so. If it is easier to leave the page blank for now, you can do that instead.

Think about the ten people you are in most regular contact with and write their name in a circle below. Put a + sign beside those who actively support your recovery (they could be abstinent or attend recovery meetings with you). Put a - sign beside those who would support your addiction (they may give you money for drugs/alcohol or take substances with you).



More than **8 +** Well done, you have the basis of a great recovery support network.  
**5-7 +** Good work, sticking with the winners in early recovery is really important.  
**1-4 +** Ok if you have just one abstinent friend you are in luck - now is the time to build your recovery support network more though if you want to stay in recovery long term.  
**0 -** get to a recovery meeting today! It is vital for long term recovery that you have at least 1 abstinent friend in your social network.

# BELONGING

Did anyone ever tell you the story of the Ugly Duckling? If you even heard the Danny Kaye song you'd know "there once was an ugly duckling with feathers all grubby and grey, and everywhere that he went people said quack get out of town?" Do you recognise that experience? Feelings such as isolation, loneliness and despair can be common in active addiction and while it is not unusual for them to be self-inflicted, it is a very real experience nonetheless.

The story tells us about a deep human need - the need to belong, to feel part of, to be seen, to feel meaningful and productive in the world. Our sense of being 'part of' the world can be disconnected by years of addiction and the secrecy associated with our behaviour. Human life is full of opportunities for our sense of connectedness to others to be cut and in rare cases, people can be born disconnected. But mostly it's the damage of sending young people to war, the hurt adults can do to children in their care, the hurt we can do to people who are somehow different to us or a culture that can train men to disguise their feelings in public. These can all create the ideal conditions for a basic disconnection between a human being and their sense that they belong.

This sense of being loved, noticed and 'part of' is essential to human growth. Our brain grows and develops through our relationships with others. Our emotions are more easily regulated when we feel connected to others. We are soothed and comforted in the many trials and tribulations of life on earth just by being around other people we know care for us deeply, and that we care for too.

Kindness and reconnection can repair the damage. It is no surprise that much long term healing from addiction happens in collective settings in the community. In small church halls and community centres up and down Scotland thousands of individuals come together voluntarily and heal from addiction through mutual aid.

It is important to remember that the potential to heal is always there when you are ready to find it. Look for recovery in your local area, find out where the local mutual aid group meets or if there is a recovery community gathering close to you. Seek out others in recovery and you may be surprised at how quickly you will feel that you do belong.

## BELONGING: SOME SUGGESTIONS

You may find the following suggestions useful as part of your recovery journey. Read over the list and think about which ones, if any, you would like to take action on.

- Attend a regional or national recovery event where people in recovery are in the majority. Notice if that changes how you feel about being in recovery or about yourself in any way.
- Commit to becoming part of something like your local recovery community, even if it's only for a few weeks.
- Think about what you now feel about belonging and how important it is to your recovery.

The space below has been included for you to record any thoughts that you have on this section of your workbook. You could record a suggestion that you have decided to take action on, something that you have learned or a comment about recovery in general. It may feel more appropriate for you to leave this section blank, this is entirely up to you.

“ The truth is: Belonging starts with self-acceptance. Your level of belonging, in fact, can never be greater than your level of self-acceptance, because believing that you're enough is what gives you the courage to be authentic, vulnerable and imperfect. ”

– Brene Brown, Researcher –

## THE LIVED EXPERIENCE: CHANGING SELF-IDENTITY

*This recovery share is about changing self-identity and the challenges that this can bring.*

“ I used to think that I was worthless and that I would never amount to anything. I felt like I would be lonely for all of my life – and that’s just a wee bit of it! I had to work on all of those negative things and try to build them into positives. You think you’re suffering from depression when you are in addiction and then find out you are actually not, it’s the drugs that make you feel like that.

You have to learn how to be at ease with yourself and in that way deal with the loneliness, the lack of self-esteem, the lack of confidence or self-belief. You have to change all of that to get on in recovery and it’s hard.

It doesn’t happen overnight. It was a case of working on that daily and over the course of time it did start to change. Now I manage my recovery to a degree where I do believe those things. I believe that I have got self-worth; I have got self-belief, I have got self-esteem, I have got confidence, and I am worthwhile. I am entitled to a chance to better my life and that’s what I am doing now.

The biggest help was the treatment that I received at the time which was a community based day programme. The staff up there were in recovery themselves and their guidance and support in certain situations where I doubted myself will always stick with me, always. When I made mistakes; I got to realise that it was

alright to make mistakes and I started to learn from them. Making mistakes; that’s where you get your growth from! I realised that and stopped beating myself up about certain situations as I would have done in the past. I can let things go now.

Another one of the big things that helped my confidence and self-esteem was getting involved in recovery organisations. Mixing with people in recovery and learning to speak to people really helped. I used to have no confidence at all. I could hardly speak to people and I could not socialise. I wouldn’t engage with anything.

Later in my recovery I became a volunteer with a recovery organisation. I was part of a team where my contribution was worth something and had to get on stage, speak in front of people, speak at conversation cafe’s, take part in seminars and share personal stuff. It was all new and it really helped to grow my self-confidence. I am not saying it was easy, but it was a process of working on myself to overcome all of those negative thoughts that I used to have about myself.”



# CHANGING SELF-IDENTITY

How often do you give yourself a hard time? Are you a frequent flyer in the self-criticism lane of life? This is utterly normal for a human exiting a life of addiction, and indeed quite normal for a human being raised in Scotland. If you are already tuned into positive views about yourself in your recovery, “Gaun Yersel!” It’s a beautiful thing to appreciate yourself and others.

Getting into recovery challenges all those thoughts and words that you and others have used to crucify you. “You’re a waster/rubbish/worthless/a waste of space”. None of these match the reality of your recovery experience, if they were ever true in the first place.

In recovery, as some of those old negative feelings are dealt with, you are freed to see a different picture of you. This one notices what you do well, your talents, your gifts and your willingness to be part of, to say sorry and to give back.

Sometimes though the old tape gets stuck and it just keeps on playing, which can hamper your recovery and your life quite seriously. These self-critical messages are what stop you from trying for that course, saying what you really feel, or joining that group. It can happen when the guilt and shame you feel for your past actions and way of life is turned inwards.

When you share these feelings and explore what you feel bad about in your past behavior, you can take action to show that you really do regret it and then let it go. This negative tape can then be erased and replaced with a new positive one.

As your self-worth increases you will begin a new path towards self-acceptance which means that you will acknowledge your strengths and weaknesses. You made a mistake, you are not a mistake as a person. When you accept this it will be so much easier to acknowledge mistakes and move on.

Now you are free to visualise the person you always wanted to be! Stop, think, feel and walk forwards towards this person.

## CHANGING SELF-IDENTITY: SOME SUGGESTIONS

You may find the following suggestions useful to reflect upon your self-identity. Read over the list and think about which ones, if any, you would like to take action on.

- Pat yourself on the back when you do something you are proud of!
- Ask your friends and supporters if they have noticed any positive changes in you lately.
- Notice yourself more. Take time every day to meditate or write about your recovery in a journal.

The space below has been included for you to record any thoughts that you have on this section of your workbook. You could record a suggestion that you have decided to take action on or how you feel about your self-identity today. It may feel more appropriate for you to leave this section blank, this is entirely up to you.

“You have to believe in yourself.”

– Sun Tzu, Philosopher –

## THE LIVED EXPERIENCE: FAMILY IN EARLY RECOVERY

*The impact that family can have on early recovery is the focus of this recovery share.*

“ I come from quite a big family; I have got 9 brothers and sisters and loads of nieces and nephews. My relationship with them was difficult because I hadn't worked through resentments with my older siblings around the way my parents broke up when I was quite young. I put some of that blame onto two of my older brothers. I hadn't seen them for years.

Most of my addiction was when I was in the city centre and homeless areas through the nineties. My two kid sisters would come up to Sauchiehall Street where I was selling the Big Issue and they would talk to me now and again. It was really strained and it took a lot of work to build it back up again.

Sitting down with another recovering addict was really important for me in early recovery; to finally open up about how I felt about my mum and dad and my whole family. I was brought up to just roll your sleeves up and get on with it. That means that your brothers and sisters just don't talk about it. To open up about how I felt about my role in my family was important for me. I realised that a lot of it wasn't my fault, or my parents or my siblings fault. It was just the setting we were in.

In early recovery, I had still had a lot of blame. I wanted to blame people for things that went wrong and I had to finally open up about that and accept that it was nobody's fault. Parents break up all the

time. I grew up in an environment where you don't ask questions and you just get on with it so I answered a lot of my own questions and I didn't come up with very good answers! I put a lot of blame onto myself and onto others. As an adult getting into recovery I could finally see it for what it was. My mum and dad's relationship broke up as relationships sometimes do. It was as simple as that.

I had a couple of relapses and went into rehab a couple of times because I could not let go. I couldn't find the courage to trust another human being and it just kept me relapsing.

Finally I got to a point where I surrendered. I knew I had to open up to somebody, and then finally did. That was probably one of the greatest things I have ever done. Opening up to that person helped me in other relationships because my defenses were down. I was more inclined to trust people rather than keep them back because I was scared of being hurt.”

# EXERCISE 10: FAMILY IN EARLY RECOVERY

This exercise is designed to help you think about your family and your recovery. Read through the instructions and, if it feels right for you, complete the exercise below. If it is easier to leave this page blank for now, you can do that instead.

- A** = Alcohol problem (bingeing/alcoholic/problem drinking)
- D** = Drug problem (street drugs/prescribed drugs/over the counter medications)
- MH** = Mental health problem (depression/bi-polar/schizophrenic/PTSD)

Write the names of your immediate family in the boxes and put the letter **(A/D/MH)** next to any of them who have or have had an alcohol/drug or mental health problem.

GRAN	GRANDAD		GRAN	GRANDAD
MOTHER	AUNT/UNCLE	AUNT/UNCLE	AUNT/UNCLE	FATHER
CHILD	CHILD	ME	CHILD	CHILD



# FAMILY IN EARLY RECOVERY

Let's begin this section with a statement about addiction: It is no-one's fault! It's not yours, it's not your family's, it's not the government's, it's not the treatment systems and it's not the media's. Addiction is a human condition. It can affect anyone. If we begin by removing blame, we might have a chance of exploring what has contributed to, but not necessarily caused, the addiction that you are now working to recover from.

Think of the family, not as a personal failure or success for you or anyone in it, but rather as a product of so many large forces outside your control. The family is a system of relationships and behaviours shaped by the economy, the historical moment and the culture in which it exists, the physical environment in which it lives and the psychology of each individual member. From that perspective, blame throwing and finding fault can get in the way of recovery from addiction and from the understanding and compassion we all need to re-connect, heal from the addiction and build a new life in recovery.

There is real hurt in families when addiction has been in the family system. There is hurt in the family members that struggle to help or deal with the addicted members. There is hurt in the person in early recovery who now feels decades of pain that had been shut down by the addiction or guilt at what they put their family through. It is easy to understand that early recovery is a very rocky road for family systems and relationships.

Any pain, anger, grief or guilt that you feel is not wrong either. Feeling that and expressing it is an important part of recovery from addiction. You do need to

re-visit the family history and how its trials and joys may have affected you from your point of view. In doing so you are building an adult sized, clearer eyed view of your family.

Families can be talked about as functional and dysfunctional systems. All families in this sense have greater or lesser functional and dysfunctional aspects. Some qualities of dysfunctional family systems are: denial, inadequate or missing boundaries, scapegoating, lying or threats to individual members. Some qualities of functional family systems are; connectedness, acceptance, trust, appreciation, boundaries, safety, truthfulness and flexibility.

Humans are generally socialised in family settings and we learn a lot about how to be in the world through our families. As adults we choose what to keep from that early learning and what to let go of, so that we don't pass it on to our children.

## FAMILY IN EARLY RECOVERY: SOME SUGGESTIONS

You may find the following suggestions useful as part of your recovery journey. Read over the list and think about which ones, if any, you would like to take action on.

- Talk to a recovery friend, sponsor, programme therapist or key worker about challenges and feelings around family right now.
- Visit an open meeting of a recovery fellowship for families like Al-Anon or Families Anonymous. This could help you to learn about addiction and recovery from a family perspective.
- Write about how it felt for you to grow up in your family.

The space below has been included for you to record any thoughts that you have on this section of your workbook. You could record a suggestion that you have decided to take action on or your initial thoughts on the suggestions above. It may feel more appropriate for you to leave this section blank, this is entirely up to you.

“The un-faced and un-felt parts of our psyche are the source of all neurosis and suffering”

– Carl Jung, Psychiatrist –

## THE LIVED EXPERIENCE: ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

*The following recovery share focuses upon romantic relationships in recovery.*

“ I remember going to meetings and being told lots of things about relationships. Don't go into a relationship for at least a year and when the year is up maybe look at another year.

‘Blah di blah’ I thought...

I had been depressed for three months and I remember saying to my sister-in-law that I had got this new lease of life in recovery. I started to get identification at meetings and was employable again. She asked how I was doing and I remember saying that I'd be ok when I got a new car, a new job and a new woman in my life. I believed that would make me happy.

I got a job on a building site quite quickly and a boy from my work started talking about setting me up on a blind date. He was speaking to this girl who seemed interested and I remember going from feeling ok about it to being frightened about going on this date. I had gone out drinking after being 3 months in recovery and I had only been back in recovery a week when this date was set up! What was I thinking?

When this girl came in with the boy from my work and his Mrs I felt surprisingly calm, free and comfortable. The important thing for me was to feel accepted and get the feeling of validation, which was huge. She was quiet but it seemed that she did

like me and so I was quite confident when I was talking to her on this date.

What I took from that night was how much I wanted to be needed, wanted and to be special. I got a lot of validation from this woman. The difficulty was that although I liked the validation, it was like a drug and when I didn't get it I became difficult. I thought that she didn't like me. I started to criticise her friends, even ones I haven't met, because they took her attention away from me. I also remember thinking that people would like me because I went out with this intelligent, professional, good looking girl. I had no identity for myself.

She started to withdraw a wee bit and in return my barriers went up, then she ended it. The pain of that showed me how much work I still had to do. As one of the guys said, I had run out of material, I couldn't deal with it and I pushed her away. In early days of recovery I was in the insanity of repeating the same action and expecting a different result. I kept chasing the ease and comfort and validation I got out of romance. Even though somewhere I knew it just wasn't right I kept looking for the validation and approval in relationship after relationship.

In the end I had to take a step back and take a deeper look at what was going on with me and romantic relationships. It's a work in progress.”

# EXERCISE 11: ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

The following poem will help you think about romantic relationships and your recovery journey. Read through the poem and, if it feels right for you, write down your response to the questions underneath. If it is easier to leave this page blank for now, you can do that too.

After a while  
 you learn the subtle difference between  
 holding a hand and chaining a soul  
 and you learn love doesn't mean leaning and  
 company doesn't always mean security.  
 And you begin to learn that kisses aren't  
 contracts and presents aren't always promises  
 and you begin to accept your defeats with your  
 head up and your eyes ahead with the grace  
 of a woman, not the grief of a child.  
 And you learn to build all your roads on today  
 because tomorrow's ground is too uncertain for  
 plans and futures have a way of falling down  
 in mid-flight.  
 After a while you learn that even sunshine  
 burns if you get too much  
 So you plant your own garden and decorate  
 your own soul instead of waiting for someone  
 to bring you flowers  
 And you learn that you really can endure, that  
 you really are strong and you really do have  
 worth  
 and you learn  
 and you learn  
 with every good-bye you learn.

– Veronica A. Shoffstall –

## Questions

1) What do you think the difference is between 'holding a hand' and 'chaining a soul'?

2) How could you 'develop your own spirit' instead of 'waiting for someone to bring you flowers'?

3) What will help you to believe in your own worth?

# ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

One of the great challenges of a life in recovery from addictions is dealing with matters of the romantic heart. Romance is such a trigger for people in early recovery that many established recovery programmes ask that you abstain from romantic relationships until your recovery is well established. Why? The short answer is that both the ecstasy of falling in love and the abject misery of breaking up a relationship are major and serious triggers for addiction relapse.

Human biology has evolved a mechanism to get us to form close pair bonding attachments. Our internal chemical systems trigger some very natural and very appealing hormones when we find ourselves attracted, falling in love or basically lusting after someone. But, as addicts in recovery, the chemical soup triggered by falling in love or rejection in love is very close to the highs and lows experienced while using. On a physical level this can trigger craving for our substance of choice.

Human physiology means that when people are in love they can behave in ways akin to obsessive compulsive disorder. Our day is made if we see the object of our desire; the day is pointless if they don't smile at us. But in early recovery you may have to learn more about the 'in love' state.

When a period of your life has involved chasing highs and avoiding feelings and emotions, there are few psychological defences left against powerful emotions. To love is to fear loss of love also. Many teenagers in love for the first time think they will be unable to cope if the object of their love rejects them. Addicts tend to have one coping mechanism to challenge

problematic romantic emotional and psychological states; get wasted! In recovery we have to learn that feelings of love, loss and rejection are normal human states and that we can survive them. In recovery we embark upon an intense and accelerated programme of psychological growing up.

Romantic relationships can be tricky for people in early recovery. Learning to differentiate the physical biological reactions from the psychological ones can help you to be aware of triggers that relate to the ups and downs of romantic love.

Build your own strong relationship with life, its meaning and purpose. Explore and make your own spiritual connections to give you a bigger perspective on life in general which can help you to deal with finding love and fearing its loss.

## ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS: SOME SUGGESTIONS

You may find the following suggestions help you to reflect on the role of romantic relationships in your recovery journey. Read over the list and think about which ones, if any, you would like to take action on.

- Write your own history of romantic relationships.
- If you have a partner, talk to them about what you are learning in your recovery.
- Create a list of your own personal beliefs about romantic relationships and see how far they match with experiences that you have had.

The space below has been included for you to record any thoughts that you have on this section of your workbook. You could record a suggestion that you have decided to take action on, or how you feel about romantic relationships today. It may feel more appropriate for you to leave this space blank, this is entirely up to you.

“To love oneself is the beginning  
of a lifelong romance.”

– Oscar Wilde, Writer –

# RESOURCES

## Mutual Aid Fellowships

The Mutual Aid Fellowships listed below all have live meetings in Scotland;

- **Alcoholics Anonymous**  
[www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)
- **Narcotics Anonymous**  
[www.ukna.org](http://www.ukna.org)
- **Cocaine Anonymous Scotland**  
[www.cascotland.org.uk](http://www.cascotland.org.uk)
- **SMART Recovery**  
[www.smartrecovery.org.uk](http://www.smartrecovery.org.uk)
- **Gamblers Anonymous Scottish Region**  
[www.gascotland.org](http://www.gascotland.org)
- **Overeaters Anonymous**  
[www.oagb.org.uk](http://www.oagb.org.uk)
- **Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous**  
[www.slaauk.org](http://www.slaauk.org)

There are also mutual aid meetings available in Scotland for your family members:

- **Al-Anon and Alateen**  
[www.al-anonuk.org.uk](http://www.al-anonuk.org.uk)
- **Families Anonymous**  
[www.famanon.org.uk](http://www.famanon.org.uk)

Recovery meetings and/or social networks are available from many of the above fellowships. There are many more than have been listed here.

## Free treatment services

Most free treatment services available in your area of Scotland are listed on the site:

[www.scottishdrugservices.com](http://www.scottishdrugservices.com)

You can also find treatment service listings and contacts on your local Alcohol and Drug Partnerships web page.

## Community based recovery support and activity in Scotland

The Scottish Recovery Consortium website lists the various local recovery support groups and communities in Scotland.

[www.scottishrecoveryconsortium.org](http://www.scottishrecoveryconsortium.org)

## Mindfulness and meditation based recovery approaches

[www.5th-precept.org](http://www.5th-precept.org)

A virtual sit 'n' share meeting.

[www.thebuddhistcentre.com/eightsteps](http://www.thebuddhistcentre.com/eightsteps)

Eight step recovery online meditation resources.

## Online recovery support

[www.intherooms.com](http://www.intherooms.com)

An International online recovery community.

[www.in2recovery.org.uk](http://www.in2recovery.org.uk)

A UK based online recovery blog and news site.

[www.methadonesupport.org](http://www.methadonesupport.org)

A USA based Methadone anonymous support organisation.

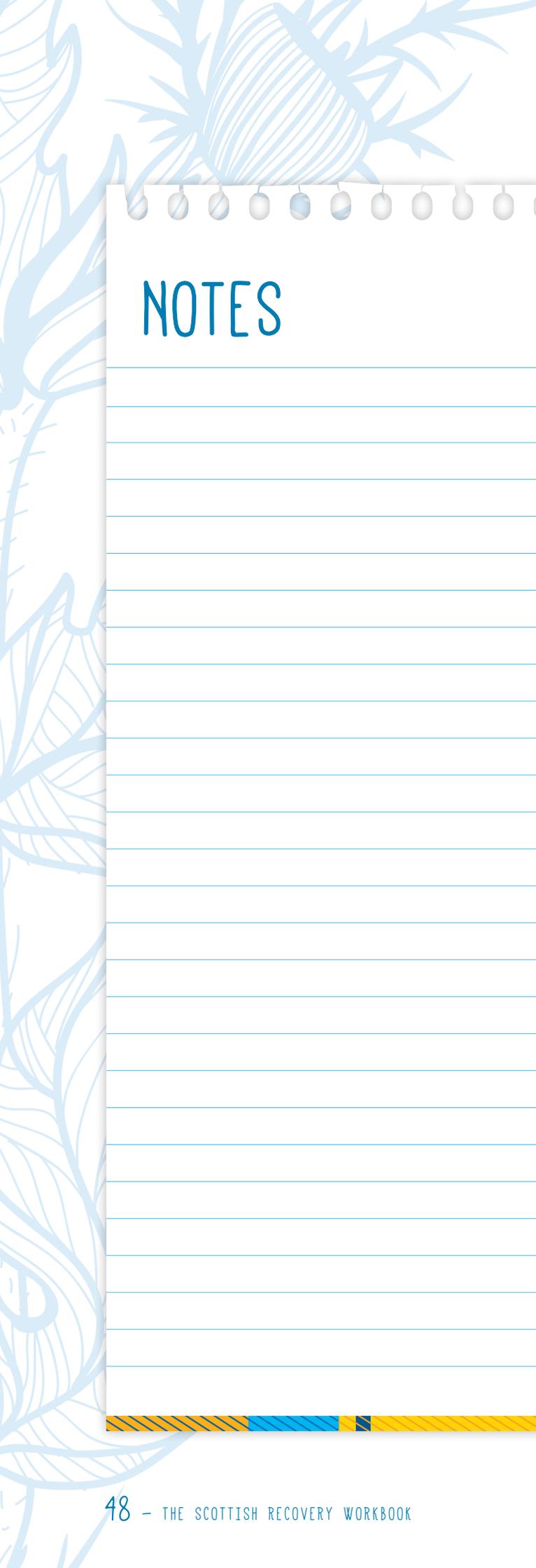
## Downloadable resources

The Scottish Recovery Consortium website has downloadable versions of this workbook and other recovery resources for individuals, recovery groups and treatment providers.

[www.scottishrecoveryconsortium.org](http://www.scottishrecoveryconsortium.org)

# NOTES

A spiral-bound notebook page with a white background and blue horizontal lines. The word "NOTES" is written in blue at the top left. The page is framed by a blue border, and the spiral binding is visible at the top. A decorative border at the bottom consists of alternating yellow and blue diagonal stripes.



NOTES

Lined area for writing notes, featuring a spiral binding at the top and a decorative border at the bottom.



Scottish Recovery Consortium  
2/1, 30 Bell Street  
Glasgow G1 1LG  
Telephone: 0141 559 6931  
[www.scottishrecoveryconsortium.org](http://www.scottishrecoveryconsortium.org)



Charity No SC041181 (Scotland)

