

Finding Yourself Again in Recovery

Deep Dives · The Recovery Files

A guided intensive for rebuilding identity, reclaiming values, and discovering who you are becoming beyond addiction.

Recovery Made Simple • Father Martin's Legacy

— · Assessment Score · Sections Completed · A Note Before You Begin

Finding yourself again is not a single event — it is a daily practice of showing up, being honest, and making choices that align with who you are becoming. Move through this intensive at your own pace. Some sections will be difficult. That difficulty is the work.

In this workbook

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Each reading is followed by its check-in questions and exercises, in the same order as the app. Your scored results are shown in the app.

PART 1 OF 5 · READING

The Identity Thief: What Addiction Does to Who You Are

Addiction is, at its core, an identity thief. It arrives quietly, often masquerading as relief, connection, or escape — and then, piece by piece, it dismantles the person you were and replaces them with someone whose entire inner world orbits around a substance. By the time most people reach the point of seeking help, they look in the mirror and don't fully recognize who is looking back.

The process of identity erosion happens gradually. In the early stages, substance use feels like an addition to who you are — something you do, not something you are. But over time, the substance begins to colonize more and more of your identity. Your schedule, your relationships, your values, your self-concept, your aspirations, your daily rituals — all become organized around the substance.

What addiction steals is subtle and profound. It steals your values — the deeply held beliefs about what matters and how to live. It steals your sense of competence. It steals your authenticity, because the shame of addiction forces the construction of elaborate false selves designed to hide the truth. It steals your future orientation — your ability to imagine and work toward a future self you want to become.

Perhaps most painfully, addiction steals your relationship with yourself. The self-trust, self-respect, and self-knowledge that form the foundation of a stable identity are systematically eroded. You make promises to yourself and break them. You watch yourself do things that contradict everything you believe about who you are. You become a stranger to yourself.

Recovery begins with the recognition that this stolen identity must be reclaimed — or more accurately, rebuilt. The work of "finding yourself again" in recovery is not a passive process of waiting for your old self to return. It is an active, intentional, often painful process of excavating what remained beneath the addiction, understanding what was lost, and constructing something new and more durable than what came before.

Reflection Questions

1. When you think about who you were before addiction fully took hold, what qualities, values, or characteristics come to mind? Who was that person?

2. What specific things did addiction steal from you — relationships, opportunities, values, roles, aspirations? Make a mental inventory.

3. At what point in your substance use did you begin to feel like a "stranger to yourself"? What triggered that shift?

4. Has there been a moment in recovery — even a brief one — when you caught a glimpse of a self you recognized and wanted to be? Describe it.

5. What does "finding yourself again" mean to you personally? What would it look, feel, and sound like to be fully yourself in recovery?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 1 OF 5

Identity Loss & Confusion

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I struggle to describe who I am beyond "someone in recovery"

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I feel disconnected from the person I was before addiction

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I am unsure what I actually value, enjoy, or believe anymore

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I often feel like I am performing a version of myself rather than being myself

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I have difficulty answering the question "Who are you?" with any confidence

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I feel that addiction changed me in ways that are difficult to name or understand

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I notice I take on the identity of whoever I am around rather than having a stable sense of self

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I feel like I lost years of my life and am uncertain who I was supposed to become

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Worksheet 1: Identity Timeline

Mapping the Story of Who You Have Been

Purpose of This Exercise

Your identity did not disappear overnight — it shifted gradually over time. This timeline helps you see the full arc of who you have been: who you were before addiction shaped you, how addiction changed you, and who you are becoming in recovery.

Chapter 1: Before — The Original Self

Reach back to the person you were before active addiction. Think of childhood, early adolescence — before substances became a central organizing force.

I was known for being:

The qualities others saw in you...

The things I loved most:

Activities, interests, passions...

What I believed about myself:

Your self-concept — confident, creative, kind...

My dreams and aspirations:

What did you want to be, do, or become?

My clearest memory of feeling fully myself:

A moment when you were completely you...

Chapter 2: During — The Lost Years

Look honestly at the changes that occurred during active addiction. This is not about shame — it is about seeing clearly.

The version of me I became during active addiction:

Describe who you were at your worst...

The values I compromised or betrayed:

What did you stop living by?

The roles and relationships I lost:

Parent, professional, friend, partner...

What I told myself to keep going:

The stories, rationalizations, denials...

The moment I knew something essential had been lost:

A turning point when you saw yourself clearly...

Chapter 3: Now — The Emerging Self

Who are you right now, in this moment of recovery? This chapter is still being written.

What I know to be true about myself today:

Not what you hope or fear — what you know...

The qualities that survived the addiction:

What was always there, even in the worst of it...

The new qualities I am developing in recovery:

Patience, honesty, courage, discipline...

Who I am becoming — my recovery self:

The person taking shape day by day...

The defining moment of my recovery identity so far:

A moment that captures who you are becoming...

Timeline Synthesis

1. Looking at all three chapters, what is the thread — the through-line — that connects who you were, who you became, and who you are now?

Your synthesis...

2. What surprises you about your own story when you see it laid out this way?

Your synthesis...

3. What would you want Chapter 4 — your future self — to say about who you became?

Your synthesis...

PART 2 OF 5 · READING

Who Were You Before? Excavating the Original Self

One of the most powerful — and most overlooked — questions in recovery is this: who were you before addiction had its way with you? Not the version of you performing recovery, not the version struggling under the weight of shame, but the original person — the one who existed before substances became the organizing principle of your life. Excavating that person is not about nostalgia. It is about recovering raw materials — authentic qualities, buried values, forgotten dreams — that can be brought forward into the life you are building now.

The excavation requires going back further than most people are comfortable going. You need to reach past the years of active addiction, past the early experimentation, and find the person who existed before the world began shaping you away from yourself. This often means returning to childhood. What did you love as a child, before anyone told you your interests were impractical? What were you good at before failure became a persistent companion? What made you laugh, made you curious, made you feel alive in a way that didn't require anything external?

These questions matter because the seeds of authentic identity are planted early. A child who was drawn to animals, or art, or justice, or building things, or caring for others — that draw was not accidental. Addiction may have buried those expressions under years of numbness, shame, and distraction — but it could not extinguish them. They are still there, waiting.

The excavation also involves recovering your original values. Many people in recovery discover, when they do this work honestly, that they have never actually stopped believing in the things they claim to have lost. The person who used substances to cope with the pain of failed relationships still believed in love. The behavior betrayed the values — but the values persisted, underground. Recovering those values is not about manufacturing something new. It is about recognizing what was always there.

Reflection Questions

1. What did you love as a child — activities, subjects, interests — that felt authentically yours, before others defined what you should care about?

2. What character qualities did people notice in you before addiction? What words would those who knew you then have used to describe you?

3. What values did you hold — even if unconsciously — that your addiction-era behavior betrayed? How did those betrayals feel?

4. What pain, loss, or wound in your history contributed to reaching for substances? Can you acknowledge it with compassion rather than judgment?

5. What parts of the pre-addiction you do you most want to recover and bring into your recovery? What feels most essential to who you actually are?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 2 OF 5

Self-Compassion & Self-Acceptance

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I struggle to forgive myself for the things I did during active addiction

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I often speak to myself with more harshness than I would ever use with another person

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. When I make mistakes in recovery, I tend to spiral into shame rather than learn and move on

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I feel that I do not deserve the good things that recovery is bringing into my life

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I find it difficult to hold compassion for the person I was during active addiction

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I believe that self-criticism is necessary and that self-compassion is a form of weakness

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I minimize my growth and progress in recovery and focus more on what I still lack

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I feel fundamentally flawed or "broken" at a level that recovery cannot fully repair

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE**Worksheet 5: Letter to My Past Self**

Compassionate Communication Across Time

The Power of This Letter

The person you were in active addiction was doing the best they could with the resources they had. Writing to that person with compassion rather than contempt is one of the most powerful acts of self-healing available in recovery. This letter is not about excusing behavior — it is about understanding it.

Before You Write: Setting the Stage

1. Picture the version of you who was in the depths of active addiction. What age were they? Where were they? What were they feeling?

2. What was that person most afraid of? What pain were they trying to escape or numb?

3. What did they most need to hear that no one was saying?

Your Letter

Write a letter to your past self — the version of you who was struggling in active addiction. Include: what you understand now that they couldn't see then; what you wish you could have said; the compassion you have for what they were surviving; what you want them to know about who they would become.

Dear [your name]...

After You Write: Reflection

1. What was most surprising or difficult about writing this letter?

2. What emotion surfaced most strongly? What does that tell you about what still needs healing?

3. What would it mean for your recovery to truly extend to your past self the compassion you wrote about?

PART 3 OF 5 · READING

Building Forward: Recovery Is Construction, Not Restoration

Here is one of the most important reframes in the entire recovery process: you are not trying to get back to who you were. You are building forward into who you are becoming. This distinction matters more than most people realize, because the goal of "getting back to normal" — of recovering a pre-addiction self — is both impossible and undersells what recovery actually offers.

It is impossible because you cannot step into the same river twice. The person you were before addiction is gone — not in a tragic sense, but in the simple, irreversible sense that all past selves are gone. That person was real. They mattered. Their qualities, values, and strengths are worth recovering. But you cannot inhabit them again. Recovery is not time travel.

More importantly, the goal of restoration undersells what is actually possible. If you succeed only in returning to who you were before addiction, you return to someone who was vulnerable to addiction. Recovery offers something more radical: the opportunity to become more fully and authentically yourself than you have ever been. Not despite the addiction, but informed by it. The person who has survived addiction, faced themselves honestly, made amends, developed new skills for living, and built something worth protecting has access to a depth of character and resilience that most people who have never faced this crucible will never develop.

Building forward requires three things. First, honest archaeology — excavating what is genuinely worth bringing forward. Second, the courage to release what is not worth bringing forward — old coping patterns, toxic relationships, limiting beliefs. Third, vision — the capacity to imagine a future self who does not yet exist and to make choices in the present that bring that person closer.

Identity in recovery is not discovered passively. It is actively constructed through deliberate choices. Every time you do the next right thing, you are not just making a good decision. You are building a self. You are depositing into the account of the person you are becoming.

Reflection Questions

1. Have you been approaching recovery as "restoration" — trying to get back to who you were? How has that framing helped or limited you?

2. What qualities, values, or strengths from your pre-addiction self are genuinely worth bringing forward into the person you're becoming?

3. What from your past — coping patterns, roles, beliefs, relationships — is not worth bringing forward? What do you need to leave behind?

4. What does your "future self" look like — the person you are building toward in recovery? Describe them as specifically as you can.

5. What is one concrete, daily choice you can make that builds toward that future self? What does "building yourself" look like on an ordinary Tuesday?

YOUR EXERCISE

Worksheet 6: Letter to My Future Self

Visioning the Person You Are Becoming

Why This Letter Matters

Research on future-self continuity shows that people who have a vivid, positive, detailed sense of their future self make better decisions in the present. This letter is not wishful thinking — it is identity construction. You are writing the person you are building toward into existence.

Your Letter

Write a letter from your future self — 3-5 years from now — back to who you are today. What does that person want you to know? What would they tell you about what mattered, what was worth the work, and what to hold onto in the hard days ahead?

Dear [your name], It's [year]. I want to tell you what I know now that you couldn't see then...

Building the Bridge

1. What is the single most important thing you need to do — or stop doing — today to honor the future self you just wrote to?

2. What would your future self say about your current recovery support system? Are you building what that person needs?

3. Write one promise to your future self — something you commit to, in writing, right now.

PART 4 OF 5 · READING

Values, Strengths & Character: The Architecture of Your New Self

If identity is a house, then values and strengths are the architecture — the structural elements that determine the shape, durability, and character of the whole. You cannot build a stable, lasting sense of self without knowing what you stand for (values) and what you are genuinely good at (strengths). For people in recovery, this work is both urgent and often unfamiliar.

Values are not things you aspire to. They are things you believe — deeply, often pre-verbally — about what matters, what is right, how life should be lived. The trouble with values in active addiction is that they become impossible to live by. This gap between values and behavior is the engine of shame, and shame, unaddressed, drives continued use. Recovery requires closing that gap — not by lowering your values to meet your behavior, but by raising your behavior to meet your values, one day at a time.

Character strengths are equally important and equally underrecognized. Research by psychologists Martin Seligman and Christopher Peterson identified 24 universal character strengths — qualities like bravery, kindness, creativity, perseverance, humor, love of learning, gratitude, and leadership. Knowing and using your signature strengths is one of the most reliable predictors of wellbeing and authentic functioning. You have genuine strengths — developed over a lifetime — that survived the addiction and are available to you now.

Many people in recovery are so accustomed to focusing on what they have done wrong, what they lack, and what needs to be fixed, that they have no functional relationship with their own strengths. Building a new identity requires a different focus — not ignoring the deficits, but also genuinely knowing and celebrating what you are good at.

Character — the convergence of values and strengths in consistent behavior over time — is what creates trustworthiness: first to others, then to yourself. When you can trust yourself — when your self-concept is grounded in the accumulated evidence of your own integrity — you have built something that addiction cannot easily steal again.

Reflection Questions

1. What are your top 5 core values — the things you believe most deeply about what matters and how to live? How did you identify them?

2. In active addiction, which of your values were most frequently violated? What was the cost of those violations to your sense of self?

3. What are your genuine character strengths — the things you are authentically good at? Can you name at least 5 without deflecting or minimizing them?

4. How are you using your strengths in your recovery right now? Where could you be deploying them more intentionally?

5. What does a values-aligned day look like for you — a day where your behavior and your beliefs are in sync? Describe it in detail.

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 3 OF 5

Values Clarity & Alignment

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I have difficulty naming what I most deeply value — what I believe in and stand for

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I feel that my current behavior is frequently out of alignment with what I believe is right

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I make decisions without a clear internal framework of values to guide them

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I notice that I am living the values of others (family, culture, peers) rather than my own

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I feel pulled in conflicting directions and unsure what actually matters most to me

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I have never seriously examined what I value and why I value it

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I experience shame that I believe comes from the gap between my values and my behavior

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I am unclear about my purpose — why I am here and what my life is meant to contribute

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Worksheet 3: Values Excavation

Discovering What You Actually Stand For

Values Are Not Aspirations

Values are not things you want to be. They are things you already believe, at a deep level, about what matters. The work here is not to choose good values — it is to excavate the ones that are authentically yours.

Step 1: Value Recognition

Tap the values that feel most authentically and deeply yours. Then write your top 7 below.

☐ Honesty ☐ Courage ☐ Loyalty ☐ Family ☐ Service ☐ Faith ☐ Freedom ☐ Creativity ☐ Justice ☐ Compassion ☐ Integrity ☐ Perseverance ☐ Humility ☐ Gratitude ☐ Growth ☐ Connection ☐ Responsibility ☐ Adventure ☐ Excellence ☐ Health ☐ Forgiveness ☐ Purpose ☐ Humor ☐ Community ☐ Peace ☐ Authenticity ☐ Discipline ☐ Kindness ☐ Love ☐ Wisdom

My top 7 values:

List your 7 most important values...

Step 2: Values Compass

1. How would your daily life look different if your behavior were fully aligned with your top values?

2. Name one decision in the next 24 hours you can make specifically to honor one of your core values.

3. Write your personal values statement — a 2-3 sentence declaration of what you stand for and how you choose to live.

PART 5 OF 5 · READING

Belonging, Purpose & Connection: Finding Your Place Again

Finding yourself again in recovery is not only an inward journey — it is also a relational and communal one. Humans are social creatures, wired for belonging, and a stable, positive identity is not something that can be constructed in isolation. We become ourselves in relationship — in the mirror of being seen, known, and accepted by others; in the shared commitments of community; in the experience of contributing something that matters beyond ourselves.

The question of belonging is particularly acute for people in recovery, because addiction typically destroys communities of belonging while creating a false substitute. The drinking crowd, the using partners, the shared rituals of addiction — these feel like community, and in some ways they are. But they are communities organized around a substance rather than around genuine human values. When you leave the substance behind, you often leave that community behind as well, and the result is a social void that can feel terrifying.

For many people, the answer begins with recovery community — AA, NA, SMART Recovery, faith communities, therapy groups, and the expanding ecosystem of peer support. But recovery community is not the only community that matters. Finding yourself again means finding your place in all the communities that compose a full human life — family, friendship, neighborhood, profession, faith tradition, civic life.

Purpose is the other essential ingredient — the sense that your life is organized around something that matters, that your presence in the world makes a difference. Research confirms that purpose is not a luxury — it is a fundamental human need. People with a clear sense of purpose live longer, recover more fully from setbacks, experience less depression and anxiety, and maintain healthier behaviors over time.

In active addiction, purpose is often reduced to a single, consuming drive. Recovery invites you to reclaim a richer and more sustaining purpose. This might take the shape of a restored commitment to family, or through service — using your own hard-won recovery to support others who are still struggling. Purpose is not always dramatic. Often it is simply the decision to live fully — to inhabit your life rather than escaping it.

Reflection Questions

1. Where do you currently experience a sense of belonging in recovery? Where are your people, and what does that community offer you?

2. What communities — beyond recovery community — do you want to belong to? Where do you feel drawn to connect?

3. What is your sense of purpose in recovery right now? What gets you up in the morning beyond obligation or routine?

4. How does service to others — sponsorship, volunteering, mentoring, advocacy — figure into your recovery identity? What do you have to give?

5. What would a full, purposeful, connected life look like for you five years from now? Describe it with as much specificity as you can bring.

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 4 OF 5

Belonging & Social Identity

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I feel like I do not fully belong anywhere — not in recovery community and not in the "normal" world

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I am uncertain who my real people are now that I am in recovery

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I miss the social connection that substances once provided, even though I know it was false

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I feel awkward, out of place, or unable to connect in social situations without substances

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I have lost most of my pre-recovery friendships and have not yet replaced them

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I am not sure how to present my recovery identity to people who were not part of that life

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I feel like my recovery makes me different from others in ways that make true connection difficult

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I experience loneliness as a significant challenge in my recovery

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 5 OF 5

Purpose, Strengths & Future Orientation

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I struggle to imagine a meaningful, fulfilling future for myself in recovery

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I am unaware of my genuine character strengths — what I am truly good at

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I feel like my past has permanently limited the possibilities available to me

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I lack a clear sense of direction or purpose that motivates me to keep going

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I minimize or dismiss my accomplishments and progress in recovery

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I am uncertain what I want to do with my life, my time, or my energy

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I do not have goals or aspirations that feel genuinely mine (not just what others expect)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I feel that my best years and best opportunities are behind me because of addiction

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Worksheet 10: My Recovery Identity Statement

Declaring Who You Are Becoming

Identity Becomes Behavior

The most durable change in recovery happens not when people try harder to behave differently, but when they come to see themselves differently. This statement is not a goal. It is a declaration of the self you are building and inhabiting, right now, one day at a time.

Part 1: Raw Material Collection

My 3 most important values:

What I stand for...

My 3 signature strengths:

What I am genuinely good at...

The roles that matter most to me:

Parent, friend, professional, person of faith...

What I have survived and built in recovery:

Evidence of your resilience...

What I am no longer willing to be:

What you are leaving behind...

What I am committed to becoming:

The direction of your life...

Part 2: Draft Your Statement

Using your raw material above, write your Recovery Identity Statement. Begin with "I am..." and write in the present tense — not "I want to be" but "I am." This should be personal, specific, and grounded in evidence.

I am a person who...

Part 3: Final Statement

I am...

Consider writing this on a card you can carry. Read it every morning. Let it become true.