

The Half-Light

A Journey Through Early Recovery

Experience, Strength & Hope · The Recovery Files

A powerful narrative exploring the challenges of honesty and transparency in early recovery.

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The world looks different now. Sharper somehow, yet simultaneously more fragile. I've been sober for forty-two days—not that I'm counting obsessively or anything—but the ground beneath my feet still feels uncertain, like walking on a frozen lake where any step might break through the surface.

Before entering recovery, dishonesty had become as natural as breathing. I'd constructed elaborate architectures of deception: convenient fictions about where I'd been, creative accounting of how much I'd consumed, carefully edited versions of events presented to different people in my life. These weren't just lies to others; they were lies I told myself, too. I can stop whenever I want. I'm just having fun. Everyone does this.

The counselors call it "selective information sharing," which sounds almost professional, like I'd been curating data rather than hiding in plain sight. In group therapy, they explained how addiction hijacks the brain's survival mechanisms—how the lies became necessary protection for the disease to continue. My dishonesty wasn't just a character flaw; it was a symptom.

In early recovery, I'm learning that honesty isn't simply the absence of lies. It's an active practice, one that feels dangerous and exposing.

When my sponsor asked me to complete that self-assessment about dishonesty, I instinctively wanted to manipulate the answers to appear "better" than I am—even though the only person who would see it was me. Old habits.

The first time I spoke honestly in group about the depth of my manipulation—how I'd stolen medication from my grandmother's bathroom cabinet while pretending to help her after surgery—my hands trembled so violently I had to sit on them. The shame felt like it might physically consume me. But something unexpected happened: no one

recoiled in disgust. Instead, heads nodded in recognition. One woman squeezed my shoulder as she walked past during break.

I'm discovering that the half-truths I once thought protected me actually kept me isolated. Each omission, each carefully constructed narrative, was another brick in a wall between myself and genuine connection. The irony is that while I thought I was maintaining control through selective sharing, I was actually surrendering my power to the addiction.

Recovery demands a radical honesty that still terrifies me. When cravings surge through my body—and they do, with alarming frequency and intensity—my first impulse remains concealment. No one needs to know how close I came to relapse yesterday. If I tell my counselor about these thoughts, they'll think I'm not committed enough. These thoughts arise automatically, the defensive reflexes of a mind conditioned by years of addiction.

The hardest part isn't even the big revelations but the daily practice of small truths. Admitting when I'm struggling. Acknowledging jealousy when others seem to find recovery easier. Confessing when I've been fantasizing about using. Speaking aloud the petty resentments that accumulate like dust in the corners of my mind.

Sometimes I wonder if complete honesty is even possible. There are truths I'm only beginning to recognize about myself—patterns of thinking, emotional blind spots, motivations I've never examined.

How can I be honest about what I don't yet understand? Recovery, I'm learning, isn't about achieving perfect transparency overnight but about developing a willingness to look unflinchingly at myself and share what I see, however imperfectly.

The counselors say that secrets keep us sick. In moments of clarity, I can see how my carefully managed information—what I chose to reveal and what I kept hidden—maintained the perfect conditions for my addiction to thrive. Darkness, isolation, shame: these were the elements my disease required.

Recovery asks me to step into the light, to allow myself to be seen—messy, flawed, and struggling. Some days, this feels like freedom. Other days, it feels like standing naked in a crowded room. But I'm beginning to understand that the alternative—returning to that carefully constructed world of half-truths—leads inevitably back to the same destination.

When I rated myself on that self-assessment, giving honest scores rather than aspirational ones, I recognized patterns that had been invisible to me before. My highest scores were around fear of judgment and presenting a false picture of my progress. The smallest dishonesty—exaggerating how well I'm doing in recovery when talking to my mother, for instance—creates a subtle distance between my experience and my expression of it. And in that space, addiction finds room to grow.

Each honest moment, however uncomfortable, is a small act of reclaiming my authentic self from the distortions of addiction. When I admit to my sponsor that I drove past my old dealer's neighborhood "just to see," I'm choosing recovery over the comfortable familiarity of deception. When I acknowledge in group that sometimes sobriety feels like an unbearable loss rather than a gift, I'm choosing connection over isolation.

Recovery isn't just about abstaining from substances; it's about building a life where I no longer need to hide—from others or from myself.

The path forward isn't straight or simple. There are days when honesty feels impossible, when the old patterns of selective sharing seem safer than vulnerability. But I'm beginning to trust that the discomfort of truth leads somewhere worthwhile, while the temporary comfort of dishonesty leads back to places I never want to revisit.

In this new landscape of radical honesty, I'm discovering parts of myself I never knew existed beneath the layers of deception. Some days, I catch glimpses of who I might become if I continue this journey—someone whose inside and outside match, someone capable of genuine connection.

For now, I take it one truth at a time, one day at a time, trusting that each honest moment creates more space for healing than any elaborately constructed fiction ever could.

THE MATCHED SELF-ASSESSMENT

Honesty and Transparency in Recovery Assessment

This self-assessment is designed to help individuals in recovery evaluate their patterns around honesty, transparency, and information sharing. The assessment explores both active dishonesty (deliberate deception) and passive dishonesty (selective disclosure and omission).

Understanding these patterns can illuminate areas where greater honesty may support recovery growth. There are no right or wrong answers - the goal is to promote self-awareness and identify opportunities for positive change.

Instructions

For each statement, rate how often it applies to you using the scale:

- 1 - Never: This doesn't apply to you
- 2 - Rarely: This occasionally applies
- 3 - Sometimes: This sometimes applies
- 4 - Often: This frequently applies
- 5 - Always: This consistently applies

Part 1: Active Dishonesty

1. I find myself lying or withholding information from others about my substance use or addictive behaviors
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always
2. I deliberately mislead others about my whereabouts, activities, or relationships
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always
3. I tell different versions of events to different people to manage their reactions
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always
4. I make up explanations or excuses to avoid difficult conversations
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always
5. I hide evidence of my behaviors or activities from others
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always
6. I lie about small things even when there's no clear reason to do so
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always
7. I minimize or downplay the consequences of my actions
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always
8. I exaggerate or embellish stories to make myself look better
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always
9. I deny things that I know are true when confronted
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always

10. I make promises I don't intend to keep to manage others' responses
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always

Part 2: Selective Disclosure

11. I tell half-truths or only share certain details to avoid revealing the full extent of my struggles
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always
12. I withhold information that I think might change how others view me
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always
13. I present an incomplete picture of my recovery progress or challenges
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always
14. I avoid topics that might require complete honesty
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always
15. I change the subject when conversations get too personal or probing
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always
16. I share different levels of information with different people to maintain control
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always
17. I wait to see how others react before deciding how much to share
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always
18. I filter my experiences to show only what I think others want to hear
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always
19. I maintain separate spheres of my life that don't intersect
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always
20. I hold back parts of my story even in recovery settings
☐ 1 Never ☐ 2 Rarely ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Often ☐ 5 Always

Reflection Questions

Understanding Patterns

1. In what situations do you most often find yourself being dishonest or selective with information?

2. What emotions typically arise when you consider being completely honest?

3. How do your patterns of dishonesty in recovery mirror patterns from active addiction?

Trust and Relationships

4. Who do you feel most able to be honest with, and what makes those relationships feel safer?

5. How has dishonesty affected your ability to form authentic connections?

6. What would need to change for you to feel safe being more transparent?

Fear and Protection

7. What are you most afraid would happen if you were completely honest?

8. What aspects of yourself are you trying to protect through dishonesty?

9. How might your fear of others' reactions be limiting your recovery?

Recovery Impact

10. How does maintaining dishonesty drain energy from your recovery?

11. What recovery opportunities might open up with greater honesty?

12. How might complete honesty support your long-term recovery goals?

Action Planning

Based on your assessment results, select 2-3 specific areas where dishonesty or selective sharing are impacting your recovery. For each area:

1. Identify the current pattern

- What specific behaviors need to change?
- What triggers these behaviors?
- What fears or beliefs maintain the pattern?

2. Define desired changes

- What would honest behavior look like?
- What support would you need?
- What benefits might result?

3. Create an implementation plan

- Start with small, manageable steps
- Include specific accountability measures
- Plan for potential obstacles
- Set realistic timelines

Your scores, and what they mean, are in the app.