

Father Martin's Feelings

Father Martin's Chalk Talks · The Recovery Files

"Handle Them — or They Will Handle You"

A Recovery Intensive in the Spirit of Father Joseph Martin · The Recovery Files

Father Martin's Warning · Unhandled · Feelings grow, distort thinking, drive relapse · Handled · Acknowledged, processed, expressed, released

"The thinking must be treated as much as the drinking." — Father Martin

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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 6 · READING

Father Martin's Core Philosophy: "Handle Them or They Will Handle You"

In the annals of addiction recovery, few voices have carried more weight — or more warmth — than that of Father Joseph Martin. A priest in long-term recovery himself, Father Martin spent decades traveling the country and the world, speaking about alcoholism and addiction with the clarity of someone who had lived it and the compassion of someone who understood it.

His approach was simple, direct, and unforgettable: he met people exactly where they were, used language they could understand, and told them the truth without shame or judgment.

Of all the topics Father Martin addressed in his celebrated lectures and talks, feelings — specifically the management of negative feelings — occupied a central place. He understood something that decades of clinical research would later confirm: that untreated emotional distress is among the most potent drivers of relapse.

His famous warning, delivered with characteristic directness, captures the entire framework: "Handle them — or they will handle you."

This single sentence contains everything you need to know about the relationship between feelings and recovery. Feelings are not passive. They are not neutral. They do not simply sit quietly inside you, waiting to be addressed on your schedule. They are active forces.

Left unmanaged, they grow. They organize your thinking. They shape your decisions. They drive your behavior. And for someone in recovery from a substance use disorder, they will eventually drive behavior in a direction that threatens everything recovery has built.

Father Martin's philosophy was not that feelings are bad. It was that unhandled feelings are dangerous — particularly the negative ones. Anger that is nursed becomes resentment. Resentment that is fed becomes hatred. Self-pity that goes unchecked becomes a worldview. Shame that is avoided becomes the engine of the next relapse.

None of these emotional trajectories are inevitable. Each one has an exit — a point at which the feeling can be acknowledged, processed, and released rather than allowed to build into something that takes over.

The profound gift of Father Martin's teaching is that he made this accessible. He did not require sophisticated psychological vocabulary or years of therapy to understand. He simply asked: "What are you feeling? Have you talked to someone about it? Have you taken it to a meeting? Have you prayed about it?"

The action steps were simple. The commitment they required was not — because the deep human habit of stuffing, suppressing, and denying negative feelings runs deeper than most people realize.

Reflection Questions

1. When you first hear "Handle them or they will handle you," what feeling does that evoke? Does it feel like a warning, a relief, a challenge, or something else?

2. Can you identify a time in your life — in active addiction or in recovery — when unhandled feelings "handled you"? What happened?

3. Father Martin spoke from personal experience. How does knowing he was a person in recovery himself affect how you receive his teaching?

4. What specific feelings do you most need to "handle" right now, in this stage of your recovery?

5. What does it mean to you personally to "handle" a difficult feeling? What does that look like in practice?

YOUR EXERCISE

Personal Feelings Inventory

Naming What Is Already There

"

You can't handle what you can't name. The first step is to get honest about what's actually happening inside.

— Father Martin tradition

How to Use This Inventory

Check every feeling that has been present for you in the past 7 days — not just today, and not just the ones you're comfortable admitting. Then complete the reflection questions below. Father Martin's prescription begins with honesty: you cannot handle what you refuse to name.

Anger Family

- ☐ Angry ☐ Furious ☐ Resentful ☐ Bitter ☐ Irritated ☐ Annoyed ☐ Hostile ☐ Contemptuous ☐ Frustrated ☐ Rageful

Fear Family

- ☐ Afraid ☐ Anxious ☐ Panicked ☐ Worried ☐ Terrified ☐ Nervous ☐ Dread ☐ Insecure ☐ Overwhelmed ☐ Paranoid

Sadness / Self-Pity Family

- ☐ Sad ☐ Hopeless ☐ Defeated ☐ Pitying myself ☐ Lonely ☐ Empty ☐ Grieving ☐ Depressed ☐ Despairing ☐ Melancholy

Shame / Guilt Family

- ☐ Ashamed ☐ Guilty ☐ Worthless ☐ Humiliated ☐ Regretful ☐ Inadequate ☐ Disgusted with myself ☐ Embarrassed ☐ Exposed ☐ Like a failure

Positive Feelings Family

- ☐ Grateful ☐ Hopeful ☐ Peaceful ☐ Content ☐ Joyful ☐ Proud ☐ Connected ☐ Accepted ☐ Energized ☐ Willing

Reflection 1

1. Which feeling above is currently most dominant for you? Describe how it is showing up day to day.

Reflection 2

2. Which feeling above are you most tempted to avoid, deny, or stuff down? What makes it the hardest one to sit with?

Reflection 3

3. Did naming these feelings change anything — even slightly? What shifted when you put a word to what you are carrying?

Reflection 4

4. Look at the positive feelings. Are any present, even faintly? What conditions in your life allow those feelings to exist?

Reflection 5

5. Which of the feelings you checked would Father Martin identify as most "dangerous" to your recovery right now? Why?

PART 2 OF 6 · READING

Negative Feelings as Dangerous Luxuries: Anger, Resentment & Self-Pity

Father Martin was not a man who minced words. When he described certain negative emotions — particularly anger, resentment, and self-pity — as "luxuries" that people in recovery simply cannot afford, he was not being dismissive of human experience. He was being protective of human survival.

He had seen too many men and women lose their sobriety to these three emotions to romanticize them. He called them as he saw them: dangers dressed up as feelings.

Why "luxuries"? Because luxuries are things that feel good to have, that provide a sense of comfort or pleasure or satisfaction, but that are not necessities — and that can, if indulged beyond reason, cause harm.

The person nursing a resentment experiences something that resembles satisfaction. There is a grim pleasure in maintaining a grievance, in being certain that you were wronged and that the other person deserves your continued hostility.

The person wallowing in self-pity finds a strange comfort in the certainty that their suffering is unique, that the world has treated them especially badly, that they are more deserving of sympathy than others receive.

These feelings have a payoff. That is what makes them seductive. And that is precisely what makes them dangerous for someone in recovery.

Anger, in Father Martin's framework, was the most immediate danger. He did not teach that anger is always wrong — he was too honest for that. He taught that unprocessed anger becomes resentment, and resentment is the relapse waiting to happen.

The alcoholic who leaves a meeting seething, who carries the anger home, who lets it ferment overnight, who wakes up still stewing — that person is building the case for drinking. Not consciously. Not deliberately. But the emotional mathematics are simple: anger fed becomes resentment, resentment grown large enough becomes unbearable, and the nearest exit from unbearable is the bottle.

Resentment — which comes from the Latin "re-sentire," meaning "to feel again" — is the practice of replaying a wound, keeping it fresh, preventing it from healing.

Father Martin was particularly emphatic about resentment because it is so common in people with substance use disorders and so perfectly designed to drive relapse. Every time you replay the resentment, you re-experience the original pain. Every replay adds interest. The wound that was once manageable becomes a defining injury.

And the person who caused it — who has perhaps moved on, who may not even remember the incident — continues to live, rent-free, in your emotional real estate, poisoning your recovery without even knowing it.

The bitter irony Father Martin loved to point out: you drink to punish them, and they are completely unaffected.

Self-pity is perhaps the most insidious of the three because it so convincingly masquerades as legitimate suffering. Father Martin was clear: your pain is real. Your losses are real. Your hardships are real.

The problem is not the pain — it is the habitual dwelling in the role of victim, the cultivation of a story in which you are uniquely disadvantaged, the endless enumeration of what you don't have and what has been done to you.

Self-pity is not the same as grief, which moves and heals. Self-pity is static. It circles. And circling self-pity in a person in recovery creates precisely the emotional condition that cries out for chemical relief.

Father Martin's prescription was not to deny these feelings — it was to refuse to set up housekeeping in them. Feel the anger? Yes. Sit in it for a week? No. Acknowledge the hurt? Absolutely. Build a monument to it and return to it daily? Not if you want to stay sober.

Reflection Questions

1. Which of the three "dangerous luxuries" — anger, resentment, or self-pity — is most present in your current recovery experience? Be specific.

2. Father Martin said people drink to punish others and the others don't even know it. Has this been true in your experience? Describe a specific resentment and who it has actually hurt most.

3. What is the "payoff" of your most significant negative feeling? What does holding onto it give you, even temporarily?

4. What is the difference between feeling your pain honestly versus "setting up housekeeping" in it? Where is the line for you?

5. If you committed to carrying no resentment older than 24 hours, what would you have to do differently starting today?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 1 OF 5

Negative Feelings as Dangerous Luxuries

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

1. I regularly hold onto anger, resentment, or bitterness without addressing it
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
2. I engage in self-pity — feeling like the world is unfair to me specifically
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. Resentment toward people from my past occupies significant mental space
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. I dwell on past hurts and wrongs done to me even when they are not relevant to the present
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I recognize that my negative feelings have "handled me" — driven my choices and behaviors
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I allow envy or jealousy to fester rather than expressing or releasing them
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I use anger or resentment as a form of self-protection or armor
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. I have allowed negative emotions to serve as justifications for drinking or using
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Resentment & Anger Inventory

The Relapse Hiding in Plain Sight

"

You drink to punish them — and they don't even know it.

— Father Martin

Father Martin's Warning

Resentment means 're-feeling' — you are re-experiencing the original injury every time you revisit it. The wound cannot heal while you keep reopening it. For each resentment below, you will name it, trace its cost, and identify a specific action step. This is not therapy — it is recovery work.

Resentment 1: A person from your past whom you still feel anger or bitterness toward

Who or what is it, and what specifically did they do?

How long have you been carrying this? How much mental and emotional space does it occupy?

Who has this resentment actually hurt most — them or you? How has holding it affected your recovery?

What is one action you could take this week to begin releasing this resentment? (Pray for them, talk to sponsor, write a letter you don't send, make amends)

Resentment 2: A person currently in your life who frustrates, irritates, or angers you

Who or what is it, and what specifically did they do?

How long have you been carrying this? How much mental and emotional space does it occupy?

Who has this resentment actually hurt most — them or you? How has holding it affected your recovery?

What is one action you could take this week to begin releasing this resentment? (Pray for them, talk to sponsor, write a letter you don't send, make amends)

Resentment 3: A family member toward whom you carry unresolved resentment

Who or what is it, and what specifically did they do?

How long have you been carrying this? How much mental and emotional space does it occupy?

Who has this resentment actually hurt most — them or you? How has holding it affected your recovery?

What is one action you could take this week to begin releasing this resentment? (Pray for them, talk to sponsor, write a letter you don't send, make amends)

Resentment 4: Someone who wronged you during your active addiction

Who or what is it, and what specifically did they do?

How long have you been carrying this? How much mental and emotional space does it occupy?

Who has this resentment actually hurt most — them or you? How has holding it affected your recovery?

What is one action you could take this week to begin releasing this resentment? (Pray for them, talk to sponsor, write a letter you don't send, make amends)

Resentment 5: An institution, system, or organization you resent (employer, court, treatment system)

Who or what is it, and what specifically did they do?

How long have you been carrying this? How much mental and emotional space does it occupy?

Who has this resentment actually hurt most — them or you? How has holding it affected your recovery?

What is one action you could take this week to begin releasing this resentment? (Pray for them, talk to sponsor, write a letter you don't send, make amends)

Resentment Inventory Summary

1. Which resentment has the most power over you right now — which one occupies the most space? What does it cost you daily?

2. Father Martin said resentments are "luxuries" people in recovery cannot afford. Do you believe that? What would you lose by giving them up?

3. What is the difference between processing anger healthily (feeling it, expressing it, moving through it) and carrying it as a resentment? Where is that line for you?

4. Which of your resentments have the greatest potential to drive a relapse? Why that one specifically?

5. Write a one-sentence commitment about how you will handle your most dangerous resentment this week.

YOUR EXERCISE

Self-Pity Pattern Excavation

The Victim Story and How to Rewrite It

"

Self-pity is the most common cause of dry drunk. The person is sober but miserable — and miserable people eventually use.

— Father Martin tradition

Understanding Self-Pity in Recovery

Self-pity is different from grief. Grief moves, heals, and transforms. Self-pity circles. It keeps you locked in the role of the person to whom things happened, rather than the person who chooses what happens next. Father Martin saw self-pity as one of the most dangerous emotional patterns for people in recovery — not because the underlying pain is invalid, but because the way self-pity processes it leads to relapse.

Reflection 1

1. Write out your "victim story" in its most elaborate form — the story of everything that has been done to you, everything you have lost, all the ways life has been unfair to you. Get it all out.

Reflection 2

2. What is the payoff of this story? What does it give you — protection, sympathy, justification, connection, identity? Be brutally honest.

Reflection 3

3. What does holding this story cost you? In recovery, in relationships, in your ability to take agency over your life? What has it taken from you?

Reflection 4

4. Rewrite the same facts from the victim story, but this time in the voice of agency — what choices did you make? What can you choose now? What is still possible?

Reflection 5

5. Is there genuine grief underneath the self-pity — a real loss that deserves to be mourned? What would it look like to grieve it honestly, rather than to circle it as self-pity?

Reflection 6

6. Father Martin said gratitude is the antidote to self-pity. Write 10 specific things — people, moments, capacities, circumstances — that are genuinely good in your life right now.

PART 3 OF 6 · READING

The Magnification Rule: What You Focus On Grows

One of Father Martin's most practical and psychologically sophisticated teachings was what we might call the Magnification Rule. He observed, through decades of working with people in recovery, a pattern so consistent it had the quality of a natural law: whatever you focus on grows.

Focus on the wrong in your life, and unhappiness expands. Focus on the good and the beautiful — even the small good, even the fractional beautiful — and happiness begins to grow in its place.

This is not the same as toxic positivity. Father Martin was not telling people to pretend their problems didn't exist, to slap a smile on genuine suffering, or to deny the reality of their difficulties. He was making an observation about the architecture of the human mind and how, particularly in recovery, that architecture can be consciously redirected.

The mind is a meaning-making machine. It takes in the enormous complexity of experience — thousands of sensory inputs, interactions, events, memories, and possibilities — and creates a narrative. That narrative is not objective reality; it is a curated selection of reality, shaped by what we attend to.

The person in early recovery who wakes up and immediately catalogs everything that is wrong — the health damaged by years of use, the relationships strained, the finances depleted, the professional opportunities missed, the years that feel lost — is feeding a narrative of devastation.

And that narrative is not untrue. But it is also radically incomplete, because it excludes the fact that they woke up sober today. That someone in their life still loves them. That the sun came up. That coffee exists. That the body, damaged as it is, is already beginning to repair itself.

Father Martin taught that gratitude is not a feeling you wait to arrive — it is a practice you choose to engage in before the feeling shows up. You do not feel grateful first and then give thanks. You choose to look for what is good, name it, and express thanks for it, and the feeling of gratitude follows.

This is profoundly counter-intuitive to most people's emotional experience, but it is borne out by decades of research in positive psychology. Gratitude practices — the deliberate, daily enumeration of specific things for which one is thankful — produce measurable improvements in mood, sleep, relationship quality, and — critically — resistance to substance use.

The Magnification Rule has a direct corollary for people in recovery: the stories you tell yourself about your recovery expand. The person who tells the story "I'm a failure who ruined everything and will probably relapse again" feeds that narrative with every retelling, making failure more likely.

The person who tells the story "I am a person who struggled with something powerful and chose, today, to fight back" feeds a different narrative — one of agency, resilience, and possibility.

Father Martin was also very practical about this. He didn't ask people to completely transform their inner narratives overnight. He asked them to make "at least an attempt" — to look for one thing that was good, to name it, to be present with it.

That small, consistent attempt, made daily, gradually shifts the center of gravity of the mind's attention. It is not dramatic. It is not instantaneous. But it is real, and it works.

Reflection Questions

1. What is the primary narrative you are currently telling yourself about your recovery? Write it out in one or two sentences, as honestly as you can.

2. Is that narrative more focused on what has gone wrong, or what is possible? How does it make you feel when you hold it?

3. Identify three specific things that are genuinely good in your life right now — not generic platitudes, but real, specific things. Then sit with each one for 30 seconds.

4. Father Martin said gratitude is a practice, not a feeling you wait for. What would a daily gratitude practice look like for you, concretely and specifically?

5. How does the story you are telling yourself about your recovery affect your motivation, your willingness, and your daily choices? Write an example.

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 2 OF 5

The Magnification Rule: What You Focus On Grows

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

1. I spend more time focused on what is wrong in my life than what is right

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. When one thing goes badly, I tend to catastrophize — concluding everything is ruined
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. I struggle to notice the "good and beautiful" around me, even when it is present
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. Negative news, social media, or conversations tend to dominate my mental landscape
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I frequently compare my situation unfavorably to others
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I find it difficult to hold onto positive experiences — they fade quickly while negatives linger
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. My default interpretations of ambiguous situations tend to be negative
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. I am more practiced at complaining than at expressing gratitude
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Magnification Tracker & Gratitude Builder

What You Focus On, Grows

"

Focus on the good and beautiful and happiness will grow. Focus on the negative and unhappiness expands.

— Father Martin

The Balance Exercise

For each topic below, you will first list the negatives — what your mind naturally gravitates toward — and then deliberately search for the positives. The goal is not to deny the negatives, but to train your attention to see the whole picture. Over time, this practice literally rewires the brain's default focus.

A day that started badly

THE NEGATIVES (what your mind focuses on)

List every bad thing about this day you can think of

THE POSITIVES (deliberately searching now)

Now list every good, neutral, or okay thing about the same day

Which list came more easily? What does that tell you about your current default focus?

Your current recovery situation**THE NEGATIVES (what your mind focuses on)**

What is wrong, difficult, or challenging about your recovery right now?

THE POSITIVES (deliberately searching now)

What is working, improving, or genuinely good about your recovery right now?

Which list came more easily? What does that tell you about your current default focus?

Yourself, honestly assessed**THE NEGATIVES (what your mind focuses on)**

What do you criticize or dislike about yourself?

THE POSITIVES (deliberately searching now)

What is genuinely good, resilient, or admirable about you?

Which list came more easily? What does that tell you about your current default focus?

Your relationships**THE NEGATIVES (what your mind focuses on)**

What is broken, strained, or painful in your relationships right now?

THE POSITIVES (deliberately searching now)

What is working, healing, or valuable in your relationships right now?

Which list came more easily? What does that tell you about your current default focus?

Daily Gratitude Practice Design

Father Martin's Prescription

Gratitude is not a feeling you wait to arrive — it is a practice you choose before the feeling shows up. Design your personal gratitude practice below.

1. List 10 specific things you are genuinely grateful for right now — not generic ("my family") but specific ("my sister called me last Tuesday and she didn't give up on me").

2. What time of day will you practice gratitude? Morning, evening, or both? Where will you do it — in writing, out loud, or in prayer?

3. When your mind resists gratitude practice — and it will — what will you say to yourself to do it anyway? Write the self-talk script you will use.

4. What is the difference between gratitude as a spiritual practice and "fake positivity"? How will you practice the former without collapsing into the latter?

PART 4 OF 6 · READING

"Stinking Thinking": When the Mind Becomes the Enemy

Among Father Martin's most enduring contributions to the vocabulary of recovery is the phrase "stinking thinking." Delivered with characteristic warmth and a slight smile — because he knew exactly how familiar his listeners would find it — the phrase describes the particular pattern of cognitive distortion that precedes, accompanies, and follows relapse.

His thesis was simple but radical: you cannot treat the drinking without treating the thinking. The mind must be as much the object of recovery work as the substance-seeking behavior.

Stinking thinking is not simply negative thinking, though it includes that. It is thinking that is distorted in specific ways — that systematically misreads reality in directions that make substance use feel logical, justified, or necessary.

Father Martin observed that almost every person who relapsed could, if they were honest, trace the relapse back through a sequence of mental moves that began days or even weeks before the first drink or drug. The relapse began not with the substance but with the thought.

The classic forms of stinking thinking that Father Martin identified include several recognizable patterns.

First is the black-and-white pattern: "I've already messed up, so I might as well go all the way." This thinking has ended more attempts at sobriety than almost any other single cognitive pattern. The moment of imperfection — missing a meeting, snapping at a family member, having a bad day — is converted into evidence of total failure, which becomes justification for total abandonment.

Second is the "dry drunk" thinking that sobriety without emotional and attitudinal recovery produces: the person is not drinking, but their mind is still running on resentment, self-pity, blame, and victimhood. The behaviors of addiction are absent; the thinking patterns that drove them remain fully intact.

Justification and rationalization are perhaps the most sophisticated forms of stinking thinking, and the most dangerous because they are the most convincing. The mind of a person in early recovery is extraordinarily talented at constructing arguments for why, in this particular case, with these particular circumstances, using would be understandable, forgivable, temporary, manageable, or even deserved.

The argument is often airtight. It is built from real grievances, real pain, and real frustration. But the conclusion it reaches — "therefore I should use" — is the destination the disease had in mind from the beginning. The argument works backward from the desired conclusion.

Father Martin taught that the antidote to stinking thinking is not fighting the thoughts — that gives them power by making them the center of attention — but exposing them to light. Take them to a meeting. Tell them to a sponsor. Say them out loud.

The peculiar quality of distorted thinking is that it often dissolves under examination, particularly in the presence of someone else who knows the disease. What felt airtight in the private echo chamber of the mind becomes obviously self-serving when spoken aloud to another person who is also in recovery.

He also taught that people in recovery must develop what might be called "thinking hygiene" — a regular practice of examining their mental patterns and asking the fundamental question: "Is this thought helping my recovery or harming it?"

Not "Is this thought true?" — because many stinking thoughts contain kernels of factual truth — but "Is this thought, as I am currently running it, serving my recovery or working against it?"

That question alone, applied honestly and consistently, is among the most powerful tools in the recovery toolkit.

Reflection Questions

1. Can you identify your own recurring patterns of "stinking thinking"? Write them out specifically — not the feelings, but the actual thoughts.

2. Trace a past relapse or close call backward through the thinking that preceded it. What was the sequence of mental moves? Where did it begin?

3. Have you experienced "dry drunk" thinking — being physically sober but mentally running on resentment, victimhood, or entitlement? What does that feel like from the inside?

4. What is the most convincing argument your stinking thinking has ever produced for using? What made it so convincing — and what was wrong with it?

5. Father Martin said to take the thoughts to someone else. Who could you call right now, today, when you notice stinking thinking beginning? Write their name and commit to using them.

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 3 OF 5

"Stinking Thinking": Distorted Mental Patterns

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

1. I notice patterns of all-or-nothing thinking ("I'm either perfect or a total failure")
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
2. I frequently tell myself stories that are not supported by facts
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. I rationalize behaviors I know are harmful with elaborate mental justifications
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. Negative self-talk runs in the background of my thinking much of the time
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I have noticed that my distorted thinking often comes before a craving or urge to use
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I build mental cases against other people — collecting evidence for resentments
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I use "should" statements that create pressure and shame when unmet
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. My thinking patterns often make me feel worse rather than better about my recovery
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Stinking Thinking Log & Challenger

Treat the Thinking as Much as the Drinking

"

The 'stinking thinking' must be treated as much as the drinking. The mind is where the relapse begins.

— Father Martin

Why This Works

Stinking thinking doesn't announce itself. It slides in quietly, builds a convincing case, and has you halfway to a relapse before you know what happened. The antidote is exposure — the moment you name the pattern, you step outside it. Use this log to catch the thoughts and challenge them before they build momentum.

All-or-Nothing Thinking

PATTERN SIGNATURE

"I missed one meeting, so my recovery is over."

Either I do it perfectly or I'm a total failure

Have you noticed this pattern in your own thinking? Write a specific, recent example.

What does this thinking lead to — what behavior does it eventually justify or produce?

Write the challenge: what is the more honest, recovery-supporting thought that could replace this one?

Catastrophizing

PATTERN SIGNATURE

"This one thing going wrong means everything will fall apart."

Making disasters out of inconveniences

Have you noticed this pattern in your own thinking? Write a specific, recent example.

What does this thinking lead to — what behavior does it eventually justify or produce?

Write the challenge: what is the more honest, recovery-supporting thought that could replace this one?

Justification / Rationalization

PATTERN SIGNATURE

"After everything I've been through, I deserve a drink."

Building logical-sounding cases for harmful behavior

Have you noticed this pattern in your own thinking? Write a specific, recent example.

What does this thinking lead to — what behavior does it eventually justify or produce?

Write the challenge: what is the more honest, recovery-supporting thought that could replace this one?

Mind Reading

PATTERN SIGNATURE

"They think I'm a failure — I can tell."

Assuming you know what others think, always negatively

Have you noticed this pattern in your own thinking? Write a specific, recent example.

What does this thinking lead to — what behavior does it eventually justify or produce?

Write the challenge: what is the more honest, recovery-supporting thought that could replace this one?

Minimizing Progress

PATTERN SIGNATURE

"I've been sober 3 months but that doesn't count."

Discounting genuine gains while amplifying failures

Have you noticed this pattern in your own thinking? Write a specific, recent example.

What does this thinking lead to — what behavior does it eventually justify or produce?

Write the challenge: what is the more honest, recovery-supporting thought that could replace this one?

Entitlement Thinking

PATTERN SIGNATURE

"I've worked hard enough — I shouldn't have to deal with this."

Believing recovery should protect you from all difficulty

Have you noticed this pattern in your own thinking? Write a specific, recent example.

What does this thinking lead to — what behavior does it eventually justify or produce?

Write the challenge: what is the more honest, recovery-supporting thought that could replace this one?

The Resentment Build**PATTERN SIGNATURE**

"I'm going to remember this and add it to the list."

Collecting evidence against people to fuel resentment

Have you noticed this pattern in your own thinking? Write a specific, recent example.

What does this thinking lead to — what behavior does it eventually justify or produce?

Write the challenge: what is the more honest, recovery-supporting thought that could replace this one?

Self-Pity Spiral

PATTERN SIGNATURE

"Nobody has had it as hard as me. I'll never get a fair chance."

The victim narrative on repeat

Have you noticed this pattern in your own thinking? Write a specific, recent example.

What does this thinking lead to — what behavior does it eventually justify or produce?

Write the challenge: what is the more honest, recovery-supporting thought that could replace this one?

My Stinking Thinking Summary

1. Which stinking thinking pattern is most active in your recovery right now? How often does it show up?

2. Trace your most recent craving or difficult moment backward through the thinking that preceded it. What was the sequence of thoughts? Where did it begin?

3. Father Martin said to expose stinking thinking to another person — the sponsor, the meeting. Who specifically would you call when you notice this happening? Write their name and commit to using them.

4. Write your personal "thinking hygiene" commitment: what daily practice will you use to monitor and challenge distorted thinking?

PART 5 OF 6 · READING

Attitude as "Father" to Action: The Root of Recovery

Perhaps the most nuanced and psychologically sophisticated of Father Martin's teachings was his understanding of attitude. He taught that attitude is not merely a mood or a disposition — it is the generative root of action.

Attitude, he said, is the father to action: before an action is taken, the attitude that will produce it is already in place. Change the action without changing the attitude, and you have changed the surface without addressing the source. Genuine, lasting recovery requires a fundamental transformation of attitude — not just the cessation of substance use.

Father Martin drew a sharp contrast between two fundamental attitudes available to the person in recovery: the attitude of gratitude and the attitude of victimhood. These are not simply emotional states; they are interpretive frameworks — lenses through which all of experience is filtered, evaluated, and responded to.

The person operating from an attitude of gratitude inhabits a fundamentally different world from the person operating from an attitude of victimhood, even if their external circumstances are identical.

The victimhood attitude — which Father Martin was careful to note is not the same as being a genuine victim of genuine injustice — is one that places the locus of one's suffering entirely outside oneself, in the actions of others, in the unfairness of circumstances, in the cruelty of fate.

The person in the grip of victimhood is, by definition, powerless — because if the source of the problem is entirely external, then the solution must also be external, and the person can only wait and suffer until the external world gets better.

In recovery, this is a recipe for relapse. If drinking was the only available response to an intolerable external world, and if that world remains intolerable, then the logic of drinking remains intact. The victimhood attitude is not a neutral position; it is a position that actively sustains the disease.

The gratitude attitude does not deny pain, difficulty, or injustice. It shifts the question from "Why is this happening to me?" to "What can I do with what is happening?"

It locates agency within the self — not omnipotent control over all circumstances, but the real and meaningful capacity to choose one's response to circumstances.

Viktor Frankl, writing from the Nazi concentration camps, made the same observation Father Martin made from the recovery community: that between stimulus and response there is a space, and in that space lies freedom. The gratitude attitude is the practice of inhabiting that space.

Father Martin was also clear that attitude change is not simply a decision, any more than recovery is simply a decision. Attitudes are shaped by deep patterns of experience, thought, and emotion, and they change through sustained practice rather than through a single act of will.

The person who has operated from victimhood for decades cannot simply choose gratitude on a Tuesday morning and find it fully installed by Wednesday. They must practice it — through the daily gratitude lists, through the meeting attendance, through the service work, through the fourth and fifth step work that uncovers the pattern of self-centered fear that has been driving the victim narrative.

What Father Martin gave people was not a prescription for forced positivity but a map of where genuine recovery leads — toward increasing willingness, increasing gratitude, and decreasing entitlement and victimhood.

And he was clear that this is not achieved alone. The community of recovery — the sponsor, the home group, the service commitments — is the laboratory in which attitude is transformed through action, one day at a time.

Reflection Questions

1. Honestly assess your current predominant attitude toward recovery: is it closer to gratitude and willingness, or to victimhood and resentment? Be specific.

2. Identify one area of your life where you are operating from a victimhood attitude. What would shifting to an attitude of agency look like in that specific area?

3. Father Martin said attitude gives birth to action. Trace a recent action you are not proud of back to the attitude that generated it. What was the attitude underneath the action?

4. What practices — daily gratitude, service work, step work, community — are you currently using to actively cultivate an attitude of gratitude? What is missing?

5. Write a paragraph describing the person you want to be in recovery — their attitude, their relationship to difficulty, their way of moving through the world. Then ask: what would need to change in your current attitude to become that person?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 4 OF 5

Attitude as "Father" to Action

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

1. My default attitude toward recovery is one of resentment rather than willingness
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
2. I approach difficult situations from a position of victimhood rather than agency
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. I frequently experience a sense of entitlement — feeling I deserve better than what I have
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. My attitude shapes my actions in ways I do not always consciously choose
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I recognize that my underlying attitude has "birthed" harmful behaviors
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I struggle to adopt an attitude of genuine gratitude even when circumstances improve
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I tend to approach recovery as something being done to me rather than something I am choosing
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. I have noticed that a shift in attitude produces a shift in what I do
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Attitude Audit

Gratitude vs. Victimhood — The Root of Action

"

Attitude is the father to action. Before you can change what you do, you have to examine what you believe.

— Father Martin tradition

How to Use This Audit

For each dimension below, rate your current attitude on a scale of 1-5 (1 = solidly in victimhood, 5 = solidly in gratitude). There are no right answers — only honest ones. Then reflect on what is driving the attitude and what action could shift it.

My attitude toward my recovery program

VICTIMHOOD END

Recovery is being done TO me. I resent what it requires.

GRATITUDE END

Recovery is something I am choosing. I am grateful it exists.

My current attitude on this dimension (1 = victimhood → 5 = gratitude):

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

What specific experiences, thoughts, or patterns are keeping me in the victimhood end on this dimension?

What is one specific action I could take this week that would shift this attitude even slightly toward gratitude?

My attitude toward the people in my life

VICTIMHOOD END

People have failed me, let me down, or don't understand.

GRATITUDE END

Some people have stayed, tried, and cared despite everything.

My current attitude on this dimension (1 = victimhood → 5 = gratitude):

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

What specific experiences, thoughts, or patterns are keeping me in the victimhood end on this dimension?

What is one specific action I could take this week that would shift this attitude even slightly toward gratitude?

My attitude toward my past

VICTIMHOOD END

My past defines me and was mostly damage and loss.

GRATITUDE END

My past shaped me and contains lessons, resilience, and survival.

My current attitude on this dimension (1 = victimhood → 5 = gratitude):

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

What specific experiences, thoughts, or patterns are keeping me in the victimhood end on this dimension?

What is one specific action I could take this week that would shift this attitude even slightly toward gratitude?

My attitude toward today

VICTIMHOOD END

Today is hard and I have too many problems.

GRATITUDE END

Today I am sober and something small is good.

My current attitude on this dimension (1 = victimhood → 5 = gratitude):

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

What specific experiences, thoughts, or patterns are keeping me in the victimhood end on this dimension?

What is one specific action I could take this week that would shift this attitude even slightly toward gratitude?

My attitude toward my future

VICTIMHOOD END

It is too late and too much has been lost.

GRATITUDE END

Recovery makes something new possible.

My current attitude on this dimension (1 = victimhood → 5 = gratitude):

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

What specific experiences, thoughts, or patterns are keeping me in the victimhood end on this dimension?

What is one specific action I could take this week that would shift this attitude even slightly toward gratitude?

My attitude toward myself

VICTIMHOOD END

I am fundamentally broken, shameful, or beyond repair.

GRATITUDE END

I am a person in recovery who is doing something courageous.

My current attitude on this dimension (1 = victimhood → 5 = gratitude):

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

What specific experiences, thoughts, or patterns are keeping me in the victimhood end on this dimension?

What is one specific action I could take this week that would shift this attitude even slightly toward gratitude?

My Attitude Summary & Commitment

1. Which dimension scored lowest? What action is that attitude currently "fathering" — what behavior is it producing?

2. If your attitude toward recovery shifted by even 20% toward gratitude and willingness, what would change in your daily experience?

3. Father Martin taught that attitude change requires sustained practice, not a single decision. What is your specific, daily practice for cultivating gratitude attitude?

4. Write your personal attitude commitment statement: "I commit to approaching my recovery with an attitude of [specific words] rather than an attitude of [specific words], because..."

PART 6 OF 6 · READING

Bring the Body and Radical Acceptance: Recovery Through Action

Father Martin was a deeply practical man. He was not content with insight alone — he wanted people to know what to do. And what he consistently prescribed, in response to almost every emotional challenge in recovery, was action.

Not perfect action. Not inspired action. Not action that waited for the right feelings to arrive first. Action that preceded the feelings — that, in fact, generated them.

His most memorable formulation of this principle was simply: "Bring the body."

He said it in the context of meeting attendance, but it applies universally to recovery. There will be days — particularly in early recovery — when you do not feel like going to a meeting. You are tired. The meeting feels pointless. You would rather stay home. You do not believe, in that moment, that sitting in a room with other people will make any difference.

Father Martin's response was: go anyway. Bring the body. Leave the feelings at home if they won't cooperate — but the body is coming.

Because in his experience, and in the experience of thousands of recovery communities across decades, something almost always happens when the body shows up. The mind, given no alternative, begins to engage. A word lands. A person shares something that resonates. The meeting begins to work.

The "bring the body" principle is a direct application of behavioral psychology's understanding of how motivation actually works. Most people believe that motivation precedes action — that you must feel motivated before you act.

This is backwards. The research consistently shows that action precedes motivation. You begin the behavior, and the motivation to continue it gradually emerges. You take one small step, and the next step becomes more available.

The person who waits to feel ready before beginning their recovery work may wait a very long time. The person who begins the recovery work before they feel ready — who brings the body — usually finds that the feelings begin to follow.

Radical acceptance is the companion principle. Father Martin taught it not as resignation — he was far too vigorous a man to advocate for passive acceptance — but as the prerequisite for effective action.

Radical acceptance means acknowledging reality fully and without reservation: this is the situation as it actually is, not as I wish it were, not as it should be, not as it was before, not as it might be someday — as it is, right now, today.

The person who is fighting against reality — who is spending emotional and cognitive energy on "this shouldn't be happening" — is spending resources that are desperately needed for actual recovery.

Father Martin also offered something rare in recovery communities of his era: a non-shaming, compassionate understanding of relapse. He taught that relapse is a teacher, not a moral failing.

This was radical in a culture that often treated relapse with contempt, and it is still desperately needed today. The person who relapses and is met with compassion — who understands that they have received information about where their recovery needs strengthening rather than evidence of their fundamental unworthiness — is far more likely to return to recovery and do the work differently.

Shame, Father Martin understood, is among the most powerful drivers of relapse, not because it makes people want to use but because it makes people believe they deserve to.

The practical takeaways of Father Martin's action orientation are these: Don't wait for the feeling. Do the thing. Go to the meeting. Call the sponsor. Do the step work. Write the gratitude list. Get out of your own head and into the world.

And when you relapse, or stumble, or fall back into patterns you thought you had left behind — be gentle with yourself, learn what it has to teach, and bring the body back one more time.

Reflection Questions

1. "Bring the body" — where do you most need to apply this principle right now? What have you been waiting to feel ready for before you begin?

2. Describe a time when you took action before you felt ready or motivated, and the motivation came after the action began. What does that experience teach you?

3. What reality in your current life are you not fully accepting? What would radical acceptance of that reality actually look like?

4. How do you respond to the teaching that relapse is a teacher rather than a moral failing? Does it relieve shame, or does it feel like it lets people off the hook? Explore your reaction honestly.

5. What is the single most important action you could take today — right now, before this exercise is complete — to advance your recovery? What is stopping you from doing it?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 5 OF 5

Action-Oriented Recovery Capacity

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

1. I "bring the body" — I show up to meetings, appointments, and recovery activities even when I don't feel like it

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I have a sponsor or trusted person I regularly share my difficult feelings with

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I practice radical acceptance — acknowledging reality rather than fighting against it

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I take action on difficult feelings rather than waiting until I feel ready

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I can experience a difficult emotion and choose a healthy response rather than acting out

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I understand that relapse is a teacher, not a moral failing, and I extend that to myself

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I have developed concrete tools for managing anger, resentment, and self-pity

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. My recovery is built on consistent action, not on waiting for the right feelings

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Sponsor Connection Planning

The Antidote to Isolation — Father Martin's Prescription

"

Problems and feelings get bigger when kept to oneself. The sponsor is the person you tell the things you don't want anyone to know.

— Father Martin tradition

Father Martin on the Sponsor

Father Martin was emphatic that the sponsor relationship is not optional for people in recovery — it is the primary mechanism through which stinking thinking is interrupted, resentments are processed, and the isolation that breeds relapse is broken. This exercise helps you develop or strengthen your sponsor connection deliberately and specifically.

Reflection 1

1. Do you currently have a sponsor? If yes, how regularly do you contact them? If no, what is the specific barrier? Be honest.

Reflection 2

2. What are you currently carrying — feelings, resentments, stinking thinking, fears — that you have not yet told your sponsor or a trusted person? List them.

Reflection 3

3. What makes it hard to reach out to your sponsor when you most need to? What is the feeling, belief, or pattern that stops you from picking up the phone?

Reflection 4

4. If you could tell your sponsor ONE thing right now — the most honest, most difficult, most important thing — what would it be? Write it here first. Then commit to telling them.

Reflection 5

5. When specifically will you contact your sponsor this week? Write the day, the time, and what you will say first. The more specific you are, the more likely you are to follow through.

Reflection 6

6. What qualities do you most need in a sponsor right now — directness, warmth, patience, personal experience with your specific challenges? How does your current sponsor relationship match those needs?

Father Martin's Challenge

Before you close this exercise, commit to one thing: the next time you notice anger building, resentment fermenting, stinking thinking beginning, or self-pity circling — you will tell someone. Not your disease. Not your journal. A person. Your sponsor, your home group, someone who knows the territory. Father Martin did not discover anything new when he said this. He simply said it clearly enough that people could no longer pretend they hadn't heard it.

YOUR EXERCISE

Bring the Body — Action Commitment Plan

Don't Wait for the Feeling. Do the Thing.

"

Bring the body. The mind will follow. Don't wait to feel like going — go. And the feeling will come.

— Father Martin

The Action Precedes the Feeling

Father Martin understood something that behavioral science has since confirmed: we do not wait to feel motivated before we act — we act, and motivation follows. This exercise asks you to design your recovery actions for the coming week before you feel ready, before you feel like it, before the feelings cooperate. The commitment is made now. The body shows up. The rest follows.

Identifying the Barriers to Bringing the Body

1. What specific thoughts arise when you think about going to a meeting you don't feel like attending? Write them out — get them on paper where you can see them.

2. What feelings typically accompany resistance to recovery actions? Name them specifically.

3. What has happened, historically, when you have given in to the "I don't feel like it" message? Where does that lead?

4. What has happened when you have brought the body despite not feeling like it? Describe a specific experience.

Meeting Attendance

How many meetings will you attend this week, specifically? Which ones, and when?

What will you say to yourself when you don't feel like doing this?

Sponsor Contact

When specifically will you call or meet with your sponsor this week?

What will you say to yourself when you don't feel like doing this?

Step Work

What specific step work will you do this week, even if you don't feel like it?

What will you say to yourself when you don't feel like doing this?

Gratitude Practice

When and how will you practice gratitude this week, before you feel grateful?

What will you say to yourself when you don't feel like doing this?

Service

What one act of service will you do this week — in a meeting, for another person in recovery, or in your community?

What will you say to yourself when you don't feel like doing this?

Physical Self-Care

What will you do this week to care for your body — the one you're being asked to "bring"?

What will you say to yourself when you don't feel like doing this?

Accountability Structure

1. Who will you tell about these commitments, making yourself accountable to another person?

Your accountability plan...

2. How will you track whether you followed through? What does the check-in look like?

Your accountability plan...

3. If you don't follow through on a commitment, what is your recovery protocol — how do you get back on track without spiraling into shame or self-pity?

Your accountability plan...

YOUR EXERCISE

Relapse as Teacher

Compassionate Review Without Shame Spiral

"

Relapse is a teacher, not a moral failing. Shame drives people back to using. Compassion brings them back to recovery.

— Father Martin tradition

A Note Before You Begin

This exercise is for anyone who has experienced a relapse — recent or in the past — or who has had a significant stumble in recovery. It is not about making excuses or minimizing the consequences. It is about doing what Father Martin prescribed: treating the experience as data, not as evidence of your fundamental unworthiness. Shame keeps people sick. Understanding moves them forward.

Step 1

1. Describe the relapse or stumble factually — what happened, when, where, with whom. Not the story around it, just the facts.

Step 2

2. What was happening in the weeks before it — emotionally, in your thinking patterns, in your meeting attendance, in your sponsor contact? Trace the trail backward.

Step 3

3. In hindsight, what were the warning signs you either ignored or did not recognize? Where was the stinking thinking? Where was the resentment? Where was the isolation?

Step 4

4. What does this relapse teach you — specifically — about where your recovery needs strengthening? Be precise.

Step 5

5. What shame-based thoughts have you had about this relapse? Write them out. Then write the compassionate response Father Martin would offer you — the response that acknowledges what happened without condemning who you are.

Step 6

6. What specific, concrete changes will you make to your recovery program based on what this relapse has taught you? If you have not relapsed, what does this exercise reveal about your relapse prevention plan?

Father Martin's Invitation

Every person in this room who has ever relapsed is still worthy of recovery. Every person who has ever stumbled is still welcome in the community. The disease is powerful. That's not an excuse — it's a fact that deserves respect. You bring the body back. You get honest with your sponsor. You do the work differently. That is not weakness — that is exactly what courage looks like.

YOUR EXERCISE

Building My Recovery Mindset

Father Martin's Principles, Personally Applied

"

Recovery is not the absence of difficult feelings. It is the presence of the tools, the relationships, and the willingness to handle them.

— Father Martin tradition

Synthesizing the Work

This final exercise asks you to personally apply each of Father Martin's core principles to your specific situation right now. These are not abstract concepts — they are living tools. The recovery mindset is built one application at a time, in the real moments of your real life.

Principle 1

"Handle them or they will handle you."

1. Which feeling in your life right now most needs to be handled — and what does handling it look like?

Principle 2

"Negative feelings are dangerous luxuries."

2. Which luxury are you currently indulging — anger, resentment, or self-pity — and what is it costing you?

Principle 3

"What you focus on grows."

3. What are you currently magnifying in your recovery? What would you rather have grow?

Principle 4

"Stinking thinking must be treated."

4. Which thought pattern is your current biggest threat to recovery? What is your plan for treating it?

Principle 5

"Attitude is the father to action."

5. What attitude is currently generating your recovery actions — gratitude, fear, resentment, or willingness?

Principle 6

"Bring the body — the mind will follow."

6. Where do you most need to bring the body right now, even without feeling ready?

Principle 7

"Use your sponsor — problems grow in isolation."

7. What are you currently carrying alone that needs to be said out loud to another person?

Principle 8

"Relapse is a teacher, not a moral failing."

8. What has the hardest moment in your recovery taught you about where you need to grow?

My Recovery Mindset Declaration

Write Your Declaration

Synthesize everything from this intensive into a personal declaration — who you are in recovery, what you commit to, how you will handle the feelings that will inevitably arise. This is not a contract with anyone else. It is a statement of who you are choosing to be.

1. Write your personal recovery declaration, incorporating the language and principles of Father Martin that most resonated with you. Make it specific. Make it honest. Make it yours.

2. Which one of Father Martin's teachings, from this entire intensive, most changed how you think about your recovery? Why that one?

3. What is the most important action you will take in the next 48 hours as a result of completing this intensive? Name it specifically — not "work on myself," but the concrete, time-specific, real-world action.

You have done the work.

Father Martin dedicated his life to meeting people exactly where they were and helping them find a way through. You have honored that legacy by showing up honestly to this material. The feelings will keep coming — that is the nature of being human. What has changed is that you now have a framework for meeting them. Handle them. All of them. One day at a time.