

Aviation Professionals

Pilots, air traffic controllers, and aviation personnel
Professionals Program · The Recovery Files

In the app only: Control Paradox Assessment, Step Three Assessment, Recovery Mind Map (scored or interactive, so they stay in the app).

The Pilot's Recovery Journey

Digital Recovery Modules for Aviation Professionals

Welcome to Your Recovery Journey

This comprehensive digital platform is designed specifically for pilots and aviation personnel navigating recovery from substance use disorders. Your professional training brings unique strengths and challenges to recovery - this program bridges both worlds.

Pre-Flight Check

Your Recovery Journey Begins

Initial assessment and personalization

15 min

The Control Paradox

Step One: Powerlessness & Control

Navigate the tension between professional control and recovery surrender

45 min

Flight Path Planning

Stages of Change Assessment

Identify your current stage and chart your recovery course

30 min

Instrument Flight Rules

Step Two: Coming to Believe

Trust beyond visibility - developing faith in recovery

45 min

Navigation Charts

Mind Mapping Your Recovery

Visual tools for understanding your journey

20 min

Air Traffic Control

Building Your Support Network

Creating connections despite aviation isolation

30 min

Flight Operations

Daily Recovery Tools

Practical tools for maintaining sobriety

25 min

Decision to Land

Step Three: Made a Decision

Turning decision into action

40 min

Program Features

Aviation-Specific

Tailored for pilot mindset and challenges

Evidence-Based

Grounded in proven recovery principles

Confidential

Your privacy and career protected

Professional Support Recommended

This digital program is designed to complement, not replace, professional treatment. Consider working with a counselor familiar with aviation professionals and HIMS programs.

Pre-Flight Check

Just as every flight begins with a thorough pre-flight check, your recovery journey starts with understanding where you are and where you're heading.

Your Name

Aviation Role

[Select your role... / Commercial Pilot / Private Pilot / Air Traffic Controller / Flight Instructor / Aircraft Maintenance / Other Aviation Professional]

Days in Recovery (approximate)

Primary Challenge

[Select your main challenge... / Accepting powerlessness / Letting go of control / Building support network / Aviation-related isolation / Professional identity conflicts / Schedule/travel challenges]

Recovery Goals

Current Support System

Complete Pre-Flight Check

Please fill in all required fields

Flight Path Planning: Stages of Change

Module Progress0%

The Stages of Change model describes how pilots move through different phases when changing behavior. Understanding where you are helps identify appropriate actions for your current stage.

Aviation Perspective

Just as flight planning requires understanding current position, weather conditions, and destination, recovery requires honest assessment of where you are in the change process. Each stage has its own "flight characteristics" and requires different approaches - there's no shame in any stage, only awareness of what's needed for safe navigation.

Precontemplation

Not Ready: "I don't have a problem"

Aviation Parallel:

Denying instrument readings despite warning lights

Description

In this stage, you may not see your substance use as a problem. You might feel that others are overreacting or that the concerns raised about your use are exaggerated. Change is not being

considered.

Characteristics

- Denial or minimization of the problem
- Defensiveness when use is questioned
- Focus on benefits of using rather than costs
- Belief that others are overreacting
- Little awareness of how use affects life
- No intention to change in the near future

Common Thoughts

"I can stop whenever I want to"

"It's not that bad compared to others"

"Everyone does this"

"I have it under control"

"The problem is other people, not my use"

Stage Assessment

Rate how much you agree with each statement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

I recognize that my substance use may be causing problems in my life

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I am open to considering that others' concerns about my use might be valid

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I can see how my use has negatively impacted my personal or professional life

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I am willing to honestly examine my relationship with substances

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I acknowledge that my control over substance use may not be as strong as I believe

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

Reflection Questions

Do you find yourself defending your substance use when others express concern?

What evidence do you use to convince yourself (or others) that your use isn't a problem?

If someone close to you is concerned about your use, what is their perspective? (Try to describe it without defending or dismissing)

Contemplation

Getting Ready: "I might have a problem"

Aviation Parallel:

Recognizing warning indicators but delaying corrective action

Description

In this stage, you're beginning to recognize that your substance use may be problematic. You're weighing the pros and cons, feeling ambivalent about change. You intend to change in the next six months but haven't taken action yet.

Characteristics

- Awareness that a problem exists
- Ambivalence about changing
- Weighing costs and benefits
- Thinking about change but not committed
- May feel stuck or overwhelmed
- Gathering information about change

Common Thoughts

"Maybe I should cut back"

"I know it's a problem, but..."

"I'll change eventually"

"What would life be like without using?"

"I want to change but I'm not sure I can"

Stage Assessment

Rate how much you agree with each statement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

I am seriously considering changing my substance use within the next 6 months

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I can clearly see both the benefits and costs of my substance use

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I am actively seeking information about recovery options

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I believe the benefits of changing outweigh the costs

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I am developing confidence that I can make this change

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

Reflection Questions

What concerns have you started to notice about your substance use?

What would you lose if you stopped using? (Be honest about what feels like a loss)

What would you gain if you stopped using?

What fears do you have about making a change?

Preparation

Ready: "I'm going to change"

Aviation Parallel:

Pre-flight planning and checklist preparation

Description

In this stage, you've decided to make a change and are preparing to take action soon (within the next month). You're making plans, gathering resources, and taking small initial steps.

Characteristics

- Commitment to change has been made
- Developing a plan of action
- May have made small changes already
- Gathering support and resources
- Setting a date to begin
- Feeling mixture of hope and anxiety

Common Thoughts

"I'm ready to do this"

"I need to figure out my plan"

"Who can help me?"

"What do I need to succeed?"

"I'm nervous but committed"

Stage Assessment

Rate how much you agree with each statement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

I have a clear plan for how I will change my substance use

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I have identified specific support resources I will use

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I have already taken some small steps toward change

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I have set a specific date to begin my recovery

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I feel ready and committed to taking action

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

Reflection Questions

What specific changes are you planning to make?

What resources or support do you need? (People, programs, information, tools)

What obstacles might you face, and how can you prepare for them?

What small step can you take this week to move toward your goal?

Action

Doing: "I am changing"

Aviation Parallel:

Active flight operations with continuous monitoring

Description

In this stage, you're actively working on changing your behavior. You've stopped or significantly modified your substance use and are implementing your change plan. This stage requires significant time, energy, and commitment.

Characteristics

- Active modification of behavior
- Following through on change plan
- Developing new coping strategies
- Seeking and using support
- Dealing with cravings and triggers
- Building new routines and habits

Common Thoughts

"I'm doing this"

"This is harder than I expected"

"I need to stay focused"

"One day at a time"

"I'm proud of my progress"

Stage Assessment

Rate how much you agree with each statement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

I have successfully abstained from or significantly reduced my substance use

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I am actively using my recovery support systems

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I have developed effective strategies for managing cravings

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I am building new healthy habits and routines

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I feel confident in my ability to maintain these changes

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

Reflection Questions

What actions have you taken so far in your recovery?

What has been most challenging so far?

What strategies are helping you stay on track?

What triggers or high-risk situations have you identified, and how are you managing them?

What do you need more of to support your continued action?

Maintenance

Sustaining: "I am maintaining my change"

Aviation Parallel:

Cruise flight with ongoing systems monitoring

Description

In this stage, you've maintained your behavior change for at least six months. The focus shifts from active change to preventing relapse and consolidating gains. You're working to make your new behaviors a permanent part of your life.

Characteristics

- Sustained behavior change (6+ months)
- Focus on relapse prevention
- Continued practice of new skills
- Integration of recovery into lifestyle
- Increased confidence in ability to maintain change
- Awareness that vigilance is still needed

Common Thoughts

"I've come so far"

"I can't let my guard down"

"Recovery is part of who I am now"

"I know what works for me"

"This is sustainable"

Stage Assessment

Rate how much you agree with each statement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

I have maintained my recovery for more than 6 months

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

Recovery practices are now integrated into my daily life

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I have effective strategies for preventing relapse

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I feel confident in my ability to maintain long-term recovery

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I remain vigilant without being anxious about my recovery

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

Reflection Questions

How has your life changed since you stopped using?

What practices or strategies have become part of your regular routine?

What challenges to your recovery do you still face?

How do you prevent complacency while avoiding constant anxiety about relapse?

What keeps you motivated to maintain your recovery?

Relapse/Recurrence

Learning: "I've returned to old patterns"

Aviation Parallel:

Course deviation requiring correction and learning

Description

Relapse is not a stage of change but rather a common experience in recovery. It involves returning to substance use after a period of abstinence. Rather than viewing it as failure, it can be understood as part of the learning process and an opportunity to strengthen your recovery.

Characteristics

- Return to previous behavior patterns
- May feel shame, guilt, or disappointment
- Opportunity to learn and adjust approach
- Need to reassess triggers and strategies
- Importance of quickly re-engaging with support
- Not a return to square one—learning retained

Common Thoughts

"I failed"

"All my progress is lost"

"Maybe I can't do this"

"What went wrong?"

"I need to try again, differently"

Stage Assessment

Rate how much you agree with each statement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

I understand that relapse can be part of the recovery process

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I can identify specific triggers that led to my return to use

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I am willing to learn from this experience

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I am ready to re-engage with my recovery support

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

I can practice self-compassion while taking responsibility

Strongly Disagree

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly agree

Strongly Agree

Reflection Questions

If you've experienced a return to use, what circumstances or triggers were involved?

What warning signs did you notice beforehand? (Emotional, behavioral, thinking patterns)

What can you learn from this experience that will strengthen your recovery going forward?

What support do you need to re-engage with your recovery?

How can you practice self-compassion while still taking responsibility for moving forward?

Integration & Flight Planning

Based on your reflections and assessment scores, which stage best describes where you are right now?

☐ Precontemplation ☐ Contemplation ☐ Preparation ☐ Action ☐ Maintenance ☐ Relapse/Recurrence

What would moving to the next stage look like for you? What would need to happen?

What support, resources, or strategies would be most helpful for you right now?

What is one concrete action you can take this week that aligns with your current stage?

Show Assessment Results

Remember: Change takes time, and setbacks are part of the process. Like learning to fly, recovery involves practice, patience, and persistence. Being honest about where you are—without judgment—is the first step toward meaningful progress.

www.TheRecoveryFiles.com

Embrace, Empower & Evolve

Your Stage of Change Assessment Results

Instrument Flight Rules: Trusting Beyond Visibility

In instrument flight, pilots learn to trust their instruments over their physical sensations - even when instinct screams otherwise. Recovery requires a similar leap of faith: trusting recovery principles over the addictive voice, even when it feels counterintuitive.

IFR training teaches that your senses can deceive you. The recovery parallel: your addiction will lie to you, but recovery principles remain true.

Reflection

Describe a time in flying when you had to trust your instruments despite what your body was telling you. How might this experience relate to recovery?

Defining Your Higher Power

For analytical, technically-minded aviation professionals, the concept of a "Higher Power" can feel abstract or religious. Your Higher Power can be:

- The collective wisdom of recovery groups
- The proven principles of the Twelve Steps
- Nature, the universe, or natural laws
- A traditional religious concept
- The part of you that wants to recover
- Something yet to be fully understood

What concept of a Higher Power feels authentic to you? Remember: it doesn't have to be perfect or complete - it just needs to be greater than your individual will.

Building Trust in the Process

Just as you gradually built trust in aircraft systems through training and experience, trust in recovery develops through consistent practice and positive results.

Trust-Building Exercises:

- ☐ Attend meetings for 30 days without judging or analyzing
- ☐ Follow one suggestion completely, even if it seems unnecessary
- ☐ Share honestly once per week without filtering
- ☐ Try one recovery practice daily for two weeks

What small step can you take this week to build trust in the recovery process?

Your Faith in Action Plan

Coming to believe isn't a one-time decision - it's an ongoing practice. Create your plan for developing and maintaining faith in recovery.

Daily recovery practices I will commit to

Weekly meetings or support I will attend

People I will stay connected with

Warning signs that my faith is slipping

Actions to take when doubt arises

Air Traffic Control: Building Your Support Network

Aviation professionals face unique isolation challenges: irregular schedules, time zone changes, and a transient lifestyle. Building consistent support requires creative solutions.

Common Isolation Challenges:

- Irregular flight schedules make consistent meeting attendance difficult
- Frequent travel disrupts local support networks
- Professional isolation due to confidentiality concerns
- Time zone changes complicate routine
- Limited recovery community in aviation

Which of these isolation challenges affects you most? How has it impacted your recovery?

Air Traffic Control: Building Your Support Network

Your support network should be multi-layered and adaptable to your aviation lifestyle.

Home Base Support

Consistent meeting, sponsor, and fellowship in your primary location

Action: Identify 3-5 regular meetings you can attend

Travel Network

Recovery contacts in cities you frequently visit

Action: Research meetings in top 3 travel destinations

Digital Connection

Online meetings and phone support for irregular hours

Action: Find 2 online meetings that fit your schedule

Aviation-Specific Support

Other aviation professionals in recovery

Action: Connect with Birds of a Leaf or similar groups

Air Traffic Control: Building Your Support Network

ATC-Sponsor Parallel:

Your sponsor is like ATC - providing guidance, perspective, and support when you need it most. Just as you trust ATC with flight guidance, you learn to trust your sponsor with recovery guidance.

Important Sponsor Qualities:

- Understanding of aviation lifestyle and challenges
- Availability that accommodates your schedule
- Experience with professional recovery
- Direct communication style
- Willingness to provide honest feedback

What qualities are most important to you in a sponsor? If you have a sponsor, how is that relationship working?

Air Traffic Control: Building Your Support Network

Home base meeting schedule (when/where)

Sponsor contact plan (frequency/method)

Travel recovery strategy

Emergency support contacts

Accountability partners

Online meeting backup plan

Flight Operations: Daily Recovery Tools

Morning Flight Operations

Start each day with a recovery pre-flight check - setting intentions and preparing for challenges ahead.

Morning Meditation

10 minutes of quiet reflection or guided meditation

→ Pre-flight mental preparation



Gratitude List

Write three things you're grateful for

→ Checking systems that work before takeoff



Daily Intentions

Set 1-3 recovery intentions for the day

→ Flight plan waypoints



Sponsor Check-in

Brief morning text or call with sponsor

→ ATC clearance before departure



Recovery Reading

10 minutes of recovery literature

→ Reviewing procedures and charts



Which 2-3 morning tools will you commit to practicing?

Flight Operations: Daily Recovery Tools

In-Flight Tools: Managing the Day

Tools for navigating daily challenges, triggers, and maintaining course.

HALT Check

Regular checks: Am I Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired?

→ Instrument scan - regular monitoring of key indicators



Urge Surfing

Ride out cravings without acting on them

➔ Managing turbulence without over-correcting

☐**Phone a Friend**

Call someone in recovery when struggling

➔ Declaring emergency - asking for help when needed

☐**Mindful Pause**

3 deep breaths before making decisions

➔ Stabilizing aircraft before changing configuration

☐**Trigger Logging**

Note triggers and how you responded

➔ Maintaining flight log for learning

☐

Which in-flight tools will you keep readily available?

Flight Operations: Daily Recovery Tools

Evening Debrief

End each day with a recovery debrief - reviewing what worked, what didn't, and planning improvements.

Evening Debrief Components:

- Daily inventory: What went well? What could improve?
- Amends needed: Did I harm anyone today?
- Gratitude: Three positive moments
- Progress check: Did I stay sober today?
- Tomorrow's plan: Potential challenges ahead

What evening practice will help you process the day and prepare for tomorrow?

Flight Operations: Daily Recovery Tools

Emergency Recovery Procedures

Just as pilots train for emergencies, you need clear procedures for recovery crises.

Emergency: Strong craving or urge to use

- 1.Remove yourself from the situation immediately
- 2.Call sponsor or recovery contact
- 3.Attend a meeting (in-person or online)
- 4.Use the 24-hour hotline if needed
- 5.Stay with safe people until urge passes

Emergency: Feeling isolated or disconnected

- 1.Reach out to three people in recovery
- 2.Attend an extra meeting
- 3.Review your gratitude and progress
- 4.Re-read recovery literature
- 5.Plan connection for next 24 hours

Emergency: Professional stress triggering old patterns

- 1.HALT check - address basic needs first
- 2.Talk to sponsor about professional challenges
- 3.Attend aviation-specific meeting if possible

- 4. Practice stress management techniques
- 5. Remind yourself: sobriety comes first