

Home as Sanctuary

Sobriety & Resilience · The Recovery Files

Building a Living Space That Supports Recovery Growth

Now That You're Sober — What Does "Home" Mean?

A Resiliency Intensive — The Recovery Files

Neglected · Space reflects stagnation · Sanctuary · Space reflects growth & care

In this workbook

- Part 1 · Your Home Is a Mirror: What Your Space Says About Your Recovery
 - Check-in: Personal Identity & Expression
 - Exercise: Room-by-Room Recovery Walkthrough
 - Exercise: Identity & Expression Mapping
- Part 2 · The Science of Space: How Your Environment Shapes Your Brain
 - Check-in: Sensory Environment & Wellbeing
 - Exercise: Sensory Environment Inventory
- Part 3 · The Archaeology of Home: Excavating What Your Space Is Holding
 - Check-in: Physical & Emotional Safety
 - Exercise: Home Archaeology — What Your Space Is Holding
 - Exercise: Safety & Trigger Audit
- Part 4 · Building a Sanctuary: Your Home as a Recovery Tool
 - Check-in: Order, Function & Self-Care
 - Check-in: Connection, Community & Growth
 - Exercise: Home Routines & Rituals Design
 - Exercise: Housemates & Household Relationships
 - Exercise: Daily Home Care Tracker (7 Days)
 - Exercise: Boundaries & Sacred Space
 - Exercise: Sanctuary Action Plan

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 4 · READING

Your Home Is a Mirror: What Your Space Says About Your Recovery

There is a truth that most people in recovery learn the hard way: the state of your living space is almost always a reflection of the state of your inner life. When your recovery is strong — when you are connected, growing, doing the work — your home tends to reflect that. There is order. There is care. There is evidence that someone who values themselves lives here. When recovery is slipping — when isolation creeps in, when complacency sets in, when the internal life starts to deteriorate — the home is often the first place the evidence appears, long before a relapse becomes visible to anyone else.

This is not a superficial observation about tidiness. This is a clinical reality. The relationship between environment and mental health is bidirectional and powerful. Your environment shapes your psychology, and your psychology shapes your environment. They are locked in a feedback loop that either spirals upward or spirals downward.

A chaotic, neglected living space increases cortisol, disrupts sleep, promotes avoidance, and creates a background hum of low-grade shame that erodes self-worth. A cared-for, intentional living space reduces stress, supports healthy routines, reinforces identity, and sends a constant, ambient message: "Someone who matters lives here."

For people in sustained recovery — twelve months and beyond — the home environment takes on particular significance. In early recovery, the focus is survival. Where you sleep matters less than whether you stay alive and sober. But as recovery stabilizes and the crisis recedes, the quality of your living environment becomes increasingly relevant to the quality of your recovery itself. You are no longer just surviving. You are building a life. And a life needs a home — not just a place to crash, but a space that reflects, supports, and nurtures the person you are becoming.

Many people in recovery have a complicated relationship with the concept of "home." Active addiction often involved environments of chaos, danger, squalor, or instability. Some people lost their homes entirely. Others lived in homes that were sites of trauma, conflict, or shame. The word "home" itself may carry painful associations — places where addiction thrived, where relationships were destroyed, where the worst versions of yourself lived.

Part of the work of sustained recovery is reclaiming the concept of home and reimagining it as something that belongs to your sober self, not your addicted self. This intensive is not about interior design. It is about using your physical environment as a tool for recovery growth. It is about recognizing that how you treat your living space is a direct reflection of how you treat yourself — and that intentionally creating a space that supports your wellbeing is one of the most powerful, practical, and often overlooked strategies for building a recovery that lasts.

The goal is not perfection. The goal is not a magazine-worthy home. The goal is a living space that tells the truth about your recovery: that you are someone who cares enough about the life you have built to create an environment that protects and nurtures it. A space that says, "I am not just sober. I am building something worth coming home to."

Reflection Questions

1. What does the current state of your living space say about the current state of your recovery? If your home could talk, what would it tell your sponsor?

2. What was your living environment like during active addiction? How does your current home compare? What has changed, and what still carries traces of that life?

3. Has there been a time in your recovery when you noticed your home environment declining before you noticed your inner life declining? What happened?

4. What does the word "home" mean to you emotionally? Is it a word that carries warmth, or is it complicated by past experiences?

5. On a scale of 1 to 10, how intentionally are you investing in your living environment as a recovery practice? What would moving that number higher look like?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 1 OF 5

Personal Identity & Expression

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

1. My home reflects who I am becoming in recovery, not just who I was in addiction

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I have personalized my space with items that are meaningful to me (art, photos, objects)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. My home includes elements that represent my values, interests, and goals

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I have a dedicated space — even a small one — for activities that support my growth (reading, writing, meditation, hobbies)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. The colors, textures, and aesthetics of my home feel intentional rather than accidental

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I feel pride in my living space and what it represents about my progress

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. My home includes recovery-affirming elements (literature, medallions, affirmations, symbols)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. Walking into my home gives me a sense of "this is mine, and I built this"

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Room-by-Room Recovery Walkthrough

An Honest Tour of Your Living Space

How to Use This Exercise

Physically walk through your home as you complete this exercise. Stand in each room. Look around slowly. Notice what you see, feel, smell, and experience. Your nervous system is smarter than your rationalizations — trust what you feel in each space, not what you think you should feel.

Bedroom

Where you sleep, rest, and restore. The room most directly tied to the quality of your recovery.

Current state — describe what you see honestly (cleanliness, order, condition):

How does this room make you FEEL when you are in it?

What do you love or appreciate about this space?

What one change would most improve this room?

How does this room support or hinder your recovery?

Room health rating (1 = seriously neglected, 10 = fully supports my recovery):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Kitchen / Dining Area

Where you nourish yourself. The room that reflects your relationship with self-care and health.

Current state — describe what you see honestly (cleanliness, order, condition):

How does this room make you FEEL when you are in it?

What do you love or appreciate about this space?

What one change would most improve this room?

How does this room support or hinder your recovery?

Room health rating (1 = seriously neglected, 10 = fully supports my recovery):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Bathroom

Where personal hygiene and self-care happen. Often reflects how much you value yourself on a daily basis.

Current state — describe what you see honestly (cleanliness, order, condition):

How does this room make you FEEL when you are in it?

What do you love or appreciate about this space?

What one change would most improve this room?

How does this room support or hinder your recovery?

Room health rating (1 = seriously neglected, 10 = fully supports my recovery):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Living / Common Area

Where you relax, connect with others, and spend your waking hours. Reflects your relationship with leisure and connection.

Current state — describe what you see honestly (cleanliness, order, condition):

How does this room make you FEEL when you are in it?

What do you love or appreciate about this space?

What one change would most improve this room?

How does this room support or hinder your recovery?

Room health rating (1 = seriously neglected, 10 = fully supports my recovery):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Entryway / Front Door

The first thing you see when you come home. Sets the emotional tone for your entire experience of the space.

Current state — describe what you see honestly (cleanliness, order, condition):

How does this room make you FEEL when you are in it?

What do you love or appreciate about this space?

What one change would most improve this room?

How does this room support or hinder your recovery?

Room health rating (1 = seriously neglected, 10 = fully supports my recovery):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Workspace / Desk Area

Where you handle responsibilities, do recovery work, or pursue growth. Reflects your relationship with productivity.

Current state — describe what you see honestly (cleanliness, order, condition):

How does this room make you FEEL when you are in it?

What do you love or appreciate about this space?

What one change would most improve this room?

How does this room support or hinder your recovery?

Room health rating (1 = seriously neglected, 10 = fully supports my recovery):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Storage / Closets / Garage

Where you keep what you are not actively using. Often holds the unprocessed material of your past.

Current state — describe what you see honestly (cleanliness, order, condition):

How does this room make you FEEL when you are in it?

What do you love or appreciate about this space?

What one change would most improve this room?

How does this room support or hinder your recovery?

Room health rating (1 = seriously neglected, 10 = fully supports my recovery):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Outdoor Space (if applicable)

Porch, balcony, yard, or stoop. Your connection to the outside world and to nature.

Current state — describe what you see honestly (cleanliness, order, condition):

How does this room make you FEEL when you are in it?

What do you love or appreciate about this space?

What one change would most improve this room?

How does this room support or hinder your recovery?

Room health rating (1 = seriously neglected, 10 = fully supports my recovery):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Walkthrough Summary

1. Which room scored lowest? Why? What has prevented you from addressing it?

2. Which room scored highest? What makes it work — and can you apply those principles to other rooms?

3. Was there a room that surprised you — either better or worse than you expected? What did you discover?

4. If your sponsor or therapist did this walkthrough with you, what room would you be most reluctant to show them? Why?

5. What is the overall story your home is telling about your recovery? Is it accurate?

YOUR EXERCISE

Identity & Expression Mapping

Does Your Home Look Like YOU Live Here?

The Identity Question

Many people in recovery live in spaces that are either holdovers from their addiction (someone else's aesthetic, or no aesthetic at all) or generic environments that could belong to anyone. Your home should bear evidence that a specific, growing, recovering person lives here. Personalizing your space is not vanity — it is identity reclamation.

Who Lives Here Right Now?

1. If a stranger walked into your home, what would they conclude about the person who lives here? What story does your space tell?

2. What elements of your home were chosen intentionally by you, for you? What was inherited, left behind by previous tenants, or chosen by someone else?

3. Does your home contain anything that represents your interests, hobbies, values, or passions? What is present, and what is conspicuously absent?

4. Are there walls, surfaces, or spaces that feel empty or generic — waiting for something that expresses who you are?

Values Made Visible

For each value, identify whether and how it is represented in your physical space:

Recovery & Sobriety

How is "Recovery & Sobriety" currently represented (or not) in your home? What could you add or change?

Health & Wellbeing

How is "Health & Wellbeing" currently represented (or not) in your home? What could you add or change?

Connection & Relationships

How is "Connection & Relationships" currently represented (or not) in your home? What could you add or change?

Growth & Learning

How is "Growth & Learning" currently represented (or not) in your home? What could you add or change?

Creativity & Self-Expression

How is "Creativity & Self-Expression" currently represented (or not) in your home? What could you add or change?

Spirituality or Mindfulness

How is "Spirituality or Mindfulness" currently represented (or not) in your home? What could you add or change?

Order & Responsibility

How is "Order & Responsibility" currently represented (or not) in your home? What could you add or change?

Joy & Play

How is "Joy & Play" currently represented (or not) in your home? What could you add or change?

Your Home Identity Statement

1. Describe the aesthetic, mood, and feeling of your ideal home. Use sensory language — colors, textures, lighting, arrangement.

2. What three words would you want someone to use to describe your home? (examples: warm, intentional, alive, peaceful, creative)

3. What is one personalization project you could complete this month that would make your home feel more authentically yours?

4. Complete this statement: "My home should tell the story of a person who..."

PART 2 OF 4 · READING

The Science of Space: How Your Environment Shapes Your Brain

The relationship between physical environment and psychological wellbeing is not folk wisdom — it is established neuroscience. Understanding how your living space directly affects your brain chemistry, stress response, cognitive function, and emotional regulation provides a scientific foundation for why home environment is not a luxury concern in recovery but a clinical one.

Environmental psychology research has consistently demonstrated that cluttered, disorganized spaces elevate cortisol levels. A landmark study from UCLA's Center on Everyday Lives and Families found that people who described their homes as "cluttered" or full of "unfinished projects" had cortisol patterns consistent with chronic stress, while those who described their homes as "restful" and "restorative" showed healthier cortisol curves with appropriate daytime elevation and evening decline.

For people in recovery — whose cortisol regulation is already compromised by the neurological effects of addiction — this finding has direct clinical implications. A chaotic home environment is not just unpleasant; it is maintaining the chronic stress state that makes emotional dysregulation and relapse more likely.

Light profoundly affects mood, circadian rhythm, and cognitive function. Research on seasonal affective disorder and light therapy has established that exposure to natural light increases serotonin production, regulates melatonin cycles, and improves executive function. Homes with inadequate natural light, perpetually drawn curtains, or harsh artificial lighting create neurological conditions that mimic depression. For people in recovery, whose sleep architecture and mood regulation are still healing, light management in the home is not a decorating choice — it is a wellness intervention.

Temperature, air quality, and noise all affect the nervous system's ability to regulate. Chronic exposure to temperature extremes, poor ventilation, secondhand smoke, mold, or persistent noise activates the sympathetic nervous system — the fight-or-flight system — keeping the body in a low-grade state of alarm. This is the same system that is already hyperactivated in people recovering from addiction. Environmental stressors that would be merely annoying to a neurotypical person can be significantly destabilizing to a person whose nervous system is still recalibrating after years of substance-induced dysregulation.

Nature exposure — even in small doses within the home — produces measurable neurological benefits. Dr. Roger Ulrich's foundational research demonstrated that even viewing nature through a window accelerated surgical recovery, reduced pain medication use, and improved mood. Subsequent studies have shown that indoor plants reduce perceived stress, improve air quality, and increase feelings of wellbeing. The Japanese concept of "biophilia" — the innate human need for connection with nature — has been validated by fMRI research showing that nature exposure activates the parasympathetic nervous system, the body's "rest and digest" mode. For a recovery brain that has spent years in chronic sympathetic activation, anything that supports parasympathetic engagement is neurologically therapeutic.

The practical implications for recovery are significant. Your home is not a neutral backdrop to your life — it is an active participant in your neurological and psychological health. Every element of your environment — light, sound, temperature, order, nature, color, scent — is sending signals to your brain that either support healing or maintain distress.

You do not need a large budget or a large space to optimize these signals. You need awareness of what your brain needs and willingness to make intentional changes, however small, that support your recovery rather than undermine it. The recovery brain is healing. It is rewiring. It is building new pathways for pleasure, regulation, connection, and meaning. Your home environment can either support that healing process — like a greenhouse supports fragile growth — or it can create conditions that make healing harder than it needs to be.

The choice is not between a perfect home and a neglected one. The choice is between conscious engagement with your environment and unconscious acceptance of whatever environment you happen to have inherited.

Reflection Questions

1. After reading about the cortisol research, how would you describe your home — "cluttered and unfinished" or "restful and restorative"? How might this be affecting your stress levels?

2. What is the light situation in your home? Do you get natural light? Do you keep curtains open? How might your lighting be affecting your mood and sleep?

3. Are there environmental stressors in your home (noise, temperature, air quality, smoke) that you have been tolerating rather than addressing? What is the cost of that tolerance?

4. Do you have any nature in your home — plants, natural materials, a window with a view? If not, what is one small way you could introduce a natural element?

5. Think of your home as a "greenhouse for recovery." What conditions is your greenhouse currently providing — and are they supporting growth or making it harder?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 2 OF 5

Sensory Environment & Wellbeing

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

1. My home has adequate natural light during the day
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
2. The temperature and air quality in my home are comfortable
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. My home incorporates natural elements — plants, wood, stone, or natural light
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. I use lighting intentionally to create different moods (bright for energy, warm for rest)
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. The sounds in my home are generally calming rather than chaotic or stressful
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. My home smells clean and pleasant — not musty, smoky, or unpleasant
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I have comfortable seating and spaces where I can genuinely relax
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. The overall sensory experience of my home promotes calm rather than agitation
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Sensory Environment Inventory

What Is Your Home Doing to Your Nervous System?

The Nervous System Connection

Your senses are the direct interface between your environment and your nervous system. Every sensory input — light, sound, smell, temperature, texture — is either activating your stress response or supporting your rest-and-restore response. This inventory helps you identify which sensory inputs are helping and which are silently taxing your recovery.

Light

Describe the natural light in your home — when does it come in, to which rooms, and how much?

What artificial lighting do you use? Is it harsh/fluorescent or warm/adjustable?

How does the lighting in your home affect your mood, energy, and sleep?

Light quality rating (1 = actively harmful, 10 = deeply nourishing):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Sound

What are the dominant sounds in your home? (traffic, neighbors, appliances, silence, music)

Are there sounds that create stress, anxiety, or agitation?

Do you use sound intentionally (music, white noise, silence) to support your wellbeing?

Sound quality rating (1 = actively harmful, 10 = deeply nourishing):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Smell

What does your home smell like? Be honest — not what you wish it smelled like, but what it actually smells like.

Are there unpleasant odors you have been tolerating? (smoke, must, mildew, trash, cooking)

Do you use scent intentionally to create an atmosphere? (candles, essential oils, fresh air, cleaning products)

Smell quality rating (1 = actively harmful, 10 = deeply nourishing):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Touch & Texture

Describe the textures in your home — your bedding, seating, floors, clothing storage.

Is your home comfortable to BE in — can you sit, lie down, and relax without physical discomfort?

Are there textural elements that irritate you or that you have been tolerating? (scratchy bedding, broken furniture, uncomfortable chair)

Touch & Texture quality rating (1 = actively harmful, 10 = deeply nourishing):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Temperature & Air

Is your home consistently at a comfortable temperature, or do you struggle with heating/cooling?

What is the air quality like? (ventilation, humidity, stuffiness, freshness)

How do temperature and air quality affect your sleep, comfort, and daily wellbeing?

Temperature & Air quality rating (1 = actively harmful, 10 = deeply nourishing):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Nature & Living Elements

Do you have any plants, flowers, or living elements in your home?

Can you see nature from any windows? (trees, sky, garden, even a patch of grass)

What natural materials are present in your home? (wood, stone, natural fabrics, water features)

Nature & Living Elements quality rating (1 = actively harmful, 10 = deeply nourishing):

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Sensory Action Items

1. Which sense scored lowest? What specific change would improve it most?

2. What sensory input are you tolerating that you should not be? What has the cost of that tolerance been?

3. Name three small, low-cost sensory improvements you could make this week.

4. How would your daily experience of being home change if all six sensory domains were optimized?

PART 3 OF 4 · READING

The Archaeology of Home: Excavating What Your Space Is Holding

Your home is an archaeological site. Layer upon layer of your history is embedded in its objects, its arrangement, its hidden spaces, and its neglected corners. Some of these layers represent your recovery and growth — the meeting schedule on the refrigerator, the gratitude journal by the bed, the kitchen stocked with real food. Other layers represent your addiction and your past — the drawer you have not opened, the closet you avoid, the room that still feels like it belongs to someone you no longer want to be. And some layers represent the no man's land between those two selves — the spaces that are neither recovery-affirming nor actively triggering, but simply neglected, unexamined, and waiting to be claimed.

This archaeological perspective is clinically important because the objects and spaces in your home carry emotional weight that you may not consciously recognize but that your nervous system registers every time you walk past them. The jacket from a relationship that was destroyed by your addiction, still hanging in the closet. The corner of the living room where you used to use, now occupied by a piece of furniture you never really chose. The box in the garage containing possessions from a life you lost. The conspicuous absence of photographs from years that were swallowed by addiction.

These are not just objects and spaces — they are unprocessed emotional material stored in physical form. In recovery work, we talk about doing a "fearless moral inventory" of our inner lives. The home archaeology exercise applies the same principle to your physical environment. What is your home holding that you have not examined? What is it keeping that no longer serves you? What is it missing that your growing self needs? And what is it hiding — because in addiction and in recovery, what we hide in our homes often reveals what we are hiding from ourselves.

The homes of people in active addiction often contain hidden spaces — false bottoms in drawers, stash spots behind furniture, secret compartments that held substances or paraphernalia. In recovery, these hiding places may have been emptied of their original contents but never truly addressed. They remain as architectural artifacts of dishonesty, and their very existence can maintain a subtle, unconscious relationship with secrecy.

Likewise, many people in recovery continue to keep certain spaces "off limits" to their own examination — the junk drawer that has not been opened in two years, the storage unit full of things from "before," the corner of the bedroom that has become a depository for everything you do not want to deal with. These are not just organizational problems. They are physical manifestations of avoidance — and avoidance is one of the most dangerous patterns in sustained recovery.

Conversely, the process of intentionally excavating, sorting, and reimagining your space can be profoundly therapeutic. Every object you remove that belongs to your old life creates space — literal and metaphorical — for something new. Every space you clean, organize, and claim as your own reinforces the identity of the person you are becoming. Every decision to keep, discard, or transform an element of your home is a small act of agency and self-determination, qualities that

addiction systematically destroyed and that recovery must systematically rebuild.

The goal of this work is not to create a sterile, history-free space. Your past is part of your story, and some elements of that past deserve to be honored and kept. The goal is to ensure that your home is holding your history consciously rather than unconsciously — that every significant object and space has been examined, understood, and deliberately chosen to remain rather than passively accepted because you never got around to dealing with it.

A home that has been excavated and reclaimed becomes what your recovery deserves: a space that tells the truth about who you were, honors the journey you have taken, and actively supports the person you are becoming. It becomes a sanctuary not by accident but by intention — the physical manifestation of the inner work you are doing to build a life worth living.

Reflection Questions

1. What "archaeological layers" exist in your home? Can you identify objects, spaces, or areas that belong to your addiction, your early recovery, and your current self?

2. Are there objects in your home that carry unprocessed emotional weight — things you keep but never look at, or things that trigger subtle discomfort every time you notice them?

3. Are there hidden spaces, "off limits" areas, or neglected corners in your home that you have been avoiding? What do you think they represent?

4. If you did a "fearless inventory" of your home the way you did a fearless moral inventory in Step 4, what would you find? What would be the hardest thing to confront?

5. What objects or spaces in your home represent your growth and recovery? What elements would you want to add that reflect who you are becoming?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 3 OF 5

Physical & Emotional Safety

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

1. My home feels physically safe — I feel secure when I am there
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
2. My home is free from substances, paraphernalia, and triggers that could threaten my sobriety
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. The people I live with respect and support my recovery
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. I can set and maintain boundaries about who enters my home and what happens there
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. My home feels emotionally safe — I can be myself without fear of judgment or conflict
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I have removed or addressed environmental elements that remind me of active addiction
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I feel comfortable inviting recovery supports (sponsor, friends, group members) to my home
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. My home does not contain hidden caches, secrets, or spaces that represent dishonesty in my recovery
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Home Archaeology

Excavating What Your Space Is Holding

The Layers of Your Home

Your home contains layers — objects and spaces that belong to different eras of your life. Some serve your current self. Some anchor you to a past you have outgrown. And some exist in a no man's land of avoidance. This exercise helps you identify, examine, and decide what stays, what goes, and what needs to be transformed.

Layer 1: Artifacts of Addiction

Objects, spaces, or elements in your home that are connected to your active addiction — even if their original purpose has changed.

1. Are there objects in your home that are directly connected to your substance use history? (old stash spots, paraphernalia you missed, items acquired during active use)

2. Are there spaces in your home that carry the emotional charge of addiction — rooms where you used, corners where you hid things, areas associated with your worst moments?

3. Are there relationships or items from people connected to your using life that remain in your space?

4. How does it feel to inventory these items and spaces honestly? What is your body telling you?

Layer 2: The Avoidance Zone

Spaces, objects, and projects you have been avoiding — the "I'll deal with that later" items that have been accumulating.

1. What spaces in your home do you actively avoid looking at, cleaning, or organizing? (the junk drawer, the closet, the garage, under the bed)

2. What objects or collections of objects have you been meaning to sort through but keep postponing?

3. What unfinished projects or deferred maintenance exists in your home? How long has each been waiting?

4. What do you think these avoidance patterns represent emotionally? What are you not wanting to face?

Layer 3: Evidence of Recovery

Objects, spaces, and elements that represent your growth, healing, and the life you are building in sobriety.

1. What objects in your home represent your recovery? (medallions, literature, photos, artwork, gifts from recovery relationships)

2. What spaces in your home were created or transformed because of your recovery? (a meditation corner, an organized kitchen, a bed you actually make)

3. What is present in your home now that was not present during active addiction? What does its presence mean to you?

4. What recovery elements are MISSING from your home that you would like to add? What would make your space more recovery-affirming?

Excavation Decisions

1. Based on this excavation, what needs to LEAVE your home? List specific items or categories you are ready to remove.

2. What needs to STAY but needs to be TRANSFORMED — moved, repurposed, cleaned, or recontextualized?

3. What needs to be ADDED to your home to better reflect the person you are becoming?

4. What is the single most emotionally charged item or space you discovered? What will you do about it, and when?

YOUR EXERCISE

Safety & Trigger Audit

Is Your Home Protecting Your Recovery?

Why This Matters

After 12+ months, complacency about environmental safety is common. 'I'm past that' is one of the most dangerous sentences in recovery. This audit is not about paranoia — it is about honest assessment. Your home should be the safest place in your world for your sobriety.

Substance & Paraphernalia Check

Are there any substances (alcohol, prescription medications that are not yours, old prescriptions, cannabis) in your home?

Is there any paraphernalia — even items that could be used as paraphernalia — in your home?

If you have prescribed medications, are they stored safely and taken only as directed? Does anyone else have access?

Are there substances in your home that belong to a housemate or partner? How does their presence affect you?

Have you thoroughly checked ALL spaces — medicine cabinets, drawers, storage areas, vehicles — within the past 6 months?

Environmental Trigger Assessment

1. What visual triggers exist in your home? (items, images, decorations, or views that remind you of using)

2. What sensory triggers exist? (smells, sounds, lighting conditions, or textures associated with active addiction)

3. What situational triggers does your home create? (certain times of day, being alone, certain rooms, specific routines)

4. What relational triggers exist in your home? (people who visit, phone calls you take there, relationships you manage from home)

5. What digital triggers exist? (access to certain apps, contacts, or websites from your home devices)

Safety Enhancement Plan

1. Based on this audit, what immediate actions need to be taken to make your home safer for your recovery? (List specific actions with deadlines)

2. What conversations need to happen with housemates or family members about the safety of your home environment?

3. What ongoing practices will you establish to maintain home safety? (regular audits, visitor boundaries, substance-free policies)

4. Who can help you implement these changes? Have you asked them?

PART 4 OF 4 · READING

Building a Sanctuary: Your Home as a Recovery Tool

A sanctuary is defined as a place of refuge and safety — a sacred space where the noise of the world fades and the authentic self can emerge. For people in sustained recovery, the concept of home-as-sanctuary is not a luxury aspiration. It is a clinical necessity. You need a place in the world where your nervous system can downshift, where your guard can come down, where the exhausting work of maintaining recovery in a world that does not always support it can pause long enough for genuine rest and restoration.

Building a sanctuary does not require money, square footage, or design expertise. It requires intention. It requires the decision that your living space matters because you matter, and that the way you treat your environment is inseparable from the way you treat yourself. It requires seeing every choice about your home — from how you make your bed to whether you hang something on the wall — as a small but meaningful act of self-respect and self-care.

The first principle of sanctuary-building is safety. Your home must be physically and emotionally safe. For people in recovery, this has specific implications: are there substances or paraphernalia in the home? Are there people in the home who are actively using, who disrespect your recovery, or who create emotional chaos? Are there environmental triggers — a particular room, a piece of furniture, a neighborhood view — that keep your addiction story psychologically present? Safety is the foundation. Nothing else matters until this foundation is solid.

The second principle is order. Not perfection — order. The distinction matters enormously. Perfectionism is a trap that prevents action: "I can't clean because I can't deep-clean, so I don't clean at all." Order is simpler: things have places, surfaces are visible, systems exist for daily tasks, and the overall environment communicates "someone is taking care of this." Order reduces cognitive load — the mental energy spent navigating chaos that could be directed toward growth. In recovery, cognitive load is already elevated by the demands of maintaining sobriety, processing emotions, and building new patterns. Every bit of environmental order you create frees mental energy for the work that matters.

The third principle is identity. Your home should look like it belongs to the person you are becoming, not the person you were or the person you think you should be. This means surrounding yourself with objects, images, and elements that reflect your authentic values, interests, and aspirations. Recovery literature and medallions. Photographs of people and moments that represent your growth. Colors and textures that make you feel alive. A space for the hobbies and practices you are discovering or rediscovering in sobriety. Evidence of a life being actively built.

The fourth principle is nourishment. A sanctuary feeds you — sensorially, emotionally, and practically. Good light feeds your circadian rhythm and your mood. Clean air feeds your body. Comfortable seating feeds your ability to rest. A functional kitchen feeds your ability to nourish yourself with real food. Plants and natural elements feed your biophilic need for connection with living things. Quiet spaces feed your ability to reflect, meditate, and hear your own inner voice.

Each of these elements contributes to the overall capacity of your home to restore you, so that you leave it each day more capable, more centered, and more resilient than when you arrived.

The fifth principle is growth. A sanctuary is not static. It evolves as you evolve. The home that served your first year of recovery may not fully serve your third. The decorating choices you made in early sobriety — when you were just grateful to have a roof — may not reflect the person you are now. Building a sanctuary is an ongoing practice of paying attention to what your space needs, what you need from your space, and what the gap between those two realities reveals about the next level of your growth.

Your home is not just where you live. It is where you recover. It is where you sleep, eat, think, feel, connect, and grow. It is the physical container for the most important work you will ever do. Treating it as an afterthought is treating your recovery as an afterthought. Treating it with intention is treating your recovery — and yourself — with the respect you have earned.

Reflection Questions

1. Of the five sanctuary principles (safety, order, identity, nourishment, growth), which is the strongest in your current home? Which is the weakest?

2. What would your home need to look, feel, and function like in order for you to genuinely describe it as a "sanctuary"? How far is it from that vision?

3. How do you currently treat your home — as an afterthought, a chore, or an intentional recovery practice? What would shift if you began treating every home decision as an act of self-respect?

4. What is one change — even a very small one — that you could make in your home this week that would move it closer to being a sanctuary?

5. Write a description of walking into your ideal recovery home. What do you see, smell, feel, and experience? How does it make you feel about yourself and your life?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 4 OF 5

Order, Function & Self-Care

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

1. My living space is reasonably clean and organized — not perfect, but functional
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
2. I have established regular cleaning and maintenance routines for my home
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. My kitchen supports healthy eating — I have food, cookware, and the ability to prepare meals
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. My bedroom supports quality sleep — comfortable bedding, appropriate darkness, minimal electronics
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. My bathroom is clean and stocked with personal care supplies
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I address maintenance issues and repairs in a timely way rather than ignoring them
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. My space is free from excessive clutter that creates visual chaos or anxiety
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. The overall organization of my home supports my daily routines and responsibilities
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 5 OF 5

Connection, Community & Growth

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

1. My home is a place where I can connect meaningfully with others
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
2. I am comfortable having guests and sharing my space with people I trust
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. My home supports my recovery community involvement (space for calls, meetings, fellowship)
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. The people I live with (if any) are genuinely supportive of my recovery and growth
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. My home environment encourages productivity and forward movement, not stagnation
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I see my home as a foundation for the life I am building, not just a place I happen to live
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. My living situation supports my financial recovery and responsible living
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. I am investing in my home environment as an act of self-respect and recovery
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Home Routines & Rituals Design

Creating Rhythms That Sustain Your Recovery

Routines as Recovery Architecture

Routines are the invisible architecture of a well-functioning life. In active addiction, routines revolved around obtaining and using substances. In early recovery, routines were about survival. In sustained recovery, routines become the scaffolding for growth — the daily practices that maintain your home, your health, and your sanity without requiring constant willpower.

Morning Routine (Home-Based)

What do you currently do in the first 30 minutes after waking at home?

What would your ideal morning home routine look like? (bed-making, kitchen, hygiene, mindfulness)

What one morning habit would set the best tone for your day?

Evening Routine (Home-Based)

What does your evening at home currently look like?

What would support better sleep, more peace, and stronger recovery each evening?

What one evening habit would help you close each day with intention?

Cleaning & Maintenance Routine

What is your current approach to cleaning? (regular schedule, crisis cleaning, avoidance)

What would a sustainable, non-overwhelming cleaning routine look like for your home?

What area of home maintenance have you been neglecting that needs a plan?

Meal & Nourishment Routine

How do you currently handle meals at home? (cooking, takeout, skipping)

What would a recovery-supportive approach to home meals look like?

What one change to your food routine would most improve your physical and emotional health?

Recovery Practice at Home

What recovery practices do you do at home? (reading, journaling, meditation, phone calls)

Do you have a dedicated time and space for recovery activities in your home?

What recovery practice would you like to make a non-negotiable part of your home routine?

Routine Commitment

1. Which routine is most urgently needed? Which would create the most positive ripple effect?

2. What has prevented you from establishing consistent home routines until now?

3. Write out your committed daily home routine — morning and evening — in specific, timed detail.

4. How will you hold yourself accountable to these routines? Who will you tell?

YOUR EXERCISE

Housemates & Household Relationships

How the People in Your Home Affect Your Recovery

The Relational Environment

Your home environment is not just walls and furniture — it is also the people who share your space. Whether you live alone, with family, with a partner, or with roommates, the relational dynamics in your home are among the most powerful influences on your daily recovery experience. This exercise examines those dynamics honestly.

My Living Situation

1. Who do you currently live with? Describe your household.

2. Was this living arrangement chosen deliberately to support your recovery, or did it happen by circumstance?

3. On a scale of 1 to 10, how supportive is your current living situation for your recovery and growth?

4. If you could design your ideal living situation for this stage of recovery, what would it look like?

Household Dynamics Assessment

1. Do the people you live with respect your recovery? How do they show this (or fail to)?

2. Are there substances used by others in your home? How does this affect you?

3. What household conflicts or tensions exist? How do they impact your emotional state and recovery?

4. Do you share household responsibilities equitably, or is there resentment about who does what?

5. Can you be your authentic, recovering self at home, or do you put on a mask?

6. What conversations about your living arrangement need to happen that you have been avoiding?

Relationship Action Items

1. What is the single biggest relational issue in your home that is affecting your recovery? What will you do about it?

Plan your actions...

2. What boundaries need to be set or reinforced in your household? With whom, about what?

Plan your actions...

3. If your current living situation is not supporting your recovery, what steps — even preliminary ones — can you take toward a better arrangement?

Plan your actions...

YOUR EXERCISE

Daily Home Care Tracker

7 Days of Intentional Living

The Practice

For 7 days, track how you care for your home and how your home affects you. This is not about perfection — it is about awareness. Noticing the connection between what you do for your space and how your space makes you feel is the beginning of treating home care as recovery care.

Day 1

What did I do for my home today? (cleaning, organizing, cooking, decorating, repairing — any act of care)

How did my home make me FEEL today? (when I woke up, when I came home, before bed)

Did I notice any connection between my home environment and my recovery today?

Home-as-sanctuary rating today (1 = my space is working against me, 10 = my space is nurturing me)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Day 2

What did I do for my home today? (cleaning, organizing, cooking, decorating, repairing — any act of care)

How did my home make me FEEL today? (when I woke up, when I came home, before bed)

Did I notice any connection between my home environment and my recovery today?

Home-as-sanctuary rating today (1 = my space is working against me, 10 = my space is nurturing me)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Day 3

What did I do for my home today? (cleaning, organizing, cooking, decorating, repairing — any act of care)

How did my home make me FEEL today? (when I woke up, when I came home, before bed)

Did I notice any connection between my home environment and my recovery today?

Home-as-sanctuary rating today (1 = my space is working against me, 10 = my space is nurturing me)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Day 4

What did I do for my home today? (cleaning, organizing, cooking, decorating, repairing — any act of care)

How did my home make me FEEL today? (when I woke up, when I came home, before bed)

Did I notice any connection between my home environment and my recovery today?

Home-as-sanctuary rating today (1 = my space is working against me, 10 = my space is nurturing me)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Day 5

What did I do for my home today? (cleaning, organizing, cooking, decorating, repairing — any act of care)

How did my home make me FEEL today? (when I woke up, when I came home, before bed)

Did I notice any connection between my home environment and my recovery today?

Home-as-sanctuary rating today (1 = my space is working against me, 10 = my space is nurturing me)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Day 6

What did I do for my home today? (cleaning, organizing, cooking, decorating, repairing — any act of care)

How did my home make me FEEL today? (when I woke up, when I came home, before bed)

Did I notice any connection between my home environment and my recovery today?

Home-as-sanctuary rating today (1 = my space is working against me, 10 = my space is nurturing me)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Day 7

What did I do for my home today? (cleaning, organizing, cooking, decorating, repairing — any act of care)

How did my home make me FEEL today? (when I woke up, when I came home, before bed)

Did I notice any connection between my home environment and my recovery today?

Home-as-sanctuary rating today (1 = my space is working against me, 10 = my space is nurturing me)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Week in Review

1. Looking at your 7 days, what patterns do you notice between home care and emotional wellbeing?

2. Did your sanctuary rating improve on days when you actively cared for your space?

3. What was the hardest home care task? What was the most rewarding?

4. What daily home care practice will you commit to continuing beyond this week?

YOUR EXERCISE

Boundaries & Sacred Space

Protecting Your Home as a Recovery Resource

Your Home, Your Rules

A sanctuary requires boundaries. Who enters your home, what they bring with them, how long they stay, and what behavior is acceptable in your space — these are not just preferences, they are recovery decisions. Every boundary you set around your home is a statement about the value you place on your sobriety and your growth.

Who Enters Your Space

1. Who is welcome in your home without restriction? Why these people?

2. Are there people you currently allow in who compromise your recovery, safety, or peace? Who, and what would need to change?

3. Do you have clear rules about substance use in your home? What are they, and are they consistently enforced?

4. Can you say "no" to visitors when you need solitude or rest? What makes this easy or difficult?

Creating Sacred Space

A "sacred space" does not have to be religious — it is simply a designated area in your home that is set apart for your inner life: reflection, meditation, prayer, journaling, or simply being still.

1. Do you currently have a sacred space in your home — however small? Describe it or describe why you do not.

2. If you were to create one, where would it be? What would it contain? (chair, candle, journal, literature, artwork, cushion)

3. What recovery practice would you use this space for, and how often?

4. What does the presence (or absence) of sacred space in your home say about the priority you place on your inner life?

Digital Boundaries at Home

1. How does technology affect your home environment? (screen time, noise, distraction, sleep disruption)

2. Do you have boundaries around technology use in your home? (phone-free zones, screen time limits, no devices in bedroom)

3. What digital habits are you bringing into your home that undermine your recovery or your quality of life at home?

4. What one digital boundary would most improve your experience of being home?

YOUR EXERCISE

Sanctuary Action Plan

Transforming Insight Into a Home That Supports Your Growth

From Awareness to Action

Everything you have done in this intensive — the readings, the assessment, the exercises — has been building toward this plan. You now have a detailed picture of your home environment, its strengths, its weaknesses, and its impact on your recovery. This plan translates that awareness

into concrete, time-bound action.

What I've Learned

1. Summarize the most important insight from this intensive. What did you learn about your home environment that you did not fully see before?

Synthesize your learning...

2. How is your home currently supporting your recovery, and how is it hindering it?

Synthesize your learning...

3. What excited you most about the potential for change? What feels most overwhelming or difficult?

Synthesize your learning...

This Week — Quick Wins: Days 1-7

Small, immediate changes that require minimal time or money but create visible impact. Build momentum with easy victories.

Safety improvement:

What will you do to make your home safer for recovery?

Order & function improvement:

What will you clean, organize, or repair?

Identity & expression improvement:

What will you personalize, add, or display?

Sensory environment improvement:

What will you change about light, sound, smell, or comfort?

Routine or ritual to establish:

What daily home practice will you commit to?

How I will know it worked:

What will be different — visually, emotionally, functionally?

This Month — Meaningful Changes: Days 8-30

Larger projects that require planning, effort, or modest investment. These are the changes that shift how your home feels.

Safety improvement:

What will you do to make your home safer for recovery?

Order & function improvement:

What will you clean, organize, or repair?

Identity & expression improvement:

What will you personalize, add, or display?

Sensory environment improvement:

What will you change about light, sound, smell, or comfort?

Routine or ritual to establish:

What daily home practice will you commit to?

How I will know it worked:

What will be different — visually, emotionally, functionally?

This Quarter — Transformative Goals: Days 31-90

Significant improvements that may require support, resources, or sustained effort. This is where your space becomes a sanctuary.

Safety improvement:

What will you do to make your home safer for recovery?

Order & function improvement:

What will you clean, organize, or repair?

Identity & expression improvement:

What will you personalize, add, or display?

Sensory environment improvement:

What will you change about light, sound, smell, or comfort?

Routine or ritual to establish:

What daily home practice will you commit to?

How I will know it worked:

What will be different — visually, emotionally, functionally?

My Sanctuary Commitment

Write a personal commitment statement — a declaration of your intention to treat your home environment as a recovery resource and an act of self-respect.

I commit to creating a home that...

Date of commitment:

90-day review date:

Remember

You did not survive addiction to live in a space that does not honor the life you have built. Your home is not just where you sleep — it is where you recover, where you grow, where you practice being the person sobriety is making possible. Every act of care you give your home is an act of care you give yourself. Every space you claim, clean, or transform is a declaration that you deserve a life of quality, dignity, and beauty. You are not just sober. You are building a sanctuary — and a sanctuary is built one intentional choice at a time.

"Embrace, Empower & Evolve"