

PAWS Timeline Mapping Board

[Vision board](#) · [Recovery Timelines](#) · [The Recovery Files](#)

Printable fill-in version: write your answers on the lines. The interactive board, its charts and your saved entries stay in the app.

PAWS Timeline Mapping Board

Post-Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (PAWS) doesn't follow a straight line — it comes in waves. This board helps you map those waves, identify patterns, understand triggers, and build the tools to ride them out.

Episodes Logged

Sections Complete

How to use this board: Start with Understanding PAWS if you're new, then complete the Symptom Assessment to get your baseline. Use the Timeline Board to log each PAWS episode as it happens. Over time, the Pattern Recognition Workbook will help you see your cycles and predict your waves — before they hit.

☐ Understanding PAWS What it is, why it happens, how long it lasts
 ☐ My PAWS Timeline Board Log episodes, track patterns, map your waves
 ☐ PAWS Symptom Assessment 5 domains • 40 questions • Personalized results
 ☐ Pattern Recognition Workbook Identify cycles, windows, and warning signs
 ☐ Trigger Mapping Tool Chart your personal PAWS trigger landscape
 ☐ Wave Survival Kit Build your personalized coping strategy menu
 ☐ Daily PAWS Check-In 7-day guided symptom and mood tracking
 ☐ My Recovery Roadmap Commitments, goals, and support network

Understanding PAWS

The Science Behind the Waves

What Is PAWS?

Post-Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (PAWS) is the second stage of withdrawal from alcohol, opioids, stimulants, benzodiazepines, and other substances. Unlike acute withdrawal — which is intense and brief — PAWS is subtle, unpredictable, and prolonged. It reflects the brain's extended process of healing and recalibrating its chemistry after chronic substance use.

Why Does PAWS Happen?

Chronic substance use fundamentally rewires the brain. It hijacks the dopamine reward system, dysregulates the stress response, alters sleep architecture, and blunts the prefrontal cortex's ability to regulate emotion and impulse. When substances are removed, the brain doesn't snap back to baseline overnight. The healing process — neurologically speaking — takes months to years.

Think of it this way: if you've been walking with a broken leg for two years, the muscles and tendons have adapted to the injury. Taking off the cast doesn't make you fully mobile by morning. Rehabilitation takes time, effort, and setbacks. PAWS is the rehabilitation phase of your brain.

The Neurological Reality

The limbic system (emotion center), prefrontal cortex (decision-making), and hippocampus (memory) all show measurable changes after sustained substance use. PAWS symptoms directly reflect which brain systems are still healing. Anxiety and mood swings = limbic dysregulation. Brain fog = prefrontal cortex recovery. Sleep disruption = disrupted circadian and sleep

architecture.

1 Before reading this, what did you think PAWS was — or did you know it had a name?

2 Knowing that PAWS is a neurological healing process — not a sign of weakness or failure — what changes about how you see your difficult days?

PAWS Timelines by Substance

Important Note

These are general timelines based on clinical research. Your individual PAWS experience may vary based on length of use, amount used, poly-substance use, genetics, mental health history, and trauma. Your treatment team can help you understand your specific timeline.

Substance	Acute Withdrawal	PAWS Duration	Key PAWS Symptoms
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Alcohol	5–7 days	6–24 months	Mood instability, anxiety, sleep disruption, cognitive fog
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Opioids / Heroin	5–14 days	6–18 months	Depression, insomnia, restlessness, cravings, anxiety
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Stimulants (Cocaine / Meth)	7–10 days	3–12 months	Depression, fatigue, anhedonia, cognitive impairment, cravings
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Benzodiazepines	2–4 weeks	12–24 months	Anxiety, cognitive issues, insomnia, sensory disturbances
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Cannabis	1–2 weeks	3–6 months	Irritability, insomnia, anxiety, appetite changes
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Prescription Opioids	5–10 days	6–18 months	Depression, cravings, sleep disturbance, aches
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1 Based on your substance(s) of use, what is your estimated PAWS window?

2 How does knowing your PAWS timeline change the way you plan for the next 6–12 months?

Understanding the Wave Pattern

One of the defining features of PAWS is that it doesn't feel like a steady, linear improvement. It comes in waves — periods of intense symptoms followed by windows of relative calm. This episodic pattern confuses many people in recovery. During a window, they feel so good they wonder if PAWS is truly over. During a wave, they feel so bad they wonder if recovery is even possible.

Both feelings are valid. Neither is permanent. The wave will pass. The window is real — and it will return. Understanding this rhythm is one of the most protective things you can do in early and sustained recovery.

The Good News About Waves

As recovery continues, most people notice that their waves become: shorter in duration, lower in intensity, spaced farther apart, and more predictable. The overall trend is healing — even when individual episodes feel just as bad. Tracking your waves over time is the only way to see this progress clearly.

1 Describe what a PAWS "wave" has felt like for you. What happens in your body and mind?

Be as specific as you can...

2 Describe what a PAWS "window" feels like. How is it different from the wave?

Be as specific as you can...

3 Have you ever felt like PAWS was over, only to have a wave return? What happened?

Be as specific as you can...

4 What do you tell yourself during a wave to remember that it is temporary?

Be as specific as you can...

The 5 Domains of PAWS

PAWS affects five interconnected domains of functioning. Most people in recovery experience some combination of all five — though the pattern varies by substance, length of use, and individual biology.

Cognitive

Brain fog, memory lapses, difficulty concentrating, slowed processing, poor decision-making. The "cotton brain" feeling that makes simple tasks feel overwhelming.

Emotional

Mood swings, depression, anxiety, emotional numbness, irritability. Feelings that seem disproportionate to circumstances, or an absence of feeling altogether.

Sleep & Energy

Insomnia, hypersomnia, vivid dreams, unrefreshing sleep, energy crashes. The body's circadian rhythm and sleep architecture are among the last systems to normalize.

Physical

Fatigue, muscle tension, headaches, stress sensitivity, appetite changes. The body carries PAWS as much as the brain — physical symptoms are real and valid.

Craving & Risk

Sudden or chronic cravings, romanticizing use, bargaining thoughts, reduced coping when stressed. PAWS significantly elevates relapse risk — especially in months 3–6.

1 Which of the 5 domains affects you most right now? What does that look like in your daily life? Be specific about your experience...

2 Are there domains you didn't expect to be affected? Which surprised you most?

My PAWS Timeline Board

Log every wave. Every window. Build your map over time.

0 Episodes Logged

Why Log Your Episodes?

Each time you log a PAWS episode, you're building a personal dataset about your own recovery. Over weeks and months, patterns emerge: are your waves getting shorter? Are certain triggers appearing repeatedly? Is there a consistent time of month, week, or day when symptoms spike? This data becomes your early warning system.

Clinical Suggestions for Tracking

- Log episodes as they happen or within 24 hours — memory fades quickly.
- Note the full context: what were you doing, feeling, eating, and sleeping the day before?
- Track windows as well as waves — knowing what your "good" looks like is equally valuable.
- Look for monthly patterns — many PAWS cycles run on 4-6 week rhythms.
- Share your log with your treatment team, sponsor, or therapist regularly.

× Cancel

☐ New Episode Entry

Date *

Episode Type

☐ PAWS Wave (difficult) / ☐ PAWS Window (clear) / ☐ Craving Episode / ☐ Mixed Day]

Intensity: __/10

1 - Barely noticeable 10 - Overwhelming

Duration (how long did this episode last?)

Symptoms Present (select all that apply)

☐ Anxiety / panic ☐ Irritability ☐ Mood swings ☐ Depression ☐ Brain fog / confusion ☐ Poor concentration ☐ Memory lapses ☐ Cognitive fatigue ☐ Insomnia ☐ Vivid dreams / nightmares ☐ Disrupted sleep pattern ☐ Excessive fatigue ☐ Physical fatigue ☐ Muscle tension ☐ Headaches ☐ Sensitivity to stress ☐ Cravings ☐ Emotional numbness ☐ Restlessness ☐ Social withdrawal ☐ Low motivation

Triggers Identified (select all that apply)

☐ Stress at work / school ☐ Conflict in relationships ☐ Financial pressure ☐ Physical illness ☐ Poor sleep ☐ Skipped meals ☐ Loneliness / isolation ☐ Anniversaries or dates ☐ Places associated with use ☐ People from using days ☐ Boredom ☐ Celebrations ☐ Grief / loss ☐ Overwhelming emotions ☐ Exhaustion ☐ Sensory cues (smell, sound) ☐ Significant life changes ☐ Social gatherings ☐ Arguments ☐ Feeling disrespected

Coping strategies used during this episode

What did you do? What helped? What didn't?

Additional notes / context

Anything else relevant — what was happening in your life, how you're feeling looking back...

Save Episode to Timeline

Start by logging your first PAWS wave or window above.

PAWS Symptom Assessment

5 Domains • 40 Questions • Rate 1-5

How to Use This Assessment

Rate each statement based on how frequently or intensely it has affected you over the past two weeks. 1 = Not at all / rarely. 3 = Somewhat / sometimes. 5 = Very much / frequently. Be honest — this isn't a test. It's a mirror. Revisit this assessment monthly to track changes over time.

Cognitive Symptoms

Rate how much each statement applies to you over the past two weeks (1 = Not at all → 5 = Very much):

I have difficulty concentrating on tasks I used to manage easily

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I notice gaps in my short-term memory — forgetting what I just said or did

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I experience mental fog or "cloudy thinking" that makes decisions harder

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I feel mentally exhausted even after simple tasks

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I struggle to find words or process information quickly

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I find it difficult to follow complex conversations or multi-step instructions

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I make more errors or overlook details at work, school, or home

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I feel like my thinking is "slower" than before I was using

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

Domain Score

Cognitive Symptoms 0%

Reflection: What does this domain look like for you right now?

What does this feel like in your daily life?

Emotional & Mood Symptoms

Rate how much each statement applies to you over the past two weeks (1 = Not at all → 5 = Very much):

My mood shifts dramatically and unpredictably throughout the day

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I experience episodes of anxiety or panic that feel out of proportion to the situation

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I go through periods of depression or deep hopelessness without an obvious cause

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I feel emotionally numb — disconnected from feelings I know I should have

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I feel irritable or short-tempered in ways that surprise even me

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I experience sudden waves of sadness, grief, or despair that come and go

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I feel emotionally fragile or "on edge" much of the time

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I have difficulty feeling genuine pleasure or joy in things I used to enjoy

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

Domain Score

Emotional & Mood Symptoms 0%

Reflection: What does this domain look like for you right now?

What does this feel like in your daily life?

Sleep & Energy Disruption

Rate how much each statement applies to you over the past two weeks (1 = Not at all → 5 = Very much):

I have difficulty falling asleep even when I am physically exhausted

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I wake frequently during the night or in the early hours and cannot return to sleep

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I experience vivid, disturbing, or emotionally intense dreams

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I feel unrefreshed even after a full night of sleep

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I go through cycles of excessive fatigue followed by periods of high energy

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I notice I need far more sleep than I did before, or much less

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I have difficulty establishing a consistent sleep-wake schedule

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

My energy levels crash at predictable times during the day

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

Domain Score

Sleep & Energy Disruption 0%

Reflection: What does this domain look like for you right now?

What does this feel like in your daily life?

Physical & Somatic Symptoms

Rate how much each statement applies to you over the past two weeks (1 = Not at all → 5 = Very much):

I experience unexplained physical fatigue, heaviness, or body aches

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I notice increased sensitivity to noise, light, or physical sensations

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I experience muscle tension, restlessness, or an inability to sit still

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I have recurring headaches or pressure in my head with no clear medical cause

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I feel physically overwhelmed by stress in ways I didn't before recovery

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

My appetite is significantly different — much less or much more than before

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I notice physical symptoms (sweating, heart racing) triggered by stress or emotions

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I feel physically depleted at the end of each day even without heavy exertion

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

Domain Score

Physical & Somatic Symptoms 0%

Reflection: What does this domain look like for you right now?

What does this feel like in your daily life?

Craving & Relapse Risk

Rate how much each statement applies to you over the past two weeks (1 = Not at all → 5 = Very much):

I experience cravings or strong urges to use that seem to come from nowhere

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

Specific places, people, or sensory cues reliably trigger a craving response in me

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I notice craving intensity spikes when I am stressed, sleep-deprived, or emotionally overwhelmed

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I romanticize or idealize my use — remembering the relief more than the consequences

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I have thoughts like "maybe I could control it this time" during difficult stretches

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

Cravings feel like a physical sensation in my body, not just a thought

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I find myself bargaining with myself about whether recovery is "worth it"

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

I notice my coping skills break down significantly when cravings are high

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Not at all Very much

Domain Score

Craving & Relapse Risk 0%

Reflection: What does this domain look like for you right now?

What does this feel like in your daily life?

Pattern Recognition Workbook

Turning data into insight — insight into protection

The Power of Pattern Recognition

PAWS feels random and unpredictable — until you look back. Most people in sustained recovery discover that their waves follow patterns: certain triggers that reliably precede symptoms, specific times of day or week when symptoms spike, and predictable early warning signs that a wave is building. Recognizing your patterns is your single greatest protective tool.

Timing & Frequency Patterns

1 Looking at your logged episodes, do you notice patterns in WHEN they occur? (Time of day, day of week, time of month?)

Look for patterns across your logged episodes...

2 How long do your waves typically last? Has that duration been changing over time?

Look for patterns across your logged episodes...

3 How long are your windows — the clear periods between waves? Are they getting longer?

Look for patterns across your logged episodes...

4 Is there a time of year when your PAWS symptoms tend to be worse? (Seasons, anniversaries, holidays?)

Look for patterns across your logged episodes...

5 What does the day BEFORE a wave typically look like? What warning signs appear?

Look for patterns across your logged episodes...

Severity & Intensity Patterns

1 Overall, are your PAWS waves getting less intense over time — even if individual episodes still feel severe?

Be specific and honest...

2 What conditions consistently make your symptoms worse? (Sleep deprivation, skipping meals, stress, isolation?)

Be specific and honest...

3 What conditions consistently make your symptoms more manageable or help you recover faster?

Be specific and honest...

4 Rate your overall PAWS burden now compared to 30, 60, and 90 days ago. What has changed?

Be specific and honest...

5 What has your most intense PAWS episode taught you about what you need to protect yourself?

Be specific and honest...

My Early Warning System

Why Early Warnings Matter

Most PAWS waves don't arrive without notice. There are early warning signs — subtle shifts in mood, sleep, appetite, or thinking that precede a full wave. Identifying your personal early warnings and teaching the people around you to recognize them is one of the most powerful relapse prevention strategies available.

1 What are YOUR personal early warning signs that a PAWS wave is building? (List at least 3 specific signs — physical, emotional, behavioral)

Make this as concrete and specific as possible...

2 Who in your support network would notice your early warning signs? Do they know what to look for?

Make this as concrete and specific as possible...

3 What is your personal "first move" plan — what do you do immediately when you notice your early warnings?

Make this as concrete and specific as possible...

4 If someone called you right now and said "I think a PAWS wave is coming," what advice would you give them? (Often the best advice for others is also advice for ourselves.)

Make this as concrete and specific as possible...

Trigger Mapping Tool

Chart your personal PAWS trigger landscape

Understanding PAWS Triggers

PAWS triggers are conditions — internal or external — that reliably intensify your symptoms or precipitate a wave. Unlike acute withdrawal, which is driven primarily by biology, PAWS is highly sensitive to stress, sleep, emotion, and environment. Mapping your specific triggers gives you the power to reduce, prepare for, or respond to them strategically.

Biological Triggers

These are physical and physiological conditions that directly stress the nervous system.

Rate your sensitivity to each trigger (1 = minimal, 5 = very strong):

Sleep deprivation (even one poor night)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Skipping meals / low blood sugar

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Physical illness or pain

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Dehydration

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Hormonal changes (PMS, thyroid, cortisol)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Overexertion or physical exhaustion

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Caffeine excess

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Medications that affect the brain

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

1 Which of these biological triggers has the most consistent impact on your PAWS symptoms?

Be specific — the more detailed your map, the more useful it is...

2 What is your current sleep hygiene like? How reliably does poor sleep precede a wave for you?

Be specific — the more detailed your map, the more useful it is...

3 What changes could you make to your physical self-care to reduce biological trigger exposure?

Be specific — the more detailed your map, the more useful it is...

Psychological Triggers

Internal emotional states and thought patterns that activate the stress response and amplify PAWS symptoms.

Rate your sensitivity to each trigger (1 = minimal, 5 = very strong):

Prolonged anxiety or worry

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Depression or hopelessness

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Shame or self-criticism

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Grief or loss

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Anger or resentment held over time

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Boredom or emptiness

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Feeling out of control

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Catastrophic thinking

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

1 Which emotional state most reliably triggers or worsens your PAWS symptoms?

Be specific — the more detailed your map, the more useful it is...

2 Do you have a pattern of holding emotions in until they reach a tipping point? How does that connect to your waves?

Be specific — the more detailed your map, the more useful it is...

3 What emotional regulation skills do you currently use? Which are most effective?

Be specific — the more detailed your map, the more useful it is...

Social & Relational Triggers

Interpersonal dynamics, social environments, and relationship stress that strain your recovery.

Rate your sensitivity to each trigger (1 = minimal, 5 = very strong):

Conflict with a partner, family member, or coworker

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Feeling rejected or dismissed

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Spending time with people from your using days

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Social isolation or loneliness

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Feeling disrespected or misunderstood

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Family gatherings or obligations

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Pressure to explain your recovery to others

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Social situations involving alcohol or substances

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

1 Which social or relational triggers are hardest for you to manage? Why?

Be specific — the more detailed your map, the more useful it is...

2 Are there specific people in your life who consistently precede a PAWS wave? What is that relationship dynamic?

Be specific — the more detailed your map, the more useful it is...

3 What boundaries have you set — or still need to set — around social triggers?

Be specific — the more detailed your map, the more useful it is...

Environmental & Situational Triggers

Sensory cues, places, dates, and situations that activate the brain's conditioned response to substances.

Rate your sensitivity to each trigger (1 = minimal, 5 = very strong):

Places associated with past use

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Seeing or smelling substances

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Driving past old using locations

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Anniversaries of significant events

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Major life transitions or changes

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Financial stress

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Work pressure or deadlines

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

Seasonal changes or holidays

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Minimal Very strong

1 What environmental cues have you noticed most reliably trigger cravings or PAWS symptoms?

Be specific — the more detailed your map, the more useful it is...

2 Are there places you need to avoid, limit, or approach with a plan in early recovery?

Be specific — the more detailed your map, the more useful it is...

3 How do significant dates or anniversaries affect you? Do you plan in advance for these?

Be specific — the more detailed your map, the more useful it is...

My Personal Trigger Map Summary

1 List your top 3 PAWS triggers in order of impact. For each, briefly describe what happens when you encounter it.

This is your personal trigger map — make it specific and actionable...

2 For each of your top 3 triggers, what is one specific, actionable step you can take to reduce exposure or prepare in advance?

This is your personal trigger map — make it specific and actionable...

3 Which trigger do you have the most control over? Which do you have the least? What does that gap require of you?

This is your personal trigger map — make it specific and actionable...

4 Who on your support team knows about your primary triggers? Who do you need to tell?

This is your personal trigger map — make it specific and actionable...

Wave Survival Kit

Your personalized PAWS coping strategy menu

Build Your Kit Before the Wave Hits

A survival kit is only useful if you build it before you need it. The middle of a PAWS wave is not the time to figure out what might help. Curate this list now, when you're clear-headed. Then, when a

wave arrives, you have a menu — not a blank page.

☐ Immediate (0-15 min) — Use when a wave hits NOW ☐ Call sponsor or recovery support ☐ Box breathing (4-4-4-4) ☐ Hold a warm mug and slow your exhale ☐ Walk outside immediately ☐ Text someone in recovery ☐ 5-4-3-2-1 grounding ☐ Repeat the Serenity Prayer ☐ Watch recovery content ☐ Journal the craving ☐ Remind yourself: "This is PAWS. It passes."

Add your own tools for this category:

What else works for you?

Which of these is your #1 go-to in this category? Why?

Name it and explain why it works for you...

☐ Short-Term (15-60 min) — Use to stabilize during a wave ☐ Attend a meeting (in-person or online) ☐ Physical exercise ☐ Meditation or prayer ☐ Music that grounds me ☐ Creative outlet (art, writing, music) ☐ Clean or organize a space ☐ Prepare a healthy meal ☐ Read recovery literature ☐ Talk to therapist / counselor ☐ HALT check (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired)

Add your own tools for this category:

What else works for you?

Which of these is your #1 go-to in this category? Why?

Name it and explain why it works for you...

☐ Daily Prevention — Build the foundation that reduces wave frequency ☐ Consistent sleep schedule ☐ 30 minutes of movement ☐ Regular meals (no skipping) ☐ Daily check-in with support person ☐ Meditation or mindfulness practice ☐ Journaling ☐ Meeting attendance ☐ Step work ☐ Limit caffeine ☐ Limit screen time before bed ☐ Time in nature ☐ Connection with pets or animals

Add your own tools for this category:

What else works for you?

Which of these is your #1 go-to in this category? Why?

Name it and explain why it works for you...

☐ Clinical & Professional Support — When to bring in professional help ☐ Weekly therapy sessions
☐ Psychiatric medication review ☐ Group therapy or IOP ☐ Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)
☐ Regular check-ins with prescriber ☐ Peer support specialist ☐ EMDR or trauma processing ☐
Nutritional counseling ☐ Sleep study or treatment ☐ Acupuncture or integrative medicine

Add your own tools for this category:

What else works for you?

Which of these is your #1 go-to in this category? Why?

Name it and explain why it works for you...

My Wave Action Plan

Make It Concrete

The most effective relapse prevention plans are specific enough to follow without thinking. Vague plans fail in moments of crisis. Write your plan as if you're writing instructions for yourself at your worst moment — because you are.

1 The moment I notice my early warning signs, my first action will be: (Name it exactly — who you will call, what you will do, where you will go)

Make this as specific as possible...

2 During a PAWS wave, the person I will always tell is: _____. My backup person is: _____. Here is how I will reach them:

Make this as specific as possible...

3 The one thing I will NOT do during a PAWS wave (the behavior most likely to lead to relapse or make symptoms worse):

Make this as specific as possible...

4 After a wave passes, here is how I will check in with myself and my support team:

Make this as specific as possible...

5 A message I want to give myself for when I am in the middle of a wave and struggling to remember why recovery is worth it:

Make this as specific as possible...

☐ Immediate (0-15 min) — Use when a wave hits NOW ☐ Box breathing (4-4-4-4) ☐ Hold a warm mug and slow your exhale ☐ Walk outside immediately ☐ Text someone in recovery ☐ 5-4-3-2-1 grounding ☐ Repeat the Serenity Prayer ☐ Watch recovery content ☐ Journal the craving ☐ Remind yourself: "This is PAWS. It passes."

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☐ Short-Term (15-60 min) — Use to stabilize during a wave ☐ Physical exercise ☐ Meditation or prayer ☐ Music that grounds me ☐ Creative outlet (art, writing, music) ☐ Clean or organize a space ☐ Prepare a healthy meal ☐ Read recovery literature ☐ Talk to therapist / counselor ☐ HALT check (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired)

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☐ Daily Prevention — Build the foundation that reduces wave frequency ☐ 30 minutes of movement ☐ Regular meals (no skipping) ☐ Daily check-in with support person ☐ Meditation or mindfulness practice ☐ Journaling ☐ Meeting attendance ☐ Step work ☐ Limit caffeine ☐ Limit screen time before bed ☐ Time in nature ☐ Connection with pets or animals

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Daily PAWS Check-In

7 Days of Intentional Monitoring

Why Daily Check-Ins Matter

Recovery from PAWS requires daily monitoring — not because you are fragile, but because PAWS fluctuates day-to-day and hour-to-hour. A brief daily check-in keeps you connected to your own experience, catches warning signs early, and builds the habit of self-awareness that is the foundation of sustained recovery.

Overall PAWS intensity today (1 = barely noticeable, 10 = overwhelming)

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

Today's phase

☐ ☐ Wave ☐ ☐ Window ☐ ☐ Mixed

What symptoms are most present today?

Name 2-3 specific symptoms...

Did anything trigger or worsen symptoms today?

What happened? When?

What coping strategies did you use today?

What helped? What didn't?

One insight or observation from today:

What did you notice about yourself or your recovery today?

Sleep quality last night (1 = terrible, 10 = excellent)

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Week in Review

1 Looking at all 7 days: did your PAWS intensity follow a pattern? Were there consistent high or low days?

Synthesize your week...

2 What correlation do you notice between your sleep quality and next-day PAWS intensity?

Synthesize your week...

3 Which coping strategy worked best for you this week? What made it effective?

Synthesize your week...

4 What was your biggest PAWS challenge this week — and how did you handle it?

Synthesize your week...

5 What will you do differently next week based on this check-in data?

Synthesize your week...

My Recovery Roadmap

Commitments, milestones, and the people who help you get there

Your Roadmap is Your North Star

PAWS doesn't follow a straight line — but your recovery intentions can. A roadmap isn't a rigid schedule; it's a set of commitments and milestones that keep you oriented toward healing even when individual days feel chaotic. Revisit and update it regularly.

My Recovery Foundation

1 What substances are you in recovery from? How long have you been in recovery? (This is your starting point on the timeline.)

Be honest and specific...

2 Based on your substance use history, what is your estimated PAWS window? How does knowing this change your expectations?

Be honest and specific...

3 What does "recovery" mean to you — beyond not using? What kind of life are you working toward?

Be honest and specific...

4 What has been the hardest part of PAWS for you so far? What has been the most surprising?

Be honest and specific...

My PAWS Milestones

Milestone Thinking

In PAWS recovery, milestones look different than in other contexts. They might be: completing a full week without a craving wave, sleeping 7 nights without waking, or going a month without a severe episode. Naming these in advance gives you targets and a way to celebrate your progress.

1 30-Day Milestone: What do I want to be true about my recovery in 30 days from now? (Be realistic — not perfect.)

Make this vision concrete — the more specific, the more motivating...

2 90-Day Milestone: What PAWS improvements would indicate that my brain is healing? What will I be able to do that I can't easily do now?

Make this vision concrete — the more specific, the more motivating...

3 6-Month Milestone: What does life look like at 6 months of recovery? What has PAWS cost you that you will be working to reclaim?

Make this vision concrete — the more specific, the more motivating...

4 12-Month Milestone: What does a year of recovery look like — not just PAWS management, but the life you're building?

Make this vision concrete — the more specific, the more motivating...

5 What is one "proof of progress" you can look for each week — something small and observable that tells you healing is happening?

Make this vision concrete — the more specific, the more motivating...

My Support Network

1 Who is your primary recovery support person? (Name, relationship, how they support you)

Name specific people and specific plans...

2 Who is your clinical support? (Therapist, counselor, treatment team — names and how often you see them)

Name specific people and specific plans...

3 Who is your peer support? (Sponsor, recovery group, sober friends)

Name specific people and specific plans...

4 Who in your life knows about PAWS specifically — and understands what you experience?

Name specific people and specific plans...

5 Who would you call at 2am during a severe PAWS wave? Do they know they have this role?

Name specific people and specific plans...

6 Is there anyone in your life whose presence reliably makes your PAWS symptoms worse? What is your plan around that relationship?

Name specific people and specific plans...

My Recovery Commitments

A Commitment Is a Promise to Your Future Self

The person who will need these commitments most is the future version of you — exhausted, in a wave, wondering if it's worth it. Write these for that person. Be direct, honest, and compassionate.

1 I commit to seeking help — from a real person, not just this app — when my PAWS symptoms reach a level __ or above. My first call will be:

Make this commitment concrete and actionable...

2 I commit to attending __ meetings / therapy sessions per week during PAWS recovery.

Make this commitment concrete and actionable...

3 I commit to telling the truth about my PAWS experience to at least one person each week, rather than saying "I'm fine."

Make this commitment concrete and actionable...

4 The one recovery practice I will NOT skip — even on my hardest days — is:

Make this commitment concrete and actionable...

5 If I feel relapse is imminent, my immediate action plan is: (Be specific enough to follow at your worst moment.)

Make this commitment concrete and actionable...

6 A letter to myself for the next time I am in a PAWS wave and wondering if recovery is worth it:
