

Obsession in Recovery

Finding Balance in Your Thoughts

Topic Learning · The Recovery Files

Self-check questions are printed without scoring. Your scores and what they mean are in the app.

Obsession in Addiction and Recovery

In the journey of addiction and recovery, the mind can become ensnared by obsessive patterns—whether consumed by the desire to use or equally fixated on avoiding relapse. Both forms of obsession represent a mind out of balance, unable to find peace in the present moment.

This assessment helps you identify and understand your obsessive thought patterns, whether they focus on using substances or on maintaining sobriety. By recognizing these patterns, you can develop strategies to move from obsessive thinking to a more balanced, present-focused way of living.

How to use this assessment:

- Complete the self-assessment rating each statement from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always)
- Review your scores and interpretation
- Work through the reflective worksheet sections
- Develop your personal action plan
- Your responses are automatically saved as you work

Rating Scale: 1 = Never | 2 = Rarely | 3 = Sometimes | 4 = Often | 5 = Always

Self-Assessment

15 questions to identify obsessive thought patterns

Part A: Obsession with Using

These questions explore thoughts and behaviors related to substance use.

1. I spend a significant amount of time thinking about using substances.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

2. I plan my day around when I can use substances.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

3. I find it difficult to focus on anything other than my next opportunity to use.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

4. I experience intense cravings that are hard to ignore.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

5. I prioritize obtaining and using substances over other important activities.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

Part B: Obsession with Not Using

These questions explore thoughts and behaviors related to avoiding substance use.

1. I constantly worry about potential relapse scenarios.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

2. I avoid people, places, or things that remind me of using, even if it limits my life.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

3. I spend a lot of time thinking about how to maintain my sobriety.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

4. I feel anxious when I'm not actively working on my recovery.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

5. I find it hard to engage in activities without thinking about staying sober.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

Part C: Impact on Daily Life

These questions assess how obsessive thoughts affect your day-to-day functioning.

1. My thoughts about using or not using interfere with my work or studies.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

2. My relationships are negatively affected by my preoccupation with substances or avoiding them.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

3. I have trouble sleeping due to thoughts about using or maintaining sobriety.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

4. I feel emotionally drained from constantly thinking about substances or recovery.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

5. I struggle to enjoy activities without thinking about using or staying sober.

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

Your Scores

Part A

out of 25

Using Thoughts

Part B

out of 25

Not Using Thoughts

Part C

out of 25

Daily Life Impact

Total Score

out of 75

Minimal Obsession

Your thoughts about substance use or avoiding use are relatively manageable. While you may have occasional concerns, they don't significantly impact your daily life.

Strategies to Combat Obsession

15 evidence-based approaches to manage obsessive thinking

Mindfulness Practice

Learn to observe thoughts without judgment. Try apps like Headspace or Calm for guided meditations.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Work with a therapist to identify and challenge distorted thought patterns.

Scheduled Worry Time

Allocate a specific time each day to address concerns about using or not using, limiting obsessive thoughts outside this time.

Engaging in Meaningful Activities

Develop hobbies or volunteer work to redirect focus and create a sense of purpose.

Physical Exercise

Establish a regular exercise routine to reduce stress and improve overall well-being.

Support Groups

Attend recovery meetings (like AA or SMART Recovery) to share experiences and learn from others.

Journaling

Write down obsessive thoughts to externalize them and gain perspective.

Grounding Techniques

Use sensory awareness exercises to bring your attention back to the present moment.

Develop a Balanced Routine

Create a structured daily schedule that includes recovery activities, work/study, leisure, and self-care.

Practice Self-Compassion

Use positive self-talk and treat yourself with kindness when struggling with obsessive thoughts.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Learn and practice this technique to reduce physical tension associated with obsessive thinking.

Limit Exposure to Triggers

While avoiding all triggers isn't realistic, mindfully limit unnecessary exposure, especially early in recovery.

Set Realistic Goals

Create achievable short-term goals to focus on progress rather than perfection.

Cultivate Healthy Relationships

Surround yourself with supportive people who encourage balanced living.

Professional Help

Consider working with an addiction specialist or therapist for personalized strategies and support.

Part 1: Identifying Your Obsessive Thoughts

5 reflection questions

In the past week, how often have you experienced thoughts about using substances?

[Select... / Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Often / Constantly]

In the past week, how often have you experienced thoughts about avoiding substance use?

[Select... / Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Often / Constantly]

List the top 3 obsessive thoughts you've had about using substances:

List the top 3 obsessive thoughts you've had about avoiding substance use:

On a scale of 1-10, how much do these thoughts interfere with your daily life?

[Select... / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10]

Part 2: Exploring the Impact of Obsessive Thoughts

6 reflection questions

How do your obsessive thoughts affect your relationships?

How do your obsessive thoughts affect your work/study?

How do your obsessive thoughts affect your self-care?

How do your obsessive thoughts affect your emotional well-being?

What activities or situations tend to trigger your obsessive thoughts?

How do you typically respond when you have these obsessive thoughts?

Part 3: Strategies to Combat Obsession

6 reflection questions

Mindfulness Exercise: Take 5 minutes to sit quietly and observe your thoughts. Write down what you notice:

Cognitive Restructuring - Choose one obsessive thought:

Now reframe it in a more balanced way:

List 3 meaningful activities you could engage in to redirect your focus:

Identify 3 people you can reach out to when struggling with obsessive thoughts:

Describe a grounding technique you find helpful:

Part 4: Developing a Personal Action Plan

5 reflection questions

Based on this worksheet, what are the top 3 strategies you want to implement?

For each strategy, what's one small step you can take in the next 24 hours?

How will you remind yourself to practice these strategies?

What potential obstacles might you face in implementing these strategies?

How can you prepare to overcome these obstacles?

Part 5: Tracking Progress

8 reflection questions

Day 1: Rate the intensity of your obsessive thoughts (1-10):

[Select... / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10]

Day 2:

[Select... / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10]

Day 3:

[Select... / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10]

Day 4:

[Select... / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10]

Day 5:

[Select... / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10]

Day 6:

[Select... / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10]

Day 7:

[Select... / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10]

At the end of the week, reflect on any changes you've noticed:

Part 6: Self-Compassion Practice

1 reflection questions

Write a brief compassionate message to yourself about your journey in managing obsessive thoughts:

Part 7: Professional Support

2 reflection questions

If you're working with a therapist or counselor, what aspects of this worksheet would you like to discuss with them?

If you're not currently working with a professional, would you consider seeking additional support? Why or why not?

Moving Forward

Remember, managing obsessive thoughts is a process. Be patient with yourself and celebrate small victories. The goal is to find a balance where you're mindful of your recovery needs without letting them dominate your life.

Both obsessions—the compulsion to use and the fixation on not using—are two sides of the same coin. They represent a mind out of balance, unable to find peace in the present moment. By implementing the strategies you've identified and maintaining ongoing self-reflection, you can gradually shift from obsessive thinking to a more balanced approach to recovery and life.

If you find that your obsessive thoughts are severely impacting your quality of life, don't hesitate to seek professional help. Your journey deserves support, and reaching out is a sign of strength.

© 2026 The Recovery Files. All rights reserved.