

# Going Deeper: Internal Work Avoidance

Understanding and Addressing Internal Work Avoidance in Recovery

Understanding Fear in Recovery

Topic Studies · The Recovery Files

In this workbook: key ideas, reading, worksheet.

The topic's scored self-assessment is in the app.

## KEY IDEAS

# Surface Recovery

## When External Activity Masks Internal Avoidance

Many individuals maintain robust external recovery activities while simultaneously avoiding the internal processes necessary for genuine transformation. This creates "surface recovery"—looking appropriate from outside while internal patterns remain unchanged.

Over time, this gap between external appearance and internal reality creates vulnerability to relapse and limits recovery depth and quality.

## The Seven Dimensions

### How Internal Work Avoidance Operates

1

#### Written Work Avoidance

Procrastinating on assignments

2

#### Inventory Superficiality

Surface-level examination

3

#### Recovery Step Rushing

Speed over quality

4

#### Amends Avoidance

Postponing relationship repair

5

#### Contemplative Resistance

Avoiding quiet reflection

6

#### Emotional Processing

Sidestepping emotional healing

7

#### Meaning Exploration

Avoiding existential questions

# Written Work & Inventory Superficiality

## Avoiding the Written Record

### Written Recovery Work Avoidance

- X Procrastinating on written assignments
- X Starting but not completing
- X Rushing to finish quickly
- X Mechanical approach without meaning

### Personal Inventory Superficiality

- X Surface examination without exploring causes
- X Focusing on others' contributions
- X Avoiding painful memories
- X Intellectualizing without emotional connection

## Step Rushing & Amends Avoidance

### Prioritizing Speed Over Depth

#### Recovery Step Rushing

Moving quickly to demonstrate progress without allowing time for integration.

#### Amends and Relational Work Avoidance

Resistance to acknowledging harm and making appropriate repairs.

## Contemplative & Emotional Avoidance

### Sidestepping Reflection and Feeling

#### Contemplative Practice Resistance

Avoiding quiet reflection, meditation, or practices that create space for awareness.

#### Emotional Processing Avoidance

Prioritizing cognitive understanding while sidestepping emotional healing.

# The Cost of Surface Recovery

## What Remains Unchanged

### Incomplete Self-Understanding

Partial knowledge limits transformation

### Unchanged Internal Patterns

Core issues remain unaddressed

### Limited Emotional Healing

Wounds driving addiction persist

### Shallow Relational Repair

Relationships lack true healing

### Absent Value Clarity

No meaningful direction or purpose

### Relapse Vulnerability

Unaddressed roots create risk

## From Surface to Depth

## Building Genuine Transformation

### Engaging in Deep Recovery

Commit to Internal Work: Schedule specific time

Pursue Depth: Explore roots, not just symptoms

Tolerate Discomfort: Stay engaged despite challenge

Practice Contemplation: Create space for awareness

Explore Meaning: Connect with values and purpose

Between the internal work avoidance urge and your response lies a space of choice—that pause is where transformation lives.

**CORE READING****Going Deeper****Understanding Internal Work Avoidance in Recovery****Understanding Internal Work Avoidance**

Internal work avoidance—the tendency to sidestep deeper personal examination, reflection, and change work—represents a significant challenge to sustainable recovery. While external recovery behaviors are essential, they alone cannot create lasting transformation.

The result: "surface recovery"—looking appropriate from the outside while internal patterns, beliefs, and emotional responses remain largely unchanged.

Over time, this gap between external appearance and internal reality creates vulnerability to relapse and limits recovery depth and quality.

**Written Recovery Work Avoidance**

Resistance to engaging with structured written exercises, inventories, or reflections. While not the only form of internal work, written activities provide essential structure for deeper examination.

- Procrastinating on written assignments
- Starting but not completing inventories
- Rushing to "get it over with"
- Approaching mechanically rather than meaningfully

**Personal Inventory Superficiality**

Examining behavior patterns at surface level while avoiding deeper exploration of underlying causes, connections, and themes. Creates partial and incomplete self-understanding.

- Focusing on others' contributions rather than own part
- Avoiding painful memories
- Identifying patterns without examining roots
- Intellectualizing rather than emotionally connecting

**Recovery Step Rushing & Amends Avoidance****Recovery Step Rushing**

Moving quickly through steps without allowing time for integration—prioritizing appearance of progress over quality.

**Amends & Relational Work Avoidance**

Resistance to acknowledging harm, taking responsibility, and making appropriate repairs in relationships.

**Contemplative & Emotional Processing Avoidance****Contemplative Practice Resistance**

Avoiding quiet reflection, meditation, or practices that create space for deeper awareness.

### **Emotional Processing Avoidance**

Prioritizing cognitive understanding or behavioral change while sidestepping emotional healing.

### **Value & Meaning Exploration Avoidance**

Resistance to engaging with deeper questions about purpose, values, identity, and meaning in recovery. Prioritizing practical tasks while sidestepping existential dimensions.

- Avoiding questions of meaning and purpose
- Resisting exploration of shifting values
- Maintaining rigid understandings
- Sidestepping identity questions

### **Building Recovery Depth**

#### **From Surface to Depth**

Commit to Internal Work: Schedule dedicated time

Pursue Depth: Move beyond surface understanding

Tolerate Discomfort: Stay engaged when challenging

Integrate Relationally: Approach amends as growth

Develop Contemplative Practice: Create space for awareness

## WORKSHEET

## Internal Work Avoidance Worksheet

Self-Reflection, Mapping & Action Planning

### Self-Reflection Questions

#### Understanding Your Internal Work Avoidance Landscape

1. Which category of internal work avoidance (written work avoidance, personal inventory superficiality, recovery step rushing, etc.) affects you most powerfully, and why?

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2. What specific internal work avoidance patterns have you noticed that don't fit neatly into any category or that surprise you with their subtlety?

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3. How have your internal work avoidance patterns evolved or changed throughout your recovery journey?

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4. What situations or recovery activities most reliably trigger your internal work avoidance responses?

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5. Are there internal work avoidance patterns you've successfully overcome? What made this growth possible?

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#### The Psychology of Your Internal Work Avoidance

1. How does understanding internal work avoidance as a natural protective response rather than laziness or resistance affect your relationship with it?

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2. In what ways might your family of origin or educational experiences have shaped your approach to internal work?

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3. How might your substance use have helped you avoid internal discomfort, and what does this reveal about areas you find most challenging?

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4. What early warning signs might indicate you're beginning an internal work avoidance pattern before it's fully established?

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5. How might trauma experiences or co-occurring conditions affect your internal work avoidance tendencies?

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### **Developing Your Internal Work Engagement Strategies**

1. What specific strategies have proven most effective for helping you engage with difficult internal work?

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2. What role does structure play in your approach to internal recovery work?

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3. How do you balance depth of internal work with appropriate pacing and self-care?

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4. What recovery support resources do you mobilize when facing strong internal work avoidance urges?

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5. How might you strengthen your response to the internal work avoidance category you identified as most challenging?

### **Building Depth Resilience**

1. How has your relationship with internal recovery work changed throughout your journey?

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2. What values or goals help motivate you to engage in deeper work despite discomfort?

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3. How do you remind yourself of the costs of surface recovery when tempted to avoid depth?

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4. What would it look like to view internal discomfort as a signpost pointing toward growth rather than a warning to retreat?

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5. How might sharing your internal work experiences benefit both your own recovery and potentially help others?

## Creating Your Personalized Internal Work Avoidance Map

### Written Recovery Wor

☐ Personal Inventory S ☐ Recovery Step Rushin ☐ Amends and Relationa ☐ Contemplative Practi ☐ Emotional Processing

### Value and Meaning Ex

Written Recovery Work Avoidance

### Add Example

### Action Planning

Select 2-3 specific patterns to address with concrete action plans.

Action Plan 1

1. Define the specific pattern

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2. Category and manifestations

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3. Clear, measurable goal

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4. Action steps

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**Add Step**

5. Accountability measures

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6. Timeline

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7. Potential challenges

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**Add Action Plan**