

Physical Resistance in Recovery

When the Body Avoids What the Mind Intends

Presence & Engagement in Recovery

Topic Studies · The Recovery Files

In this workbook: key ideas, worksheet.

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

KEY IDEAS

Physical Resistance in Recovery

Tangible, often unconscious ways we avoid recovery participation—while the mind may recognize the importance of attendance, the body develops its own resistance.

What is Physical Resistance?

- Finding excuses to avoid recovery participation
 - Creating delays that make attendance difficult
 - Generating physical symptoms before recovery activities
 - Unconscious avoidance that operates below awareness
- ✓ The disconnect between intention and action creates vulnerability and delays healing.

Avoidance Behaviors

The most obvious manifestations—concrete actions that prevent or limit attendance and engagement.

Common Manifestations:

- Creating last-minute excuses to avoid meetings
- Engaging in tasks that make you late for appointments
- Scheduling conflicts that prevent attendance
- Leaving meetings or therapy sessions early
- Taking inefficient routes when preparing

These behaviors often develop patterns that become increasingly automatic over time.

Time Management & Physical Manifestations

Time Management Resistance:

Unconsciously structuring time to make participation difficult.

- Consistently losing track of time before meetings
- Overcommitting to other activities
- Failing to set boundaries around recovery schedules

Physical Manifestations:

Body expressing psychological resistance through symptoms.

- Unexplained symptoms before recovery activities
- Unusual fatigue when preparing for meetings
- Anxiety symptoms when approaching participation

Environmental Setup & Prioritization

Environmental Setup Resistance:

Creating environments that make participation more difficult.

- Failing to prepare necessary items
- Positioning oneself to minimize engagement
- Maintaining environmental triggers

Prioritization Patterns:

Assigning lower importance to recovery activities.

- Prioritizing less important activities over recovery
- Treating recovery as optional rather than essential
- "Productive procrastination" instead of participation

Justification & Physical Engagement

Justification Development:

Creating convincing rationales for avoiding participation.

- "Just this once" thinking that becomes a pattern
- Convincing yourself you don't need as much support
- Using past attendance to justify current inconsistency

Physical Engagement Resistance:

Limiting participation even when physically present.

- Remaining physically passive during activities
- Closed or disengaged body postures
- Using phones or other physical distractions

Building Physical Presence Practices

Developing effective responses to overcome resistance and maintain consistent engagement.

Proactive Scheduling:

- Schedule as immovable appointments
- Build buffer time before/after
- Communicate schedule to others
- Prepare well in advance

Environment Optimization:

- Create environmental cues
- Eliminate obstacles
- Establish supportive routines
- Position for engagement

Behavioral Commitment:

- Use "if-then" planning
- Establish accountability
- Arrive early, not just "on time"
- Track attendance patterns

Momentum Building:

- Leverage positive momentum
- Maintain during all periods
- Recommit immediately after lapses
- Share experiences with others

The Space of Choice

Between the impulse to resist and your response lies a space of choice

That space grows larger with each day of recovery practice—each instance of recognizing resistance yet choosing attendance anyway.

Physical presence precedes psychological transformation. By developing awareness of resistance patterns and implementing effective management strategies, you establish the consistent physical presence that makes deeper healing possible.

✓ The principle "bring the body, the mind will follow" reminds us that recovery begins with showing up, even when motivation or understanding is limited.

WORKSHEET

Physical Resistance Worksheet

Mapping Your Avoidance Patterns

About This Worksheet

This worksheet helps you identify your specific physical resistance patterns, understand their impact on recovery, and develop personalized strategies for overcoming unconscious avoidance. Take your time with each question and be honest with yourself.

Your Personalized Physical Resistance Map

For each resistance category, write your specific examples that affect you personally:

Avoidance Behaviors

Example: I consistently volunteer for extra work shifts that conflict with meeting times

Time Management Resistance

Example: I start complex projects right before meeting time, making it "impossible" to stop

Physical Manifestations

Example: I develop headaches on therapy days but not on similar non-therapy days

Environmental Setup

Example: I keep my gas tank nearly empty so transportation to meetings becomes difficult

Prioritization Patterns

Example: I consistently put others' requests ahead of my recovery schedule

Justification Development

Example: I tell myself "I've been to enough meetings this week" after only one

Physical Engagement Resistance

Example: I position myself near exits and constantly check the time during meetings

Understanding Your Physical Resistance Landscape

1. What category of physical resistance (avoidance behaviors, time management, etc.) affects you most powerfully, and why do you think that is?

2. What specific resistance patterns have you noticed that don't seem to fit neatly into any category or that surprise you with their subtlety?

3. How have your physical resistance patterns evolved or changed throughout your recovery journey?

4. What resistance experiences have blindsided you most dramatically, and what did you learn from them?

5. Are there resistance patterns you've successfully navigated through? How did this process happen?

The Psychology of Your Physical Resistance

1. How does understanding physical resistance as a natural part of a recovery journey rather than a personal failure affect your relationship with it?

2. In what ways might your specific addiction history have shaped your particular resistance patterns?

3. How do your different resistance patterns interact with each other? For example, does time management resistance make you more vulnerable to justification development?

4. What early warning signs might indicate you're experiencing physical resistance before major attendance changes occur?

5. How might co-occurring conditions affect your physical resistance vulnerability?

Developing Your Management Strategies

1. What specific strategies have proven most effective for your most challenging resistance category?

2. What role does preparation and planning play in your approach to managing physical resistance?

3. How do you balance self-reliance with appropriate help-seeking when experiencing resistance?

4. What recovery support resources do you mobilize when experiencing strong physical resistance?

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

Building Resistance Resilience

1. How has your relationship with physical resistance changed throughout your recovery journey?

2. What practices help you maintain authenticity in your recovery even when experiencing resistance?

3. How do you balance vigilance against resistance with living a full, engaged life?

4. What would it look like to view resistance as opportunities for growth rather than just threats to stability?

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

Action Planning

Select 2-3 specific physical resistance patterns to address. For each pattern, complete the following:

Action Plan #1

1. Specific resistance pattern:

2. Category and manifestation:

3. Clear, measurable goal:

4. Action steps:

5. Accountability measures:

6. Timeline:

7. Potential challenges:

Action Plan #2

1. Specific resistance pattern:

2. Category and manifestation:

3. Clear, measurable goal:

4. Action steps:

5. Accountability measures:

6. Timeline:

7. Potential challenges:

Action Plan #3

1. Specific resistance pattern:

2. Category and manifestation:

3. Clear, measurable goal:

4. Action steps:

5. Accountability measures:

6. Timeline:

7. Potential challenges:

Related Resources

For additional tools on maintaining consistent attendance and engagement, explore the "Bring the Body, the Mind Will Follow" module in the Resources tab, which provides comprehensive slides, assessment, and worksheets on physical presence in recovery.