

Character Defects & the Addiction Timeline

Parallel development of defects and addiction

Printable worksheet · 6 parts

Name _____ Date _____

The Recovery Files

Map the parallel development of character defects alongside your addiction — revealing how patterns of behavior and substance use grew together, fed each other, and can now be transformed through conscious recovery work.

Embrace · Empower · Evolve|Progress: 0%

If You're in Crisis: SAMHSA: 1-800-662-4357 · 988 Lifeline: Call or text 988 · Crisis Text: Text HOME to 741741

The Recovery Files

This tool is designed for use alongside professional treatment and is not a substitute for clinical care.

If you are in crisis, please call 988 or visit your nearest emergency room.

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PART 1 OF 6

Overview

Character Defects & Addiction: The Parallel Timeline

Character defects don't appear overnight, and they don't develop in isolation from addiction. They grow together — each feeding the other in a spiral that can span decades. This mapping board helps you trace both timelines side by side, revealing how the person you became was shaped by both the defects you carried AND the substances you used.

Mapping Progress0%

The Feedback Loop

Character defects and addiction don't just coexist — they amplify each other in a destructive feedback loop. Fear drives you to use. Using deepens dishonesty. Dishonesty creates resentment. Resentment justifies more use. More use intensifies selfishness. Selfishness damages relationships. Damaged relationships fuel self-pity. Self-pity gives permission to use again.

How to Use This Tool

1. Study the Defect Library — Understand each character defect, how it develops, and its specific connection to addiction. Rate your personal intensity for each.
2. Map the Dual Timeline — Walk through each life phase and identify which defects were active alongside your addiction progression.
3. Analyze Behavior Patterns — Use the Pattern Analysis to examine how your defects operated across different life domains.
4. Defect-to-Asset Conversion — For each defect, identify the opposite virtue and create a concrete plan for cultivating it. This is the heart of Steps 6 and 7.
5. Integration — Step back and see the full picture — the top patterns, the deepest work ahead, and the transformation already underway.

The 12 Character Defects

Selfishness & Self-Centeredness

The World Revolves Around Me

An excessive focus on your own needs, wants, and comfort at the expense of others. In...

Dishonesty & Deception

The Truth Is Whatever Works

A pattern of lying, omitting, manipulating, and deceiving — not just others, but your...

Resentment & Bitterness

The Poison I Drink

Chronic anger toward people, institutions, or situations that you believe have wronge...

Fear & Anxiety

The Invisible Prison

A pervasive, often unnamed dread that drives behavior from the shadows. Fear of rejec...

Pride & Grandiosity

Better Than / Worse Than

An inflated or deflated sense of self that puts you at the center. Pride isn't just t...

Need for Control

The Illusion of Safety

The compulsive need to manage outcomes, people, and situations. Control is the attemp...

Self-Pity & Victimhood

Poor Me, Poor Me, Pour Me a Drink

A chronic focus on your own suffering that positions you as the victim of circumstanc...

Impatience & Impulsivity

I Want What I Want When I Want It

The inability to tolerate delay, discomfort, or the natural pace of growth. Impatienc...

Jealousy & Envy

Why Them and Not Me

Resentment toward others for what they have — possessions, relationships, qualities, ...

Laziness & Avoidance

The Comfortable Cage

Not just physical inaction, but the habitual avoidance of effort, discomfort, respons...

People-Pleasing & Approval-Seeking

The Shape-Shifter

Compulsively prioritizing others' approval over your own authenticity, needs, and bou...

Lust & Excess

More Is Never Enough

Not limited to sexual desire — this is the compulsive pursuit of pleasure, intensity,...

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Defect Library

Character Defect Library

Each defect is explored in depth: what it is, how it develops, how it connects to addiction, and what its opposite asset looks like.

Selfishness & Self-Centeredness

The World Revolves Around Me

Dishonesty & Deception

The Truth Is Whatever Works

Resentment & Bitterness

The Poison I Drink

Fear & Anxiety

The Invisible Prison

Pride & Grandiosity

Better Than / Worse Than

Need for Control

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Self-Pity & Victimhood

Poor Me, Poor Me, Pour Me a Drink

Impatience & Impulsivity

I Want What I Want When I Want It

Jealousy & Envy

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More Is Never Enough

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Dual Timeline

The Dual Timeline

Map character defect development side by side with your addiction timeline. For each phase, explore what was happening with your defects AND your substance use simultaneously.

Before Substance Use

Early life

Experimentation & Early Use

First use period

Regular Use & Escalation

Developing pattern

Dependence & Active Addiction

Full addiction

Crisis & Bottom

Breaking point

Early Recovery

First year

Ongoing Recovery & Growth

Present

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PART 4 OF 6

Behavior Patterns

Behavioral Pattern Analysis

Character defects show up as specific behaviors in specific life domains. Identify how each defect manifested in your relationships, work, family, and other areas.

Romantic Relationships

Family

Career & Work

Friendships & Social

Spiritual & Inner Life

Physical & Mental Health

Financial Life

Legal & Civic

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PART 5 OF 6

Defect → Asset**Defect-to-Asset Conversion**

Steps 6 and 7 ask us to become willing to have our defects removed. Defects don't just disappear — they're replaced by conscious practice of their opposite virtues.

Selfishness & Self-Centeredness

Generosity, consideration, service to others, empathy

What would your life look like if generosity, consideration, service to others, empathy replaced selfishness & self-centeredness? How would your relationships change?

Envision life with generosity, consideration, service to others, empathy...

Concrete Daily Practice

Virtues are built through practice, not intention. What specific, daily action will you take to cultivate this asset?

Willingness Level (1 = resistant, 10 = fully willing)

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

5. Dishonesty & Deception

Honesty, transparency, integrity, authenticity

What would your life look like if honesty, transparency, integrity, authenticity replaced dishonesty & deception? How would your relationships change?

Envision life with honesty, transparency, integrity, authenticity...

Concrete Daily Practice

Virtues are built through practice, not intention. What specific, daily action will you take to cultivate this asset?

Willingness Level (1 = resistant, 10 = fully willing)

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

5. Resentment & Bitterness

Forgiveness, acceptance, letting go, compassion

What would your life look like if forgiveness, acceptance, letting go, compassion replaced resentment & bitterness? How would your relationships change?

Envision life with forgiveness, acceptance, letting go, compassion...

Concrete Daily Practice

Virtues are built through practice, not intention. What specific, daily action will you take to cultivate this asset?

Willingness Level (1 = resistant, 10 = fully willing)

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

5. Fear & Anxiety

Courage, faith, trust, acceptance of uncertainty

What would your life look like if courage, faith, trust, acceptance of uncertainty replaced fear & anxiety? How would your relationships change?

Envision life with courage, faith, trust, acceptance of uncertainty...

Concrete Daily Practice

Virtues are built through practice, not intention. What specific, daily action will you take to cultivate this asset?

Willingness Level (1 = resistant, 10 = fully willing)

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5. Pride & Grandiosity

Humility, right-sized self-perception, teachability

What would your life look like if humility, right-sized self-perception, teachability replaced pride & grandiosity? How would your relationships change?

Envision life with humility, right-sized self-perception, teachability...

Concrete Daily Practice

Virtues are built through practice, not intention. What specific, daily action will you take to cultivate this asset?

Willingness Level (1 = resistant, 10 = fully willing)

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5. Need for Control

Surrender, trust, flexibility, letting go

What would your life look like if surrender, trust, flexibility, letting go replaced need for control? How would your relationships change?

Envision life with surrender, trust, flexibility, letting go...

Concrete Daily Practice

Virtues are built through practice, not intention. What specific, daily action will you take to cultivate this asset?

Willingness Level (1 = resistant, 10 = fully willing)

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5. Self-Pity & Victimhood

Gratitude, accountability, resilience, perspective

What would your life look like if gratitude, accountability, resilience, perspective replaced self-pity & victimhood? How would your relationships change?

Envision life with gratitude, accountability, resilience, perspective...

Concrete Daily Practice

Virtues are built through practice, not intention. What specific, daily action will you take to cultivate this asset?

Willingness Level (1 = resistant, 10 = fully willing)

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

5. Impatience & Impulsivity

Patience, delayed gratification, trust in process

What would your life look like if patience, delayed gratification, trust in process replaced impatience & impulsivity? How would your relationships change?

Envision life with patience, delayed gratification, trust in process...

Concrete Daily Practice

Virtues are built through practice, not intention. What specific, daily action will you take to cultivate this asset?

Willingness Level (1 = resistant, 10 = fully willing)

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5. Jealousy & Envy

Contentment, gratitude, celebration of others, abundance mindset

What would your life look like if contentment, gratitude, celebration of others, abundance mindset replaced jealousy & envy? How would your relationships change?

Envision life with contentment, gratitude, celebration of others, abundance mindset...

Concrete Daily Practice

Virtues are built through practice, not intention. What specific, daily action will you take to cultivate this asset?

Willingness Level (1 = resistant, 10 = fully willing)

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

5. Laziness & Avoidance

Discipline, initiative, engagement, willingness

What would your life look like if discipline, initiative, engagement, willingness replaced laziness & avoidance? How would your relationships change?

Envision life with discipline, initiative, engagement, willingness...

Concrete Daily Practice

Virtues are built through practice, not intention. What specific, daily action will you take to cultivate this asset?

Willingness Level (1 = resistant, 10 = fully willing)

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

5. People-Pleasing & Approval-Seeking

Authenticity, healthy boundaries, self-respect, honest communication

What would your life look like if authenticity, healthy boundaries, self-respect, honest communication replaced people-pleasing & approval-seeking? How would your relationships change?

Envision life with authenticity, healthy boundaries, self-respect, honest communication...

Concrete Daily Practice

Virtues are built through practice, not intention. What specific, daily action will you take to cultivate this asset?

Willingness Level (1 = resistant, 10 = fully willing)

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5. Lust & Excess

Moderation, contentment, mindful enjoyment, sufficiency

What would your life look like if moderation, contentment, mindful enjoyment, sufficiency replaced lust & excess? How would your relationships change?

Envision life with moderation, contentment, mindful enjoyment, sufficiency...

Concrete Daily Practice

Virtues are built through practice, not intention. What specific, daily action will you take to cultivate this asset?

Willingness Level (1 = resistant, 10 = fully willing)

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5. Your Personal Commitment

Write a personal commitment, prayer, or intention statement about releasing your character defects and embracing the assets that will support your recovery.

My commitment to transformation...

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Integration

Integration & Pattern Recognition

The full picture — how your character defects and addiction developed together, where the patterns are most entrenched, and where your recovery is creating the most change.

Your Primary Character Defects (Ranked)

Complete ratings in the Library and Dual Timeline to see rankings.

Deep Integration

Your Core Defect

Looking at the full picture, which ONE character defect sits at the center of your story? The one that, if transformed, would create the biggest ripple effect across every area of your life? Why this one?

The Original Wound

Trace your primary defect back to its earliest origin. What happened — or what was missing — that planted this seed? Can you see the wounded child who developed this pattern to survive?

Your Personal Feedback Loop

Describe YOUR specific defect-addiction feedback loop in detail. Which defect fires first? What emotion does it create? How does that emotion drive you toward use? Map the full circle.

Evidence of Change

Where have you already seen transformation? Which defects have genuinely diminished since entering recovery? What evidence do you have that change is possible?

The Work Ahead

Based on everything you've mapped, what are the top three areas requiring the most ongoing work? Be specific about what that work looks like — not intentions, but actions.

Letter to Your Future Self

Write a letter to yourself one year from now. Describe the person you're becoming as these defects transform into assets. What does that life look like?

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