

Advanced Recovery Systems
Online Addiction Recovery Program 1

Lesson 1: Signs & Symptoms of Addiction

Do you have an addiction? This can be a hard question to answer and it can be very hard to accept. The questions below will help you to think through it.

Select below those that you would answer 'Yes' to.

- Have you tried to cut down and failed?
- Do you spend more time thinking about, or engaging in the using activity than you intended?
- Do you continue to engage in the using behavior even though it has directly or indirectly caused you to multiple problems (health, relationship, financial, legal, etc.)?
- Do you get angry or defensive if someone expresses concern about your behavior?
- Do you need to use more alcohol or drugs than you used to, to feel the desired effect?
- Does the same amount of alcohol or drugs not do what it used to?
- When you don't have alcohol or drugs, are you uncomfortable physically or emotionally?
- Have you used alcohol, or another substance, to make yourself feel better than you were, due to coming down from alcohol or drugs?
- Do you think about drugs or alcohol frequently?
- Until you've acted on an urge by drinking or using, is it very hard to get it out of your head?
- Has your drinking or drug use caused or worsened existing psychological or medical problems (depression, anxiety, cardiovascular disease)?
- Add the total number of statements you agreed to

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Lesson 2: Risk Factors

Some people have more risk factors that increase the likelihood of becoming addicted. How many risk factors are true for you?

- _____ You have at least one family member who suffers from addiction
- _____ You have had depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, or other psychological problems
- _____ Your parents or other role models used alcohol or drugs excessively around you when you were growing up
- _____ Your parents or other role models engaged in criminal behavior consistently when you were growing up
- _____ You had friends and acquaintances at school who were using drugs and alcohol when you were in your teens
- _____ You had trouble in school as a child (maybe you had a learning disability or had poor grades)
- _____ You had difficulty making or keeping friends or feeling like you “fit in” with your peers when you were growing up
- _____ There was a lot of chaos and conflict at home when you were growing up (a lot of fighting between the adults in your home)
- _____ You were physically or sexually abused
- _____ You started experimenting with alcohol or drugs as a child or in your early teen years
- _____ You have smoked or injected drugs
- _____ You had some traumatic experiences in your life prior to starting to use alcohol or drugs excessively

- _____ **Total how many of these are true for you?**

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Lesson 3: Stages of Change

Which Stage of Change are you in?

_____ Precontemplative - People in this stage are not thinking seriously about changing and tend to defend their current use patterns. They may not see their use as a problem. The positives or benefits, of the behavior outweigh any costs or adverse consequences so they are happy to continue using.

_____ Contemplative - People in this stage are able to consider the possibility of quitting or reducing use but feel ambivalent about taking the next step. On the one hand use is enjoyable, exciting and a pleasurable activity. On the other hand, they are starting to experience some adverse consequences (which may include personal, psychological, physical, legal, social or family problems).

_____ Planning – People in this stage have usually made a recent attempt to change using behavior in the last year. They see the 'cons' of continuing as outweighing the 'pros' and they are less ambivalent about taking the next step. They are usually taking some small steps towards changing behavior. They believe that change is necessary and that the time for change is imminent.

_____ Action – People in this stage are actively involved in taking steps to change their using behavior and making great steps towards significant change. Ambivalence is still very likely at this stage. They may try several different techniques and are also at greatest risk of relapse.

_____ Maintenance – People in this stage are able to successfully avoid any temptations to return to using behavior. They have learned to anticipate and handle temptations to use and are able to employ new ways of coping. They can have a temporary slip, but don't tend to see this as failure.

List your reasons for using:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are the problems drinking or using causes for you?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are the benefits of reducing or quitting alcohol or drugs you are seeking?

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1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What might you miss about drinking or using:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Lesson 4: Triggers and Urges

Which of these Internal Triggers do you have?

- _____ Depression
- _____ Loneliness
- _____ Happiness
- _____ Excitement
- _____ Feeling Stressed
- _____ Feeling Irritable
- _____ Feeling Overwhelmed

Which of these External Triggers do you have?

People

- _____ Friends

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_____ Spouse or Significant Other

_____ Family Members

_____ Co-workers or Bosses

Who triggers you (Optional)?

Which of these Places are a trigger for you?

_____ Bars or Clubs

_____ Friends' Houses

_____ Concerts

_____ School or Work

_____ Neighborhoods or Freeway Exits

Other Places that are a trigger for you (Optional)?

Which of these Situations or Activities are a trigger for you?

_____ Parties (or other gatherings)

_____ Holidays or other special occasions

_____ When Home Alone

_____ When Dining Out

_____ Before or During a Date

_____ Waking Up in the Morning

_____ After Work or School

Are there others you can think of (Optional)?

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Which of these Things are a trigger for you?

Stashes of alcohol or drugs in the house

Paraphernalia associated with drinking or using (favorite shot glasses or wine glasses, bong, rolling paper, pipes, or other objects used as part of rituals when getting high)

Which things are a trigger for you (Optional)?

Which of these do you need to remove from your environment?

Alcohol

Pills

Marijuana

Any other drugs you've used (even if not your preferred substance)

Lighters

Mirrors

Ashtrays

Pipes

Rolling Papers

Bong

Needles

Phone numbers (of dealers or contacts you use to find drugs)—delete from phone

Medical marijuana card

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Other paraphernalia to you will need to get rid of (Optional)?

Who can help you dispose of these: _____

When can you do this? _____

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Lesson 5: How Thoughts Become a Relapse

Common Red Flag Thoughts are:

- I have to have a drink
- Nobody has to know
- It really doesn't matter if I use
- I can control it
- I'm only going to have one
- I'm having a bad day, I might as well use
- I deserve it
- It's a special occasion! I can start over tomorrow.

What are your common Red Flag Thoughts?

BLACK OR WHITE THINKING:

This occurs when you see things as either all good or all bad.

Black or White Thinking:	Red Flag Thought:
I messed up everything at work	I might as well go and drink

Write an example of thoughts you have that are black and white thinking. Then, right down the red flag thoughts they can lead to:

Thoughts that black and white thinking:

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Red flag thoughts:

DISCOUNTING THE POSITIVE:

This occurs when you cast aside a compliment.

Discounting the Positive:	Red Flag Thought:
My boss only said something nice to me out of pity	I'm pathetic. I have nothing to lose by drinking.

Write an example of thoughts you have that discount the positive. Then, right down the red flag thoughts they can lead to:

Thoughts that discount the positive:

Red flag thoughts:

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS:

When you jump to conclusions, you are doing one of two things: either mind reading or fortune telling. When you are mind reading, you are assuming the other person's behavior toward you reflect

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something negative about how they feel about you. When you are fortune telling, you are predicting that things will turn out badly for you.

Jumping to Conclusions:	Red Flag Thought:
My brother is blowing me off because he thinks he's better than me. (mind reading)	I'll show him! If he's going to treat me like that, I'm going to go use.
With my luck, treatment won't work for me. (fortune telling)	I'll never be able to stay clean and sober. There's no point in even trying.

Write an example of ways you have engaged in jumping to conclusions. Then, right down the red flag thoughts they can lead to:

My ways of jumping to conclusions (mind reading or fortune telling):

Red flag thoughts:

TAKING YOUR FEELINGS TOO SERIOUSLY:

When you take your feelings too serious, you think of your feelings as reality.

Taking Your Feelings Too Seriously:	Red Flag Thought:
I feel hopeless; therefore, life must be hopeless for me.	Things will never get better. At least if I go use I won't have to feel the pain of my hopeless life.

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Write an example of your experience with taking your feelings too seriously. Then, right down the red flag thoughts they can lead to:

My ways of taking my feelings too seriously:

Red flag thoughts:

Examples of my thoughts when I've taken my feelings too seriously:

Red flag thoughts:

SELF-BLAME:

This occurs when you have an active self-critical voice inside you. You blame yourself for things that may not be in your control.

Self-Blaming Thought:	Red Flag Thought:
It's all my fault that I drink too much	I've ruined my life; I have nothing to lose by continuing to drink

Write an example of your self-blaming thinking. Then, right down the red flag thoughts they can lead to:

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Self-blaming thoughts:

Red flag thoughts:

LABELING YOURSELF:

This occurs when you label yourself for the ways that you feel, or for the mistakes you've made.

Labeling Thought:	Red Flag Thought:
I relapsed, just like I knew I would. I'm just a raging addict, always will be.	Raging addicts like me never get clean in the long run. I'm going to be another bad statistic. There's no point in me even trying to stay clean.

Write an example of labeling you have experienced. Then, right down the red flag thoughts they can lead to:

Labeling thoughts:

Red flag thoughts:

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Use the example below to track your thoughts that lead to cravings over the next couple of days. The trick to get to know how your thinking leads to cravings so you can notice and adjust your thinking to healthier and happier thoughts.

Identify a triggering situation that you have been in.

What were your thoughts?

What were your feelings?

What would have rated your cravings (0-10)?

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Lesson 6: Thought Challenging

Thought challenging can be the most useful skills you have to outsmart your addicted brain. As you practice this method of transforming irrational thinking into balanced, realistic thoughts, you will learn to take a scientific approach to correcting the thoughts that are leading you down a path to self-destructive behavior, like drinking and using drugs. You achieve this by learning to notice and respond to your thoughts in several ways.

1. You need to practice observing yourself. You do this by practicing noticing your triggers, thoughts and cravings.
2. You will then practice questioning whether your thoughts are rational, especially the ones that relate to drinking or using drugs. Thought challenging is the practice of questioning your thoughts about drinking and using by asking yourself if you have evidence that they are true.
3. After you question the evidence for your thoughts, if you find that you don't have evidence to support what you are thinking, then you will identify more rational, evidence based ideas that you can tell yourself instead. New, healthy, balanced thoughts will help you make the behavior changes you set out to accomplish in your recovery plan.

Let's look at some examples:

Triggering Situation: Hanging out with drinking buddies at a party

Red Flag Thoughts: If I have just one drink, it's no big deal. I can control it

Thoughts on Trial:

Questions to Ask to Examine the Evidence	The Facts
Is one drink okay?	Yes. Having one drink is not destructive.
Can I control my drinking enough to stop after one drink?	It's been too long to even remember the last time I stopped after one drink. The likelihood of that is extremely low.

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Response to Self:

- For me, one drink is a big deal. In the past, this way of thinking has led me straight to a full-blown relapse.
- There is plenty of evidence that I practically never stop after one drink, and I am not able to control myself once I start drinking.

Triggering Situation: Feeling depressed and low in energy

Red Flag Thoughts: Cocaine is the only thing that will make me feel better. It will help me get stuff done.

Thoughts on Trial:

Questions to Ask to Examine the Evidence	The Facts
Will cocaine make me feel better?	At first, yes, it will. But when it wears off, I will be even more depressed, and I will feel bad about having caved in and used
Is cocaine the only thing that will make me feel better?	Probably not. There are healthier things that could make me feel better—talking to someone, or exercising, or doing something fun.
Will cocaine help me get things done?	At first, yes, I will have more energy to get stuff done. But there are only so many things I can do well if I'm high. And then when I crash afterward, I might not be able to get anything done for days.

Response to Self:

- Cocaine makes my depression worse, not better. Even though I might feel good for a short time, using always makes me more depressed once it's over.
- There is plenty of evidence that when I use, I am less productive. I get depressed and barely do anything for days afterward.
- Just because I get more energy for a short time doesn't mean that using is going to lead me to get a lot of stuff done.

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Triggering Situation: Going to a party alone and feeling some social anxiety about it.

Red Flag Thoughts: If I am high, I won't feel so self-conscious and it won't be as hard to talk to people.

Thoughts on Trial:

Questions to Ask to Examine the Evidence	The Facts
Will marijuana take the edge off and make me feel better?	At first, yes, it will. But when it wears off my mood will be down and I won't feel too great for a day or two
Will being high help me handle myself better at a party	Not entirely. I won't feel as self-conscious so it will be easier to be there alone. But, usually when I am high I am a little distant and I don't really connect well with new people
Is it worth it to use marijuana in this situation?	It will make me feel better in the moment, but I probably won't socialize very much at the party. And because of the effect it will have on my mood and energy afterward, it's not worth it.

Response to Self:

- Getting high makes me a little awkward and distant in social situations. Even though I might feel less self-conscious, I won't really connect with anyone at the party. In that case, there's not much point in going if I have to get high to get myself there.
- There is plenty of evidence that when I use, it affects my mood negatively and I don't function so well for a day or two.
- Just because I won't feel so self-conscious doesn't mean that using is worth it.

Use the example below to practice challenging your thinking and adjusting your thinking to healthier and happier thoughts that help support your sobriety.

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Identify a triggering situation that you have been in:

What were your red flag thoughts?

Thoughts on Trial (Questions asked to examine the evidence):

Alternative Responses:

Lesson 7: Cravings

Noticing your sensations, thoughts and emotions you experience during a craving will help you become self-aware and improve your chances of not using when you have a craving.

How do you experience a craving in your body?

- Chest (tightness or other sensation)
- Stomach
- Jaw
- Neck
- Shoulders
- Heart (racing)
- Nose (feeling like you could smell what you're craving)

Other areas or sensations (Optional)?

What emotions do you experience during a craving?

- Anxiety
- Excitement
- Anticipation

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_____ Restlessness

_____ Irritability

_____ The same emotions you experience when you are drinking or high

Other emotions you experience (Optional)?

Identify the cognitive (thoughts) part of your experience:

_____ I need it

_____ I have to have it

_____ If I don't drink/use, I'm going to go crazy

_____ I can't handle it

_____ I can't get it out of my head

Other thoughts you have(Optional)?

Which Actions would you like to incorporate to help you when you are craving?

_____ Surf the Urge

_____ Distraction Techniques

_____ Visualize STOP

_____ Rubber Band

_____ Leave the Situation

_____ Talk to Someone

_____ Use Imagery

_____ Delay the Decision

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Can you think of some other distractions techniques you can use (Optional)?

Keep a Schedule over the next week to plan for your high-risk situations

What are your high-risk situations?

What time of day are they?

What can you put in your schedule at each of these times to help you?

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Lesson 8: Other Helpful Practices

Journaling

If you have not already started journaling, you have access to guided Journaling through your portal that is free to use.

Sleep:

Which of these practices can you incorporate to your sleeping habits?

- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, and other chemicals that interfere with sleep
- Make your bedroom more sleep friendly
- Establish a calming pre-sleep habit
- Go to bed when you are tired
- Try rotating the face of your alarm clock away from your pillow
- Take advantage of the natural light of each day
- Allow yourself to have a regular sleep schedule
- Drink enough water to prevent dehydration
- Exercise

How will you create this change (Optional)?

Increasing Pleasant Events

Which of the listed activities would you like to incorporate?

- Go for a walk
- Invite people over for dinner

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- Draw something
- Play a sport you like
- Meditate (Available in your Portal for free)
- Have takeout and movie night
- Do some journaling (Available in your Portal for free)
- Cook something new
- Spend time with a friend
- Exercise
- Eat out at a restaurant
- Plan and do an art project
- Go to a park
- Spend time with family
- Do a puzzle
- Take a class
- Do some volunteer work
- Read something enjoyable
- Go for a bike ride
- Call someone you like
- Do some gardening
- Listen to some music
- Watch something on TV
- Go to a religious activity
- Play a musical instrument
- Play with a pet

Are there any other activities you'd like to incorporate (Optional)?

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