

Understanding the Stages of Addiction

UNDERSTANDING THE PATTERN

Addiction rarely appears all at once. Understanding changing patterns can help someone notice risk earlier and seek support without shame.

Experimentation and social use

Use may begin through curiosity, opportunity, belonging or an attempt to manage discomfort.

Increasing or risky use

Frequency, amount, consequences or the situations in which use occurs begin to change.

Dependence and loss of choice

Tolerance, withdrawal, cravings and prioritising use may make change increasingly difficult.

Recovery is not linear

People may move forward, pause or return to use. A return to use is information and a reason for support, not proof of failure.

Notice your own pattern

Where I recognise myself:

What has changed over time:

Early warning sign:

Protective support:

My next honest step:

How to use this page

Read it once without pressure. Complete only the prompt that feels most useful today. Look for a link between the situation, what your mind or body expected, what you did next and what support could make a different response possible.

My next supported step

Use this resource at your own pace. Seek qualified or medical support where withdrawal, physical symptoms, significant risk or severe restriction of daily life may be present.