

The 4 Stages of Addiction

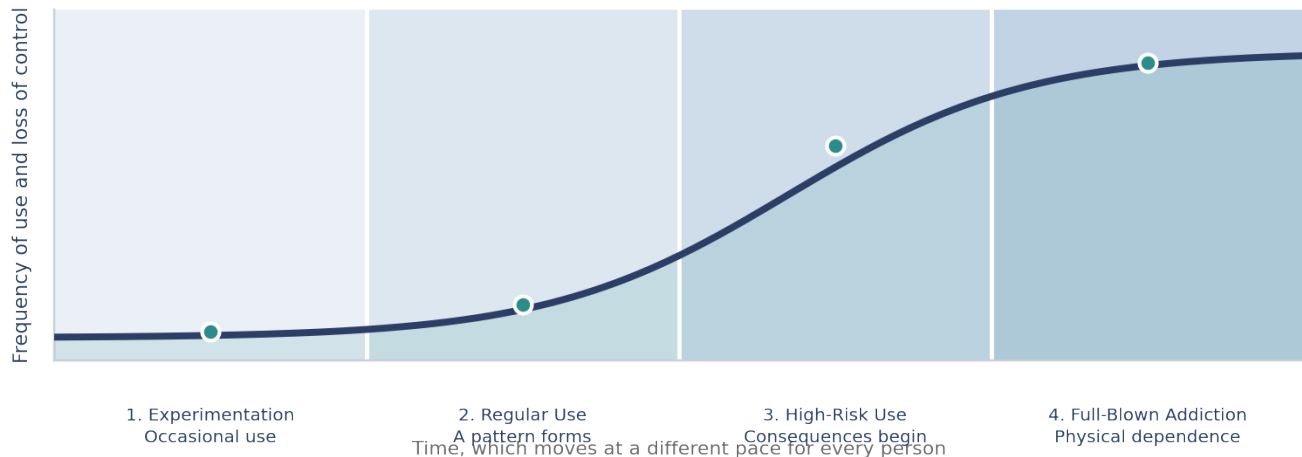
A Reflection Guide · Where the cycle starts, and where it can turn around

Name: _____

Date: _____

Addiction rarely announces itself. It builds through four stages, and people move through them at their own pace. There is no scoring here and no right answer. Read the graph, then answer honestly at whatever speed feels workable.

How Substance Use Escalates Through the Four Stages



Stage 1 Experimentation

First time use, often social, often tied to curiosity or peer pressure.

Stage 2 Regular use

Use settles into a pattern and starts doing a job, such as managing stress.

Stage 3 High-risk use

Use continues despite consequences at work, at home, or with the law.

Stage 4 Full-blown addiction

Physical dependence, withdrawal symptoms, and a tightening loop.

Reflecting on Where I Am

1. Which stage sounds most like where I am today?

Read the graph again. Name the stage, and write what makes you say so.

2. When did my use stop being occasional?

Think about frequency. Was there a season, a job, a loss, or a relationship that shifted it?

Reflecting on Where I Am, Continued

3. What has this cost me so far?

Include the quiet costs alongside the loud ones. Time, trust, health, money, sleep, peace of mind.

4. What am I afraid would happen if I stopped?

Fear keeps the cycle running. Writing it down loosens its grip.

5. Who is one honest person I could tell?

A sponsor, a doctor, a counselor, a friend already in recovery. One name is enough to start.

6. What would a sober life look like one year from now?

Picture an ordinary Tuesday, not a highlight reel. What is different about it?

When You Finish

Recovery unfolds in stages too, and the first one is simply telling someone the truth. Keep this worksheet. Reading it again in six months can show you how far you have come.

This worksheet is for personal reflection and education only and is not medical advice. If you are struggling with alcohol or other drugs, please reach out to a qualified professional or a local recovery group. If you may be physically dependent, talk to a doctor before stopping, since withdrawal can be dangerous without supervision.