

# Drug and Alcohol Support Resource Guide

## A Practical Guide for Restoring Stability, Clarity, and Self-Trust

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### Understanding Substance Use

Substance use does not begin as a problem. It begins as an attempt to cope, survive, or find relief.

For many people, drugs or alcohol initially serve a purpose. They may reduce stress, ease emotional pain, or provide a sense of connection or escape when things feel overwhelming.

But over time, what once provided relief can begin to create suffering.

You may find yourself:

- **Relying on substances more than you intended**
- **Wanting to stop but struggling to follow through**
- **Experiencing shame, regret, or loss of self-trust**
- **Feeling caught between relief and consequences**

**This is not a failure of character.**

It is a nervous system pattern that developed for a reason.

Substances directly affect the nervous system and brain chemistry. Over time, your system may begin to depend on them to regulate stress, emotion, or internal discomfort.

You may notice:

- **Using substances to cope with stress, anxiety, or emotional pain**
- **Difficulty reducing or stopping despite wanting to**

- **Cravings or urges that feel difficult to control**
- **Emotional instability or distress without substances**

These patterns reflect adaptation—not weakness.

With the right support, they can change.

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## **Signs You Might Benefit from Support**

You may benefit from counseling if you notice:

- **Increasing reliance on drugs or alcohol**
  - **Difficulty cutting back or stopping**
  - **Cravings or strong urges to use**
  - **Using substances to cope with emotions or stress**
  - **Feeling shame, guilt, or loss of self-trust**
  - **Emotional distress when not using**
  - **Impact on relationships, work, or daily life**
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## **Self-Assessment Reflection**

Take a few minutes to reflect on the following:

- **What role do substances currently play in your life?**
  - **When are you most likely to use?**
  - **What emotions or situations tend to trigger use?**
  - **What have you already tried to change your patterns?**
  - **What would feel different if you had more control and stability?**
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## **Nervous System Regulation Exercises**

### **1. Urge Surfing**

Cravings often rise and fall like waves.

When an urge appears:

- **Pause and notice the sensation**

- **Remind yourself it will pass**
- **Stay present without acting on it**

Most urges peak and decrease within minutes.

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## **2. Grounding During Triggers**

When you feel the urge to use:

- **Take slow, steady breaths**
- **Notice your surroundings**
- **Bring your attention back to the present moment**

This helps reduce reactivity and regain control.

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## **3. Delay the Behavior**

Instead of immediately acting on an urge:

- **Wait 10–15 minutes**
- **Do something else during that time**
- **Reassess how you feel**

Delaying weakens automatic patterns and increases choice.

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## **Practical Tools for Recovery**

### **1. Identify the Underlying Need**

Substance use often serves a purpose.

Ask yourself:

- **“What am I trying to feel or avoid?”**
- **“What need is this meeting?”**

Understanding the need helps you find healthier alternatives.

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### **2. Build Alternative Coping Strategies**

Replace substance use with supportive behaviors:

- **Movement or exercise**
- **Talking to someone you trust**
- **Engaging in a calming activity**

Recovery is not just about stopping—it's about replacing.

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### **3. Reduce High-Risk Situations**

Identify environments or patterns that increase risk.

Then:

- **Limit exposure when possible**
- **Plan ahead for challenging situations**
- **Create supportive structure**

Environment plays a powerful role in behavior.

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## **Mini Worksheet: Substance Use Pattern Awareness**

**Trigger Situation:**

**What I Felt in My Body:**

**What I Was Thinking:**

**What I Did:**

**What I Might Try Next Time:**

## Preparing for Your First Counseling Session

Beginning counseling for substance use can feel like a big step.

Before your first session, it may help to reflect on:

- **What you would like to change**
- **Patterns you have noticed**
- **Previous attempts to shift behavior**
- **Your goals (reduction, sobriety, stability)**

You do not need to have everything figured out.

This process develops over time.

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## How to Get the Most Out of Therapy

Recovery is a gradual and highly personal process.

Helpful approaches include:

- **Being honest about your experience**
- **Exploring underlying emotional patterns**
- **Practicing new coping strategies**
- **Allowing change to build over time**

Sustainable recovery develops through consistency, not pressure.

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## Recommended Books and Apps

### **Books**

*In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts — Gabor Maté*

*This Naked Mind — Annie Grace*

*The Biology of Desire — Marc Lewis*

### **Apps**

*Sober Grid*

*Reframe*

*Insight Timer*

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## **Closing Encouragement**

Substance use is not a reflection of your character.

It is a pattern your nervous system developed to cope—and patterns can change.

With the right support, many people begin to experience:

- **Reduced cravings and increased control**
- **Greater emotional stability**
- **Renewed confidence and self-trust**
- **Stronger relationships and connection**
- **A clearer sense of identity and direction**

Recovery is not about losing something.

It is about regaining yourself.

You do not have to navigate this alone. Change is possible. Stability can return. Your life can become fully your own.