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Wellness

OVERCOMING  
ADDICTION

  
BRAIN  
BOXES

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## **Introduction:**

Addiction is a strong, uncontrollable need for drugs, drink or to perform a particular activity. In severe cases, this addiction becomes the most important thing in your life and often leads to problems in all other aspects of life.

Whilst the reason for addiction is unclear, those who have a history of addiction in their family, those who have mental health problems or who have experienced stress or abuse in childhood are more at risk than others.

Attempting to withdraw from the substance or behaviour you are addicted to can lead to severe distress and discomfort whilst leading to both severe physical and psychological problems. There are lots and lots of treatments, support groups and full interventions available but with so many paths to take and factors to consider, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed, isolated and reaching your goals may feel totally unachievable.

As an alcoholic and drug addict myself, I know that none of this does justice to the total destruction addiction can cause and I have had personal experience of that craving in your stomach taking everything you have and more. I found success on my fifth stay in rehab and two years on, even though I am clean and sober I have ongoing challenges with my mental health, bridges with friends and family that still need to be rebuilt.

I have found great support and strength in helping others who are at an earlier stage in their journey and through running a number of support groups, and mentoring sessions, I have found that addiction is complex and different for each person I have worked with but have realised that I can play a role in helping people find the right path for recovery.

Over two thirds of people relapse after a detox and whilst this costs the NHS a huge amount of money and may take opportunities from other addicts, the most challenging factor for you is the personal challenges it will cause for you - a further knock to your confidence, more damage to relationships, and a loss of hope and belief.

## **How to use a Brain Box:**

We are currently living in a world that is overloaded by information. We have a whole variety of media channels and sources of information at our fingers and are increasingly connected, most of the time.

However, turning that information into knowledge is incredibly challenging and whether it's the number of failed businesses or people struggling with their mental health, we are surrounded by statistics that show we are failing when it comes to making information, useful.

To make information useful, we need to make it simple. However, simplicity isn't basic; it instead involves taking complex amounts of information and providing context, relevance and objectivity without losing any of the detail that exists in the information's complex state.

Brain Boxes use interactive matrices to achieve this and takes information around a wide variety of topics and makes the complex, simple.

For our users, that means you create personalised, practical information that can easily be applied. The knowledge our brain boxes generate provide you with tangible and measurable actions whilst helping you understand your own strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and vulnerabilities.

As tools in the workplace and healthcare environments, the brain boxes help managers or care providers easily and efficiently profile individuals and simply extract knowledge that ensures they can personalise the care, communication and development plans they offer.

We have identified the 9 key factors that influence your recovery and the two variables that will determine your success. To help you understand how to best prepare yourself for recovery, you need to work through each of the factors, reflecting on the key points and positioning yourself on the corresponding grid. The guidance and advice you receive will help you understand how you can best prepare yourself for a successful recovery, where you are most likely to find the right help. You need to reflect on each of the points honestly and use the final section on the book to create a personalised and effective development plan to prepare you for a successful recovery that will help you see you beat your addictions and build the life you deserve.

This unique approach provides you with practical and personalised advice, making your recovery really work for you and helping you recognise progress, improvement and specific areas of weakness.

## **Factor 1 - Recognition.**

One of the most important steps in your recovery is recognising your addiction. It is important that, as an addict, you know you have a problem but also understand the illness of addiction. It is very easy to be in denial, to avoid the realities of your illness, or to consider the problems and experiences that are leading to this behaviour. To have a successful recovery, it is important that you recognise your own behaviours and thoughts that define you as an addict and control your relationship with your drug or behaviour of choice. It is also important that you understand and recognise the illness of addiction, the physical and psychological implications and the trends, triggers and treatment available to you.

### **Key Thinking Points:**

*It is important that you think through each of these key points and reflect upon them with honesty. Take time to really consider each of these points, make notes if necessary and if you feel comfortable, discuss with others.*

#### What are you hoping to achieve by reading this book and in your recovery?

You need to consider what you hope to achieve by reading this book and what your recovery will look like. By recognising yourself as an addict, you need to understand that you will never be able to moderate or control the relationship you have with drink or drugs and therefore total abstinence is the only option for you. There are no exceptions to this rule and as an addict, you have to except the power it has over you and be willing to surrender to it rather than trying to change it. Think about how much you recognise and accept this before you begin your recovery.

#### What is your relationship with drugs and alcohol?

It is important that you spend time considering and analysing the relationship you have with drugs and alcohol. However painful it may be, it is important that you reflect honestly about the amount and frequency you are using drugs. Importantly you also need to consider the control drugs and alcohol have over you, how much you crave them, how they affect your mood and the purpose you have for using them. When you are comfortable admitting that this is not a relationship you control, you will be ready to make a successful recovery.

#### What are your priorities, focus and purpose?

You need to consider the role your addiction plays in your life. It is likely that it will have become your main focus, your top priority and in many ways, your only purpose. In helping you overcome your addiction, you will need to be prepared to realign your focus, priority and most importantly your purpose in life.

#### How much do you understand about the physical and physiological effects of addiction?

It is important that you understand the physical or physiological effect of addiction. You need to be able to recognise them in yourself and recognise the impact both usage and withdrawal will have on your body and your mind. It will help you recognise and control the thoughts, feelings,

behaviours and symptoms you will have when you are using and whilst you are recovering.

Do you understand what has triggered your addictions and how it has developed?

Having an understanding of your addiction is important. You need to understand the events, relationships or tendencies that have led to your current circumstances. This will help you avoid patterns in the future and address any underlying mental health issues that trigger drug and alcohol use.

How much do you know about the treatments and solutions that are available to you?

It is important that you are aware of the treatments, support and opportunities available to you as an addict. It is likely that this will change based on your location, your age and your circumstances. It is important that you reflect on how much you currently know and how much information is available to you and what could be achieved if you were proactive in your approach.

**Determining Statements:**

*Having worked through the key thinking points, you need to decide which statement is most relevant to you and read the advice detailed in the corresponding advice section.*

1. I know I have a problem with addiction and I know lots about it.
2. I don't believe I have a problem with addiction but I do know lots about it.
3. I know I have a problem with addiction but I do not know a lot about it.
4. I don't think I have a problem with addiction and I do not know a lot about it.

**Advice for Effective Recovery:**

*Please read the section below that is most relevant to you based on the statement you have identified with previously.*

1. I know I have a problem with addiction and I know lots about it.

This is the ideal position to ensure you have an effective recovery. You are likely to recognise yourself as an addict and understand that you are powerless to this. With a lot of knowledge around the physical and psychological effects addiction will have on you, you will be well prepared for the journey and should be aware of the opportunities, treatment and support groups open to you.

2. I don't believe I have a problem with addiction but I do know lots about it.

Although you have a lot of knowledge and understanding about addiction, it is unlikely that you will see and recognise these behaviours in yourself. It is important that you are able to objectively analyse your relationship, your behaviours and your priorities. Although you might be functional and whilst you may have the resources to effectively fund and manage your addiction, it is important that you address any dependency you may have. You should take the time to ask those that are close to you to share any changes they have seen in your mood or your behaviour, you can take a note of your usage so that you can review and reflect upon your

consumption. If you are unable to speak to someone about your thoughts and feelings initially, it may be worth communicating through text or email or, if you don't feel speaking to those you know you can also consider using anonymous online forums, groups or local meetings to help you explore your own relationship with addiction and begin to recognise your own need for treatment, support or intervention.

### 3. I know I have a problem with addiction but I do not know a lot about it.

If you know that you have a problem with addiction but do not understand the psychological and physiological impact of addiction then it is likely to be daunting, lonely and overwhelming. Whilst there is lots of support and information available, you need to be proactive in your approach to accessing it. Your GP is a good place to start but you can also find lots of information online and should be able to find leaflets and information packs at local health centres and walk in centres. There are lots of charities that help people with mental health problems and free organisations such as Alcoholics Anonymous. It is also worth exploring your local community resources which you can access by calling 111 or requesting information from your GP.

### 4. I don't think I have a problem with addiction and I do not know a lot about it.

If you are in this position, it is likely that you are a functioning alcoholic or drug addict and probably see yourself as simply a social drinker or drug user. It is becoming increasingly common for people in the UK to become dependent on alcohol or drugs through an escalation of social and habitual behaviour. In these circumstances, you may wish to do some anonymous and independent research online, to explore your thoughts, feelings, behaviours and where you might be able to gain some support and awareness. It is important that you realise many people face challenges with addiction regardless of their circumstances and find that their substance they are using begins to take control of their relationship rather than the other way around. It is important that you become aware of and understand your potential addiction problems before it develops further out of hand.

### **Mark's Recognition Story:**

I wasn't a heavy drinker until my mum passed away, having looked after her for 10 years as she faced a long and painful battle with cancer, I went wild for a while. Dealing with grief, I thought, letting off a little steam, perhaps but understandable and to some degree expected under the circumstances. I certainly thought I was in control of it and continued to maintain my job and the friendship circles I'd always had without arousing suspicion or concern. Being honest, I knew I had a problem when I woke up with cravings, shaking and being sick. My battle with alcohol really began when I decided to set myself up for the day with another drink and not long later I needed a large vodka before I could get out of bed and was drinking cans of white star with my breakfast. Two years later I took my first line of cocaine and after spending thousands of pounds, turning to crime and ruining many of my relationships, I sought professional help for the first time. At the time, I didn't know anything about being an alcoholic or a drug addict. I was hoping to simply gain a little bit of control, to be able to use the drugs socially and find a quick fix to something I fooled myself was a small problem. My final stay in rehab, I realised that I

would never be able to have a drink or a line of cocaine ever again. I knew a lot more about the process, about the help available and the experiences of others. I was much more involved with support groups, I was in supported accommodation and had access to a support worker and a psychiatrist. I knew that I had been lying to myself and knew that I needed to change my life, to change my friends, my priorities, my focus and address the life experiences and mental health issue that had led me to lean on drugs and alcohol in the first place. I believe it was both my personal recognition and awareness of addiction that made my final detox successful.

### **Emma's Recognition Story:**

I never really considered myself a heavy drinker until around the age of 24. From a young age I was only ever around casual drinkers, having the odd glass or two at parties and Christmas. I was suffering with depression & anxiety and eventually turned to alcohol to "manage" this but as a result, the problem only became bigger whilst I buried and ignored the issues affecting me. I began making poor decisions on impulse and became trapped in a continuous cycle of getting myself into, and out of trouble. I dealt with my problems by running away. Frequently "upping sticks", relocating, changing jobs and my circle of friends. Leaving a trail of destruction with no apology.

The pressure was increasing and I used alcohol more to be seen as the life and soul of the party but secretly, inside, I was exhausted. Mentally and physically. I became known as "the party girl" who would be wheeled out to client events to entertain whilst everyone else did sensible things like spend time with their families. I would often end up in dangerous situations, usually unaware until the next morning following a quick "assessment". Phone? Check. Purse? Check. Sanity? Absent. Drinking until the early hours started to take their toll and eventually I began experiencing the shakes the next morning. At first I didn't know what was happening and put it down to bad hangovers. When they didn't disappear by lunchtime, I knew something was wrong but instead of seeking help, I would seek another drink. Once I realised this worked and I could function once again I guess I thought "why wait until lunchtime, let's nip this in the bud" and before long, I was stocking up on my way to work.

At this stage, my understanding of addiction was limited. I was oblivious to the effect on my health, both physically and mentally. I tried half-hearted attempts to fix things but would never see anything through and simply papered over the cracks.

By my first detox on my 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday I had lost control. I was admitted under dual diagnosis and on release, sought to address my mental health whilst ignoring my addiction. Suffice to say, within a matter of weeks, I was drinking again. After two further detoxes, a course of CBT and support from my GP, AA and addiction teams, I had to admit I was beat. My way of doing things was not working. If it was, I wouldn't have been drinking. I admitted this but the weeks that followed drove me to complete recognition of the problem. I surrendered.

Everything had fallen to pieces. I recognised that this was going to be the end. If I didn't have a drink, I'd die. If I had a drink, I'd die. In my mind, I had nothing to lose.

## **Recognising 'Recognition' in others:**

When working with others, it is easy to spot the individuals that are in denial, that are lying to themselves or making excuses for their behaviour. Some members deny having used and others claim to be visiting the group for research or information purposes. It is often the case that as other members open up and expose their usage and challenges, those who are struggling will slowly follow suit. I find asking what people hope to achieve most useful and often reinforce the fact that for an addict, it isn't possible to have balance, to be a social user or just have one. I find when people are willing to accept this, they are often ready for recovery. For people finding recognition challenge, I often share my own story so that they are able to recognise our connection and appreciate the empathy and understanding I will have for them. I also ensure each of the individuals I work with are armed with knowledge, resources and access to support so that they have the information they need at their fingertips and are empowered to make their recovery. Recognition is a challenging stage for anyone that is facing a battle with addiction. It will make you feel incredibly vulnerable, afraid and powerless and when you first recognise your challenge it is unlikely that you will know where to turn and will probably have little hope for the future. It, in my opinion, critical to your recover and the more you recognise in yourself, the more motivated and able you will be to sustain your sobriety.

## **Factor 2 - Acceptance.**

For an effective recovery, it is essential for you to accept that you are powerless to your addiction and that your addiction is part of you. You will always be an addict and the relationship you have with the substance of behaviour you are addicted to will always take control of you and your life. It is important that you not only recognise this in yourself but are able to accept and appreciate as part of your identity.

### **Key Thinking Points:**

*It is important that you think through each of these key points and reflect upon them with honesty. Take time to really consider each of these points, make notes if necessary and if you feel comfortable, discuss with others.*

#### What is your short term view of your addiction?

It is important that you consider what you hope to achieve in the short term with regards to your addiction. You should make notes of these goals and share them with others reflecting upon whether you are simply looking to regain some level of control and functionality or take the initial steps in creating significant change in your life.

#### What is your long term view of your addiction?

Whilst you will spend much of your initial recovery focusing on the immediate future, getting through the next hour for example, it is important that you are able to look to the future and understand your long term goals. It is important to consider the relationship you will have with your addiction, how much time and effort you envision yourself dedicating to your addiction in the future and how you and others will perceive you.

#### How do you think your addiction affects you?

You need to some time to honestly reflect upon the impact your addiction has had on your life. You need to consider the impact it has had on everything from your health to your purpose, from your relationships to your bank balance and consider how this will escalate if you are unable to address your challenges. It is important that you do this with honesty, without any excuses and without any lies.

#### How do you wish to change your addiction?

Everyone will have different ambitions for the future and it is important that when you are looking forward, you consider the role your addiction will play in this. You need to be prepared to accept that addiction will play a role in your life forever and need to accept that being an addict will be part of your identity forever. It is important for you realise that you can hope to control your addiction, that you find ways of living a functional and happy life whilst managing your addiction, but removing it, leaving it behind or doing without it is not a possibility and you need to be aware of how you currently feel about this.

### **Determining Statements:**

*Having worked through the key thinking points, you need to decide which statement is most relevant to you and read the advice detailed in the corresponding advice section.*

1. I am powerless to my addiction and think it will be part of who I am forever.
2. I am powerless to my addiction but I do not think it will be part of who I am forever.
3. I can control my addiction but I think it will be part of who I am forever.
4. I can control my addiction but I do not think it will be part of who I am forever.

### **Advice for Recovery:**

*Please read the section below that is most relevant to you based on the statement you have identified with previously.*

#### 1. I am powerless to my addiction and think it will be part of who I am forever.

This is the best position to be in if you are looking to make a successful and sustainable recovery. Whilst you are likely to feel vulnerable and afraid, you should also feel relaxed and be proud of yourself for finally surrendering to the power of your addiction. By personally connecting with your addiction, you will realise that you will always have to be aware of triggers, relapses and will never be able to have use your substance of choice in moderation. Although you may feel at the bottom of a very large mountain at the moment, you have removed all of the excuses, behaviours and thinking that may have prevented a successful recovery or led to a relapse.

#### 2. I am powerless to my addiction but I do not think it will be part of who I am forever.

Admitting that you are powerless to your addiction is a significant and important step in making a successful and sustainable recovery but until you realise that your addiction is part of your identity and always will be, you are significantly more likely to have a relapse at some point in the future. If you are an addict, you always will be and it is important for you to realise that it will be as much as part of your identity as what you do, who you are friends with, what you eat and what you wear. Until you are prepared to accept this, it is likely that your addiction will continue to have control of you and when eventually, you reintroduce it to your life or begin to abstain from addiction groups, recovery programmes or independent tools or programmes that have made your recovery possible and will need to be used in order to maintain it.

#### 3. I can control my addiction but I think it will be part of who I am forever.

If you realise that you have a problem with addiction but are unable to admit that you are powerless to it, you are in a dangerous position and currently not ready to create a successful and sustainable recovery. Everyone who has a problem with addiction is ultimately powerless to it and all the time you think you are smarter than your addiction, in control of your addiction or can trick or gamble with your addiction, you are in a state of denial, you are wrong and ultimately your recovery will be unsuccessful. Admitting you are powerless will admit your need for intervention, for help, support and drastic action. You will be admitting that you are facing a huge challenge, significant hurdles and a journey that you are likely unable to imagine or

understand the end of at the present time. Admitting you are powerless will evoke a host of emotions - you will feel defeated, you will be afraid, you will be vulnerable but most of all you will want to use. Finding the strength and bravery to surrender will allow the people around you to provide you with the help and support you need for an effective and long lasting recovery.

4. I can control my addiction but I do not think it will be part of who I am forever.

If you currently feel that your addiction is not part of who you are, and is something you have power over, you are unlikely to be ready or able to face a recovery programme. The question you need to ask yourself is, how bad do things have to become before you realise you are powerless and how much of you does your addiction need to ruin before you are prepared to admit that it is part of your identity. You have the opportunity to be proactive, to face your fears and address your addiction but until you are able to admit the scale of the problem or even just the emotions it has over you, your thinking and your behaviour, it is likely to be short lived. If you are in a position of functionality, you should consider how much you will need to lose before you are forced to accept the statements above and take action. To be powerless and identify yourself as an addict does not mean that it has consumed your life, it simply means you are aware of its potential and proactively want to seek help.

**Mark's Acceptance Story:**

It wasn't until I checked into my final rehab that I realised I was not in control of my addictions. Even when I was in a hospital bed, having been scraped off the floor by my care worker, I still thought I could get dressed and go for a drink, I knew I had to surrender. I knew that this rehab was not designed for me to 'get the balance back', I knew that this wasn't a step in me outsmarting my addiction, I knew that this was a part of saving my life and that it was now or never. I was in hospital for 3 weeks before I was deemed fit enough to go on a detox programme. As I was told that I had residue around my liver, large fatty bits and early signs of psoriasis, I couldn't avoid the fact that I was an addict, I would always be an addict and would inevitably die if I had another drink. Just one more single one. Two years on, I still know that I am powerless to my addiction. I still know that I can not and will not ever have one more drink but I find it easier to live with. I have built up controls and tools to help me and can identify triggers, potential causes and know when I am most vulnerable and in need of support. Those around me know that I am an addict and it is now part of who I am, as is the months I have been clean and sober and the work I do to support others. For me, I am happy to admit I am an addict, I no longer hide who I am, what I have done in the past or what I hope to achieve in the future but am thankful, every day for sobriety and face each battle as they arise, knowing that my journey has only just started.

**Emma's Acceptance Story:**

Once I recognised the severity of the problem, once I could no longer walk to the bathroom, let alone the off-license, I begged for help. I was prepared to do anything and the only way I could

see out was to go into rehab. After all, it was the only thing I hadn't tried. I admitted I was powerless over alcohol.

Where previously resisting intervention, I embraced it with open arms and prayed for the call with a place in a detox centre and hopefully rehab. I wanted everything instantly. I felt as though I was dying. I thought I'd finally used up all of my chances and had lost my mind. Funding is limited and the call didn't come. As I had run out of money and the use of my legs, I had only one choice. To stop drinking. I was aware of the dangers of withdrawing but as far as I could see, I was going to die anyway so decided to taper off. I wouldn't necessarily recommend this as withdrawal can be life threatening. However, I let everyone around me know what I was doing and they helped control my intake in these days. I still view what happened the next few days as a miracle. I had experienced severe withdrawal symptoms in the past and this time it was tough, but considering the amount I had been consuming, manageable through measured intake. It took more strength than ever imaginable. It could have been so easy to go for the quick fix but this was no longer an option. Half measures (excuse the pun) were no longer on the table for me. I made a promise to myself and others that as soon as I had the strength to get off the sofa, I would take every little bit of help available. The following week I committed to a 12 week, day program. I hadn't committed to anything in a long while. I never looked back. These people saved my life as far as I'm concerned. They helped me to accept that I am an addict. They gave my family Emma back. Such a change of behaviour and schedule is by no means easy. Recovery is not for the faint hearted but I no longer look over my shoulder at the path of destruction or become consumed with chasing the next drink when looking forward. My addiction is part of who I am but it isn't all-encompassing. All I can see right now is a bright future; head held high.

### **Recognising 'Acceptance' in others:**

When working with others, one of my most favourite questions to ask is, 'are you here to become a social drinker or user'. Many newcomers are alarmed when I tell people who say 'yes' to leave. Until you are prepared to accept you are an addict, to accept you will be an addict forever and accept that you are powerless to that, any attempts of a recovery are simply a waste of time. For the people that are still in denial and still making excuses, they are still fighting, struggling, trying to hang on to a sense of normality and as a result typically look worn out, are huddled over, weak and defensive. Even by just accepting their addiction, I see people become more relaxed, more open and more confident and people see recovery for what it is - an opportunity to develop a state of mind that will help you learn how to control and live with your addiction. Before people can accept that they are an addict, excuses for using can range from the bus being late to losing their dog; people tend to be defensive, dismissive of support and disengaged in group based interactions. You can often see them, trapped in a web of lies, excuses, thoughts and frustrations yet people who can't accept their addiction are likely to walk out of groups straight to their drink or drug of choice. I have found that leading people to accept their addiction requires a one to one relationship and often a number of meetings - build rapport,

empathy and trust. Many people have I worked with seem fearful that the moment they admit they are an alcoholic, they will be excluded from society, taken to rehab and will never be allowed to drink again. Managing expectations, helping people understand that rehab includes a steady and manageable withdrawal and relationships based on support and understanding, often gives people the confidence to accept their addiction and often once this has been achieved, people realise it will be part of them for the of their lives.

### **Factor 3 - Accountability.**

One of the biggest challenges you are likely to face in addressing your addiction will be that of becoming accountable. In order to fuel your addiction, it is likely that you will make excuses to yourself and to others. Becoming accountable means that you need to accept that you are responsible for your thoughts, words, behaviours and actions. It means that you will accept you are the only person that can control your addiction and it means that you are the person responsible for the challenges and problems it has caused. In being accountable, you will realise that you have the power to make change, amends and opportunities.

#### **Key Thinking Points**

*It is important that you think through each of these key points and reflect upon them with honesty. Take time to really consider each of these points, make notes if necessary and if you feel comfortable, discuss with others.*

#### How often do you make excuses for your addiction?

You need to consider how often you are making excuses for using and in turn, how many times you are denying the fact that you have an addiction and blaming your behaviours on other people or circumstances. You need to consider why you are making these excuses, consider who are hiding from and what you hope to achieve by hiding the truth from yourself and those around you.

#### Who do you make your excuses to?

When you are making excuses for using, you need to consider who you are making them to. It is important to determine if you are hiding from others because of the stigmas and judgements many have around addiction or if you are excusing yourself and making someone or something else accountable for your behaviour.

#### When do you feel most disappointed with yourself?

It is important for you to understand when you feel most disappointed with yourself and analyse what it means, how it makes you feel and how you overcome those emotions. It may also be important to consider when you were last disappointed with yourself and whether or not you allow yourself to have these emotions.

#### Who or what inspires you to stop using?

It is important that you consider who or what inspires you to address your addiction, what you hope for and what you plan in your future that provides you with strength. You should consider if this inspiration is permanent or temporary and consider if it can be influenced or changed by others. For an effective recovery, it is important that your source of inspiration can not be altered by others.

### **Determining Statements:**

*Having worked through the key thinking points, you need to decide which statement is most relevant to you and read the advice detailed in the corresponding advice section.*

1. I take responsibility because it is important to me that I do that.
2. I take responsibility but only when I have people encouraging me to do so.
3. I don't often take responsibility because I don't think its important.
4. I don't often take responsibility because I can fool the people around me.

### **Advice for Recovery:**

*Please read the section below that is most relevant to you based on the statement you have identified with previously.*

#### 1. I take responsibility because it is important to me that I do that.

In this position, you are likely to have the mindset you need to complete a successful recovery programme and ensure it is sustained for the rest of your life. By finding internal validation, your moods, your commitment and your confidence in your ability to achieve will be dictated by you rather than others and by being accountable, regardless of whether or not you make mistakes or not, you are admitting your addictions and having the courage to confront them.

#### 2. I take responsibility but only when I have people encouraging me to do so.

If you find your reasonings to be accountable from others, from external factors or influencers, you need to consider what happens when those external factors change. Whilst it is a significant achievement and incredibly admirable that you often take responsibility for your actions and take some ownership of your addiction and the thoughts and behaviours this leads to, it is important that you are accountable to yourself and for your own recovery rather than for others. To have a successful and sustainable recovery, it is important that you are prepared for the rest of your life and it is undeniable that the factors that surround you, the relationships you have and what is important to you will change - if your current surroundings are your main reasons for accountability, you need to consider how you will continue to be responsible once these external factors have changed.

#### 3. I don't often take responsibility because I don't think its important.

This is a difficult position for you to be in and one which may take some time to change. If you are making excuses to yourself and truly believe you aren't responsible for your actions then only you can change that and ultimately you will not achieve a successful recovery until you do. You are likely to disregard what others say and the opinions others have of you and your thoughts and actions. It is also likely that those who are looking to support you, will struggle to communicate with you and you may find yourself disengaged in many environments. To begin exploring accountability, we recommend that you explore mindfulness as an area for development. It may also be worth exploring other thoughts and actions, unrelated to addiction, and try to find some that you do take accountability for. Perhaps you can find events in your

past that you were accountable for and begin to question why you aren't equally accountable for all the actions related to your addiction. It is important that you find the strength to explore emotions like fear, shame and guilt whilst exploring accountability and perhaps begin writing, keeping a journal or simply noting key events to see how you can reflect on these over time. Building a relationship with a coach or mentor may help you but ensure they help you question the way you are thinking and coach you through exploring that rather than simply trying to address your addiction alone.

#### 4. I don't often take responsibility because I can fool the people around me.

In this position, it is likely that you provide those around you with excuses, stories and reasons for your addiction that range from stretching the truth to outright lying. It is likely that your thoughts are consumed with what others think of you rather than considering what you might think of yourself, your own thoughts and your own behaviours. Ultimately, once you are alone, you will revert back to , and dismiss your addictive thoughts and behaviours. In this position, a recovery programme would only be effective whilst you were around carers, support workers and medical experts. It is more than likely that your behaviour will change as soon as you are alone or in the company of others users and addicts. In order to prepare yourself for a successful recovery, it is important that you begin considering your own opinions of your thinking and behaviour, consider how you feel about your addiction and what you would like to do in recovering from it. Accepting responsibility for your behaviour is key, Understanding that only you can create change is essential and realising that there are no excuses, no reasons and no circumstances under which you can escape your addiction or blame others for your behaviour is a crucial step in being ready for a successful and sustainable recovery.

#### **Mark's Accountability Story:**

When I went into my final detox, I knew, for the first time, that making this recovery attempt my final one was really down to me. During my four other stays in rehab, I had been there for someone else, because of someone else and found myself making excuses for my previous behaviour, my thoughts and most alarmingly, my reasons for being in recovery.

By the time I reached my final attempt at recovery, I had stopped making excuses - not because I had become accountable but because I really didn't care. I wasn't clean, I hadn't shaved for weeks, I didn't change my clothes, I wasn't speaking to people and I didn't have the energy to try and hide, to try and lie or to excuse my behaviour. I had previously only drunk indoors or in secret, I had often tried to present myself and would make excuses and lies for my need for money, for my inability to function and for my alarmingly high levels of drug and alcohol consumption.

When my care worker dragged me from my floor and took me to hospital, I knew that I was consumed by my addiction and I didn't need anyone else to tell me that I needed to do something. I knew that I didn't want to live the way I was anymore and I was ready to make a successful recovery. When I was told by one of the doctors that I was virtually on the brink of death, I knew that I had to decide if I wanted to live or die and I could not escape from that - it

finally made me accountable and gave me the internal strength to finally address my addictions and what they had done to my life.

Two years on, I have remain excuse free. I have gained insight and understanding which has helped me understand my addictions but has not justified or excused them in my mind. I have been able to separate the challenges I have with mental health and the problems I have with addiction and am much clearer on when to ask for help, and the type of help I am likely to need. But most all, and most importantly, I am at ease with myself and if I have a bad day, I know in my heart of hearts that I might not be able to get out of bed, I might not want to speak to others and I might be a bit grumpy but there is no might in relation to me having another line of cocaine or another mouthful of alcohol and that to me, means I have finally got my mindset right for sustainable recovery.

### **Emma's Accountability Story:**

I finally realised that I had to take responsibility for myself and others around me. No excuses. No hiding. I held my hands up and admitted I'd messed up and I had to be held accountable otherwise my life was over. Absolute honesty. Up until now I hadn't really cared about what others thought of me or how much of an impact my behaviour was having on those around me. I had no self-respect and very little respect for others. Up until now I had churning out every excuse and lie in the book and my drinking was often someone else's fault.

Eventually I realised that I had to change as there was no other option and no other way forward. My life was a mess and I had people clearing it up after me. I was bringing all the people I cared about, down with me.

Up until this point, nothing had made me want to stop. Lying in hospital being told I wouldn't make another five years. Having ravaged my insides so bad that I could not keep anything down. Having lost family members to addiction, witnessing first-hand the consequences and after-effects. So why was this time different? I wanted to do it, for myself primarily. I wanted to snatch my life back. The realisation that I had no one to blame except myself had finally hit home. I ran out of the White Star and I ran out of self-will.

I couldn't walk. I hadn't eaten a thing for nearly a month. I was being sick in a bucket in my bedroom and often not making it to the bathroom. I was dirty and smelt and couldn't remember the last time I'd had a wash or a shower. The same clothes were being picked up from the floor day in, day out and I could not bear to face my own reflection and certainly not anyone else. To this day many people do not know just how bad thing had got but if they are happy to listen, I'll more than gladly share my story.

Nowadays I can make sensible and rational decisions. On the occasions I don't, I have the courage to own them and take accountability. I behave like an adult rather than a petulant child blaming a friend. In my case, the bottle. I hadn't previously held myself accountable as I was lying to the world, and myself.

I share my feelings and discuss if I'm having a bad day. I have explored the reasons behind my addiction. I invest daily in my recovery and reap the returns and rewards from achieving the impossible. I have only been able to do so by accepting the support of people around me which I'd previously turned away.

Most of all, I am honest. This is my journey after all. No one else's.

### **Recognising 'Accountability' in others.**

One of the most challenging aspects of running support groups, is investing time in people who sit in the meetings and go for a drink on their way out. Spotting people checking their clock whilst people are sharing their reasons for their own addictions or hearing people making excuses when they are in a room free from judgement and full of support, is both frustrating and sad to see. I know those people are far away from a successful recovery, and until they are prepared to admit some of the challenges they are facing to themselves then there is little I can do to help them. I become more confident in others as they begin to explore their reasons for their addiction, their triggers and begin to understand rather than excuse their behaviour. Once people are accountable they often have a determination and a focus that is consistent and will help them acquire the tools and resources they need whilst developing a mindset to be successful in their recovery.

## Chapter 4 - Dependency.

By definition, you will be in some way dependent on the substance, drink or behaviour you are addicted to. To make a successful recovery, it is important that you understand the true nature of your addiction and can appreciate the effect its use and withdrawal from it has on both your body and your mind. This knowledge will help you ensure you have the right treatment, support and give you some understanding of what you will experience and how you will feel during your recovery.

### Key Thinking Points

*It is important that you think through each of these key points and reflect upon them with honesty. Take time to really consider each of these points, make notes if necessary and if you feel comfortable, discuss with others.*

#### Where do you feel your cravings?

You need to have an awareness of where you feel your cravings and what they mean to you. You should consider if your cravings create pain, anxiety, discomfort or sadness, bad mood or anger. Do you experience your cravings in a particular area of your body or are they driven by your thoughts or voices in your head? Understanding and being able to explain your craving experience will be important and can ensure you receive the care and support you need in your recovery.

#### What impact does using have on you?

It is important that you understand the impact your addiction has on you. Does the drug you are using have a mental or physical impact? Does it make you euphoric or does it simply allow you to function? Does it heighten or suppress your senses? Do you find it changes or simply stops your thoughts? It is important that you are able to clearly define the impact the substance you are addicted to has on you.

#### What impact does withdrawal have on you?

You need to have a clear understanding of the impact withdrawal has on you and you must explain all of this to the people that are supporting and helping you in your recovery. You need to consider all of the physical effects withdrawal has on you - from shaking and aches through to cramps and nausea. In addition to this, you need to think about the impact withdrawal has on your mental health - do you feel more anxious, do you struggle to address events from the past, do you hear voices, do you have flashbacks or nightmares? It is important that your recovery team know all possible outcomes of your withdrawal so that they can prepare and protect you so that your recovery can be successful.

#### What is your main reason for using?

You need to think about your main reasons for using the substance you are addicted to and your reasons for becoming addicted to it. It is important for you to understand if you are self

medicating because of underlying mental health issues, if it is a habitual behaviour that has escalated out of control or if you are looking to avoid another aspect of your life. To have a truly successful and sustainable recovery, you will need to address these underlying issues so that you no longer need to avoid or mask these problems with addiction.

**Determining Statements:**

*Having worked through the key thinking points, you need to decide which statement is most relevant to you and read the advice detailed in the corresponding advice section.*

1. I am mentally and physically addicted
2. I am mentally but not physically addicted
3. I am physically but not mentally addicted
4. I am neither physically or mentally addicted

**Advice for Recovery:**

*Please read the section below that is most relevant to you based on the statement you have identified with previously.*

1. I am mentally addicted.

If you are mentally addicted to the drug or substance you are using, it is likely that you will need support from a psychiatrist or counsellor. More, you will need to consider why you have become mentally addicted, what other mental problems you may be facing and prepare yourself for a mental challenge. Whilst you are likely to still need some form of medication to help you in your recovery, you will not find drugs to help you with your withdrawal symptoms and it will be important for you to find lots of tools and resources that will help keep you accountable, focused and resilient. You will need to ensure that you have support around you - groups, one to one meetings and even support lines and online forums. It may be useful to keep a diary and as you begin your recovery, it will be important for you to understand what makes you feel good, what helps with your mindset whilst having an awareness of what and whom weakens your mindset and makes your recovery more challenging.

2. I am physically addicted.

If you are physically addicted to the drug or substance you are using, you are more likely to need a residential detox programme. You will be given drugs that will help reduce your cravings and address the physical needs you have for drugs and alcohol whilst you are able to look at the mental challenges you will need to face as you overcome your addiction. It is unlikely that you will be only physically addicted to a substance and as you face your recovery, you will need to consider the reasons that led to your addiction and allowed your drug usage to get to the stage of physical dependency. Whilst your physical dependency can be addressed, you need to consider your own outlook, thoughts and behaviours that need to be managed and controlled to ensure you don't use in the future.

### **Mark's Dependency Story:**

I was mentally addicted to cocaine but both physically and mentally addicted to alcohol. At my worst, I was using 6 grams of cocaine and drinking 2 litres of vodka a day.

I found the cocaine much easier to give up and although I enjoyed the good days on cocaine, when my senses were heightened and feelings in my brain unleashed, I was really always chasing my first high. I took every line hoping that it might give me the same euphoric feeling I got first time around. I enjoyed using cocaine but when my doctor gave me the reality of death diagnosis before I began my final detox, it was an easy decision to decide to give it up. Although I spent the earlier part of my recovery thinking about cocaine and longing for the high it gave me, I never had any physical withdrawal symptoms and found the mental strength to overcome the urges I had for a line. During my final rehab, I realised I needed to throw my phone away. I knew I couldn't be friends with other drug users and realised that I didn't want my dealer to be able to contact me when I left hospital. The everyday limitations of money and access have helped me maintain a strong mindset, they put some time in between desire and action and means I have to make a real commitment to using cocaine rather than a split second decision. I rarely find myself thinking about cocaine now and compared to the battle I had with alcohol, it often gets forgotten in my story.

I was physically and mentally addicted to alcohol and drank from the moment I woke up, until the moment I woke up regardless of the time of day. Without alcohol my stomach would churn, my limbs would ache and I would shake to a point that I was unable to move or function. My need for alcohol led to stealing, lying and begging. Nothing in my life was more important than finding my next drink. My brain was like a ghost train, feeling like it was spinning around in a bucket. Alcohol never gave me a high, it simply allowed me to function. I simply felt like I was going to die without a drink and yet the reality was, I would probably die with or without one. In my programme, I was given drugs to control my cravings and left my facing just my mental addiction and the chaos and destruction my relationship with alcohol and drugs had caused and created in my life.

### **Emma's Dependency Story:**

I realised I was mentally addicted to alcohol a lot longer before I realised I was physically dependant. For some reason, my brain would not let me see how I could cope without this crutch. For a long time I was drinking heavily but still socially. Because I often felt as though I didn't fit in I would use alcohol as a form of escapism. It allowed me to be someone or something I wasn't; confident, happy and comfortable in my own skin. At first I felt happy and alive. I could join in with the joke or the conversation but in reality I probably wasn't really mentally "in the room". But it was too late. I had forgotten who I really was or who I wanted to be and became the person I thought I should be. I suffered with bad hangovers but eventually the shame took over. What did I do? What did I say? The anxiety would build up so I'd have another drink. And so the story went on. Every now and then I'd try to have a few days off but I'd feel

anxious, unable to relax and consumed with the thought of getting the next drink. Insanity.

As my drinking continued and I relied on it to relax of an evening, the after effect got worse. I'd feel shaky, sick and lethargic. Still kidding myself and unwilling to accept I had a problem, I would resolve to eat healthier, exercise more and even seek medication for the various symptoms. All the while, ignoring the growing underlying problem. My stomach would churn and I started suffering stomach problems. IBS or a bug of course (!) Heart palpitations? Must be some underlying medical issue. I had thought of everything else it could possibly be and became a walking A-Z of ailments. I must have skipped "A is for Addiction".

Eventually I knew I could not stop unaided. As my awareness of addiction grew, so did my awareness of the dangers of withdrawal. I was admitted to a psychiatric ward for my first detox once I presented my psychiatrist with the effects of withdrawal, only a few hours after my last drink. Stupidly, one week later I thought I was fixed and over the next few months my consumption returned to its previous level and I was in A&E, admitted for a detox once again, agreeing to attend AA upon discharge. After attending a handful of meetings I was convinced I had found the cure and offered support at addiction groups, thriving on the praise I received for how well I was doing. Surely everything was OK now. I had my medication sorted. Surely just one drink couldn't do any harm. Within a year I was nearly dead, housebound and helpless, drinking just to perform basic functions. My mood was erratic, I would see things and hear voices just a few hours after having a drink. I was eventually drinking every waking hour and through the night. This then became constant as I was too afraid to sleep for fear of choking on my own vomit or my organs packing up. I was convinced I had lost my mind and there was no way back. This had to be the end.

### **Recognising 'Dependency' in others:**

It is reasonably simple to spot physical dependency in the individuals I work with. You can often tell by an individual's body language, their pupils and their tendency to shake and sweat. You can often hear where people's dependencies are if you listen to them speaking and the relationship they have with their addiction. It is important that you recognise the type of addiction you are dealing with and provide appropriate care and support, being aware that physical addictions should not be withdrawn from instantly and can lead to fits, seizures or in some cases, death.

## **Factor 5 - Functionality.**

Many addicts will become unable to function in their day to day lives whether it be due to their mental and physical health, their ability to work, maintain relationships or the financial drain their addiction places on their lives. It is important that you understand that impact your addiction has had on your life and the on going support you will need as you move towards sobriety and work towards becoming functional in society. Equally, if you are unable to function within society, it is essential that you get the right support you need and are able to focus on solely on your wellbeing and recovery.

### **Key Thinking Points**

*It is important that you think through each of these key points and reflect upon them with honesty. Take time to really consider each of these points, make notes if necessary and if you feel comfortable, discuss with others.*

#### What impact is addiction having on your life?

It is important for you to have an honest look at the impact your addiction is having on your life. You need to consider how you are performing at work, how you are maintaining relationships, how you are controlling your finances and how you are managing your self, from your appearance through to your appetite. It is important that you consider how much longer you will be able to hold things together for, how much of a juggling act you are doing and how long you will be able to maintain that for.

#### How much control do you feel you currently have over your life?

You need to consider how much control you currently have over your life. You should consider not much control you have over not only your addiction but also the rest of your life also. Do you feel you are chasing your tail or performing a juggling act? How often do you feel you have achieved something in your day? How many goals, ambitions and plans for the future do you #have? If your life is being defined, largely by your addiction, you are unlikely to have the control you need to have a happy and healthy life.

#### Are you currently getting help or support as a direct result of your addiction?

Whether it is a counsellor, a care worker or benefits, you need to consider the help and support you are already getting as a direct result of your addiction. You should consider how much this is helping and how often you have involvement or interaction with these services and how they impact your mood, your addiction and your ability to function effectively.

### **Determining Statements:**

*Having worked through the key thinking points, you need to decide which statement is most relevant to you and read the advice detailed in the corresponding advice section.*

1. I am independent and consistently functional
2. I am independent but inconsistently functional
3. I am dependent on others but consistently functional
4. I am dependent on others and inconsistently functional

**Advice for Recovery:**

*Please read the section below that is most relevant to you based on the statement you have identified with previously.*

1. I am independent and consistently functional

If you are independent and consistently functional, it is important for you to find the vulnerability to seek the help and support you need in order to make to gain control of your addiction. If you feel uncomfortable getting help or support directly, then you should consider looking at the tools and resources online, engaging in online forums or calling any number of the support lines that give advice and support to addicts. It is important for you to realise, that if you need help, it is available to you in a way that can fit into your lifestyle and remain confidential.

2. I am independent but inconsistently functional

If your addiction is causing challenges in your ability to function, it is important that you seek some form of help and begin to get some insight around the large number of tools and resources available to you. Your GP and online resources are a good place to start and will help you understand what you need and what is available to you so that you can address your addiction and regain some control in your life. It is important that you do this without shame, fear or worry of judgement. As you begin your process, you will find that there are many individuals fighting addictions and leaning on the NHS, on charities and coaches, counsellors and groups, to overcome their challenges and function effectively. It is important that you are able to break the cycle you are trapped in, even if it means being dysfunctional for a longer period of time than you are used to but ultimately returning with control and consistent functionality.

3. I am dependent on others but consistently functional

If you are in this position, it is likely that you have received support and guidance in relation to your addiction that has been positive and is allowing you remain functional in society. If you are still struggling with your addiction, mental health or feel you are likely to relapse, it is important that you inform those who are currently, or who have previously helped you. It is important that you recognise and appreciate that your addiction will remain with you for the rest of your life and regardless of your age, circumstances of how long you have been clean and sober, if you are struggling, there will be people to help you. If you have had a relapse and are functioning in society, it is important that you reconnect with your care team as soon as possible to begin your recovery programme and minimise the damage a relapse can cause.

4. I am dependent on others and inconsistently functional

If you are in a position where you are dependent on others and still struggling to function, you need to begin exploring additional problems and solutions for you to explore and introduce. You should see your GP and a mental health expert for a full analysis of your physical and mental health whilst reviewing the progress you have made with your recovery to date. To make a successful recovery, it is important for all of these factors to be looked at collectively, to craft a holistic approach so that you can make a recovery whilst considering your mental health, your physical health and your addictive relationship.

### **Mark's Functionality Story:**

When I first realised I had a problem with alcohol, I was still working and managed my shifts with a quarter bottle of vodka and a good few packets of chewing gum. My journey home always included a stop off to my drug dealer and an off licence where I could pick up some more alcohol before I go home. I managed this routine for about two years before my addiction took over and I was unable to leave the house. I stopped working and began to get an income through violence and crime. When my mum passed away, I found myself with no purpose and my use of drink and drugs only escalated. I had a fresh start in a new flat which I rented with my nephew, who was also an addict. For three of four years, the flat became a den in which we were able to exist and feed our addictions away from the rest of society. Eventually, my money run out and I tried to make yet another fresh start in my own flat that was supplied through the housing association. It was in this flat that my care worker found me and took me to my final rehab where I became familiar with the support and resources I could receive and surrounded with people who had similar experiences and expertise in various areas that meant I was able to make a successful recovery. During my first year of recovery, whilst I was a resident in the YMCA but refrained from contacting my family and totally withdrawing from the friendship groups and circles that had influenced my addiction. A year into my recovery, I was placed in my own flat and began to return to work and rebuild the relationships I had suspended with my family. I found my reintroduction to society slightly overwhelming and new that it was something I need to do slowly and focused on helping people realise I was not the person they had seen a year previous. I suspect writing this book, running my groups and helping others in one to one sessions are just more steps in becoming both functional and independent. As I look to the future, I hope to become less dependent on my support and careworkers, who I still see every week but do know that I will always need medication and support to ensure my mental health remains consistent and supports my sustained recovery rather than triggering my addictions.

### **Emma's Functionality Story:**

When I first realised I had a problem with alcohol, I had a very successful career, home, partner, and a wardrobe full of designer clothes. As my problem with alcohol escalated, so did the problems in both my personal and professional life. My lies and excuses were putting a strain on my relationship. The frequency at which I would cancel on friends and let them down meant that I became more and more excluded and isolated. My home became untidy and my wardrobe was simply somewhere to hide the empty bottles. My work life became very difficult as my

concentration dwindled and my ambition and desire to strive diminished. I lost self-respect and respect for my work and peers as they were merely a distraction to my drinking. Things were ticking over and I was managing to save face but inside I was crumbling to pieces. On reflection being functional meant I didn't always get the help I needed as I was pretending to be OK.

My transition from a functioning alcoholic to a helpless, fully surrendering one happened over about three years. I quit my job as the demands and pressure became too much for me to deal with. Plus the social aspect of my job, entertaining clients became the part I despised as I wanted to drink but alone and at home. On my "park bench", my sofa. So I was free from the daily grind and for a while life was a party but in reality, it was a party for one, in my head. No one else was dancing along with me. I spent evenings in pubs, bragging about being a lady of leisure and talking about how wonderful my life was. I met someone and so desperate to be loved, very quickly moved in together and got engaged. I can't speak for other's problems so let's just say that we tend to people like ourselves and for alcoholics that is usually a drinking buddy first and foremost. It becomes easier to indulge in your habits but harder than ever to quit. Suffice to say, there wasn't a very happy ending. But today, I've acknowledged and accepted my part in that and it's now in the past. I fell to pieces. Every now and then attempting my own version of recovery and starting to build the blocks of my life back up only to come crashing down each and every time. My functionality became limited to getting to the shop and back. I eventually became unable to manage to take care of myself and moved in with family, still continuing the same pattern of behaviour until I was at death's door and I wasn't living but just existing. I was at rock bottom and couldn't take a chance to fall any further.

This wasn't me. What had happened? How had this happened? Who the hell was I? I had lost control I no longer had the answers. I didn't find them in A&E, detox, toxic friends or in the bottom of a glass. I found them through continued hard work and support. I now function as a valuable member of society, a loved family member and a trusted friend. I now believe I only get back what I give and I work hard to achieve a happy life for myself and my family. I bless the days I can get out of bed with a spring in my step, put my make up on and face the world with a smile. Anything else is a bonus.

### **Recognising 'Functionality in others:**

I tend to work with people who are no longer functional in society. In part, this is because it is where the majority of care and support is targeted and often, the stage of addiction people need to reach before they actively seek help. One of the challenges is that addicts need to identify themselves and be willing to accept help before we can intervene. One of my ambitions with this book, and with the rest of my work is that people will be more willing in seeking out support whilst they are functional in society and have something left, other than simply life itself, to fight for.

## **Factor 6 - Relationships.**

Relationships can be hugely complicated and have a dramatic impact on both your addiction and your recovery. It is likely that there are many relationships that will be casualty to your addiction but there are relationships that will be critical to your recovery and maintained well being. It is important that you are able to analyse the role each relationships in your life and which are positive, negative and detrimental to your recovery. It is likely that your relationships will change and evolve during your recovery and in your future and it will be important that you can take control of this and manage personal relationships and those with your care team, effectively.

### **Key Thinking Points**

*It is important that you think through each of these key points and reflect upon them with honesty. Take time to really consider each of these points, make notes if necessary and if you feel comfortable, discuss with others.*

#### How many of the people around you are you honest with?

You need to consider how many of the people around you know the truth about your addictive thoughts, behaviours and consumption. It is important that you think not just about your friends, colleagues or family but also give thought to your doctors, the people trying to support you and those trying to understand your current situation. Additionally, you need to reflect upon the relationships you have with other addicts, are you being honest with them? Do they know that you are struggling with addiction or are you giving them the impression that you are still having fun and are in control of your usage. Constantly being dishonest can be draining, challenging and frustrating and it is important that you consider the impact this is having on your mental health and the control of your addiction.

#### How many people understand and are supportive of your addiction?

It is likely that if you aren't being honest with those around you, few people can be truly understanding and supportive. You may find that the people you most expect to be supporting and understanding are judgemental, frustrated or dismissive so it is important that you find and develop a relationship in which you can be honest, open and get the support and understanding you need. You will find though, that until you are able to be totally honest with someone you will continue to feel lonely, isolated and alone.

#### Have the people around you been directly affected by your addiction?

Although, at this early stage in your recovery you may not be able to address the relationships you have damaged as a result of your addiction, it is important that you consider them as part of your early recovery. You need to accept and understand that many of the individuals around you will have been directly affected by your addiction - in extreme circumstances you may have stolen from them or been abusive but at best, they would have spent time worrying about you

and hoping for your recovery. It is important that you accept these relationships will not be repaired until you have managed a successful recovery and it is important that you approach your recovery feeling comfortable with this and form relationships with the individuals that can be objective, understanding and offer the support you need at this current time.

### **Determining Statements:**

*Having worked through the key thinking points, you need to decide which statement is most relevant to you and read the advice detailed in the corresponding advice section.*

1. Lots of people around me are aware of my addiction and many of them are supportive.
2. Lots of people around me are aware of my addiction but few of them are supportive.
3. Few people around me are aware of my addiction but those who know are supportive.
4. Few people around me are aware of my addiction and they are not supportive.

### **Advice for Recovery:**

*Please read the section below that is most relevant to you based on the statement you have identified with previously.*

#### 1. Lots of people around me are aware of my addiction and many of them are supportive.

This is a good position for you to be in and means you are being honest with yourself and others. Whilst it is important that people around you are supportive, as you approach your recovery, you should analyse all of the relationships around you and consider how they impact you - if they add pressure, if they have expectation and if there is potential for them to have any kind of impact on your immediate recovery. Additionally, whilst everyone needs support, you need to ensure that you are approaching a recovery for you and not simply to please those around you.

#### 2. Lots of people around me are aware of my addiction but few of them are supportive.

This is an incredibly challenging position for you to be in and is likely to add feelings of guilt, shame, frustration and loneliness to those you already have about your addiction. It is likely that the people who know about your addiction have been directly affected by it. It is likely that the people most able to support you will be objective - professionals, experts or individuals who have had similar communities. It is likely that you will be able to repair some of the relationships that have been damaged as a result of your addiction but it is important you realise you will only be able to do this after your recovery, and not before. In addition, it is important that you approach your recovery for you and not in hope of repairing these relationships. As your recovery develops, there will be professionals and individuals that have been in similar circumstances that will be able to help you, advise you and support you in rebuilding the relationships, or alternatively accepting their end, as part of your recovery programme. The initial priority for you, will be to develop a relationship, even if it is with your GP, where you can get the support you deserve.

#### 3. Few people around me are aware of my addiction but those who know are supportive.

This is a good position for you to be in as you approach your recovery and as you become stronger and more stable, it is likely that you will be able to tell more of the people around you about challenges with the support of experts and those that already have an understanding. As you approach your recovery, it is important you consider the impact these people will have on your recover and ensure that you are motivated to achieve a successful and sustainable recovery for you rather than for those around you.

#### 4. Few people around me are aware of my addiction and they are not supportive.

It is likely that you will feel very alone, isolated and frightened in this position. You need to consider who you have told and why they are not supportive. It is likely that they are too involved with your addiction to objectively understand and provide the care, support and insight you need. You need to be assured that there are lots of professionals, and others that have been in the same position as you whom will be supportive, understanding and in time will help you address the relationships that currently seem broken. You should begin by visiting your GP or calling a charity that specialises in providing support and guidance to others. As you begin engaging in your initial positive conversations, you will find the strength and confidence to build more new but positive relationships that will help you through your recovery.

#### **Mark's Relationships Story:**

Up until the point I entered my final rehab, the only person I was honest with was my drug dealer - and even then he only knew how much I was using rather than really understanding the impact it was having on my life. To everyone else, I lied. I made excuses, I thought I was smart enough to pull the wool over their eyes and in return I got accused of stealing, I was judged, I was talked about and some people labeled me as an alcoholic forever. In honesty, I deserved some of it - in the grips of my addiction, the only people that really mattered to me were other users who might trade with me, who might have money when I had none or might give me a drink when I had run dry. When I began my final rehab, I realised that I had nothing to lose and found the strength to be honest with the experts and carers around me. I was honest not just about my drug usage but also about my past, my involvement with crime and violence and my mental health problems.

I began rebuilding relationships about a year into my recovery and another year down the line, am still doing so. There are some friendships that I will never be able to regain - some because of my behaviour and others that prove to be a risk to the ongoing success of my recovery. Some people will always judge me, I know there are people waiting for me to slip up, to have a drink, to have a line and to many, I will be an alcoholic forever. Thankfully, I will be an alcoholic forever but for me, I have realised that I will be a recovering alcoholic forever, a clean alcoholic and an alcoholic that finds fulfilment in helping others. I have reached a place where the people that really matter know that and those that don't, will either change in time or not play a role in my life. It is a bitter pill to swallow but much easier, and less destructive than swallowing a mouthful of vodka.

### **Emma's Relationships Story:**

Throughout my life, as a result of never really feeling as though I've fitted in, I've struggled to be accepted. I was very shy as a child but in my late teen years I had a new found confidence and thrived on attention. I became successful in my early career and enjoyed the praise that came with it. It seems strange that around this time I felt the need to constantly be better than everyone else and eventually this was replicated in my addictive behaviour by constantly seeking bigger, better more of everything. I began to do more outrageous and shocking things for attention. Every time, ending in disaster but that is a whole other story altogether.

I doing so I lost family connections and spent less time with the people who mattered, neglecting them to spend time with those who would tolerate my behaviour and indulge in my antics. I developed so many toxic relationships and in my brief periods of sobriety I would realise the error of my ways and ditch them and try to make amends where necessary. This was obviously deemed for failure because I hadn't really changed. However, all along I was failing to see the key to my long term sobriety. Honesty. I would push people away if they became too close to discovering the real, vulnerable me. I would be argumentative and angry when people tried to provide genuine help. How was I ever going to be able to have a relationship with anyone when I didn't even know the person staring back at me in the mirror? I had many acquaintances and drinking buddies but in reality very few real friends. I'm hoping that in time I can truly show thanks from the bottom of my heart to those who stuck by me through the years.

Upon entering the program I surrounded myself strong and understanding people. This didn't mean only spending time with those in recovery but people who I could learn and grow from. I've strengthened family relationships by demonstrating my willingness to surrender to my powerlessness over addiction and acknowledge the pain I have caused. I hope in time this will reach a point of forgiveness and I hope to learn to forgive others.

These days I have ditched the toxic relationships and the guilt. I simply try to be the best I can every day and welcome positive people in my life. It's not always easy as I know I will still be judged on previous misdemeanours and forgiveness will not always be possible. What matters is that I have people around me to pick me up if I fall and I hope I can do the same for them. Today, I can hold my head up high, without worrying about the opinions of absolutely everybody and say "my name's Emma and I'm an alcoholic".

After all, in the words of Dr Seuss, **"be yourself because the people that mind don't matter and the people that matter don't mind"**.

### **Recognising 'Relationships' in others:**

When I work with others, understanding the people around them is an essential part of getting to know them and understanding their readiness for recovery. I try to understand how many addicts they are spending time with, who is being judgemental and who is being supportive. It is important for me to understand the implications these relationships have, the emotions they have created and how they will affect the recovery of the people I work with. I often see people build relationships within the community of recovering addicts - people tend to gain insight and support from others, build rapport, gain insight and empathy and create friendships and relationships that see them through the beginning of their recovery. Rebuilding other relationships is often more challenging, takes time but as people gain confidence that those they care about have made a change, a successful recovery, I often see people, rebuild bridges and piece their lives back together.

## **Factor 7 - Influencers.**

As you begin your recovery process and look to maintain a clean and sober life, you will find that certain circumstances, smells, tastes, people and situations make it more challenging to control your cravings and urges. It is important for you to be able to identify these influencers and develop the tools and resources you will need to manage them.

### **Key Thinking Points**

*It is important that you think through each of these key points and reflect upon them with honesty. Take time to really consider each of these points, make notes if necessary and if you feel comfortable, discuss with others.*

#### Are you aware of the triggers and risk factors in terms of your addiction?

It is important that you are aware of what can trigger your addiction, where and when you feel most vulnerable and what the biggest risks are to your recovery. You need to be aware of these yourself and share them with those around you so that you can plan either how to cope with or avoid them.

#### Are you easily influenced by other users?

You need to consider how easily influenced you are by other users, how often you see them and how discussing your addiction and the use of drugs and alcohol will make you feel. You should consider the influence of smells, tastes, people, associations and places have and how easily the influence you as well as the role other users will play in your recovery.

#### Do you have coping strategies and tools to help you control your addiction?

It is important that you know how you can cope with cravings and urges as they arrive and for a successful recovery, it is important that you are able to use these independently and in a wide variety of circumstances. You need to consider how you can use them both in the early stages of your recovery and as you begin to rebuild or re-introduce yourself to your life. It is important that you know which tools or strategies work in which circumstances and also need to be aware of when you need to ask for help from those around you, experts or emergency services.

### **Determining Statements:**

*Having worked through the key thinking points, you need to decide which statement is most relevant to you and read the advice detailed in the corresponding advice section.*

1. I have tools to control my addiction and am largely influenced by my own thoughts.
2. I have tools to control my addiction and am largely influenced by others actions.
3. I do not have tools to control my addiction and am largely influenced by my own thoughts.
4. I do not have tools to control my addiction and am largely influenced by others actions.

### **Advice for Recovery:**

*Please read the section below that is most relevant to you based on the statement you have identified with previously.*

#### 1. I have tools to control my addiction and am largely influenced by my own thoughts

You are in a really strong position to create and maintain a successful recovery regardless of what happens in your future. You will need to be aware that the tools you need are likely to change over time so ensure you review them and evolve them as you need to. To help you control the influence of internal factors, you may consider practising mindfulness in the later stages of your recovery to help you remain aware and in control of your thoughts and feelings.

#### 2. I have tools to control my addiction and am largely influenced by others actions.

If you are largely influenced by external factors, you need to consider how your recovery will be affected when they change. Whilst it is a positive step for you to be able to control your addiction using tools and techniques, if you are influenced by the people and things around you, these tools may become ineffective if your circumstances change. It is important that you are validated and motivated by yourself. This is the only way you can be truly accountable for your recovery and being accountable is the only way you can be successful and ultimately long lasting in your sobriety.

#### 3. I do not have tools to control my addiction and am largely influenced by my own thoughts.

It is positive that you are influenced by your own thoughts, feelings and behaviours rather than those of others but without having tools in place to help you control your addiction, it is likely to feel lonely, isolating and overwhelming. It is important that you explore and develop some tools that will help you recognise, manage and control your addiction in various circumstances to ensure you are able to sustain your recovery. You will find that GPs, care workers and psychiatrists will be able to help you develop strategies or else you may be able to exchange tips and tools with other recovering addicts online, in groups or one to one.

#### 4. I do not have tools to control my addiction and am largely influenced by others actions.

This is probably the most dangerous position for you to be in and likely means that you are still in the grips of your addiction. You ultimately need to create tools you can use to help you control your addiction and also become accountable and responsible for your actions in order to make your recovery successful and sustainable. It is likely to be most beneficial to find or develop some tools and strategies that will initially help you control your addiction and then explore, probably with the help with a coach or psychologist, how you can become accountable and what is currently preventing you from doing that. You are currently not in a position where you will be successful in your recovery and need to work with people around you to ensure you gain some control and become influenced by yourself rather than those around you or your circumstances.

### **Mark's Influencers Story:**

I used to excuse my drinking and drug usage to both myself and others - there was always a reason, an excuse or a lie I could craft and share. I had no tools to help me manage my cravings, my feelings and was influenced by anything that gave me a reason to drink. I was happy to turn my phone off and hide, blame my past, my future or something trivial and irrelevant that had happened in the present. As part of my final recovery programme, I was diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder and obsessive compulsive disorder along with the depression and psychosis I was already aware of. Understanding my mental health gave me the insight and control I needed to help manage my addiction. I have medication, breathing exercises and supporters and specialists I can regularly talk to so that I can manage my addiction on good and bad days but most importantly am no longer under any illusions and know that I will never have another drink or another line of cocaine ever again and I know that there are now reasons or excuses I will ever be able to find to justify to it. Having come out of my final rehab, I found the strength and confidence not to hide my addiction, my challenges and my problems with mental health from anyone and have found it much easier to stay strong despite the influence of others. My sobriety means more to me than anything now and as I rebuild my life after recovery, I have more and more to lose by losing it.

### **Emma's Influencers Story:**

To understand my addiction, I felt I had to first understand my mental health issues however, to fully do so, I had to be sober. My problems, thoughts and feeling were raw and painful. As soon as they become too painful, I would once again pick up a drink, longing for that release and escape from the hamster wheel in my mind. I know if I did not get this under control, I would never get well. Slowly but surely, the black dog would creep up on me and left with my own thoughts, would create a virtual miss in my mind. A panic attack would always be a good enough reason to drink. I knew no other way to cope with the feeling of impending doom, the fear of a heart attack and inability to breath. My own mind was always and will always be my biggest influencer. The difference nowadays is that I don't enter it alone. "Do not enter without a responsible adult" as my therapist says! After a lot of work on myself and my diagnosis with depression, anxiety and borderline personality disorder, I have healthier ways to deal with my emotions. They are no longer a reason or excuse to drink. Yes, I have bad days. Who doesn't? Sometimes I feel tired, upset, and angry but these are real feelings and I am armed with the tools to cope.

Whilst I never felt strongly influenced by the actions of others in the "they made me do it" sense, I guess I surrounded myself with the wrong kind of people. This who didn't really care about me. Those who wanted to drink and wanted me to drink with them. Once I entered AA and later the 12 week program, I met some amazing people who now influence my life in a positive way. I have found the humility and courage to embrace and accept these influencers and avoid the people, places and things that made me want to drink. I used to blame these people but now, I

am in control.

I am forever grateful for the strong support mechanism I have and can only hope that in someone else's eyes, I am a positive influence. Just for today, no matter what happens, no one will bring me down so much that I will need to drink.

**Recognising 'Influencers' in others.**

When I am working with others, I find that the majority of people make excuses for their drinking or use of drugs and can be easily influenced even by other members of my group. I find that in my one to one sessions, I find that people admit to using drink or drugs as a way to escape problems from their past or avoid addressing strong and dangerous emotions like guilt, grief and anger. For me, it is essential that people are honest with me so that I can provide them with the help and support they need and send them in the right direction. I know, from personal experience, that being an addict can steal everything but you can still be too proud to say that you have lost everything, can still be too ashamed to admit that your family have all turned their back on you or too scared to say that you can't even imagine an hour going by without drinking or using. Whilst your addiction may have started with others, it is likely that in the end the only person you will be running from is yourself. The challenge for us is, until we know we can't help you and finding a safe and supportive environment is the best place to start being honest with yourself and others.

## **Factor 8 - Outlook.**

Your outlook will help you create both the strength and hope that is needed to help you move forward in your recovery. Your outlook, and its consistency will create the foundations of a mindset that will ensure you recover and address the challenging situations your addiction is likely to have created. Your ability to create a positive mindset may be limited by underlying mental health issues or hope and happiness may simply be too far away from where you currently are. Becoming aware of your moods and our outlook is important and an area you are likely to have to work on for the rest of your life.

### **Key Thinking Points**

*It is important that you think through each of these key points and reflect upon them with honesty. Take time to really consider each of these points, make notes if necessary and if you feel comfortable, discuss with others.*

#### How often do you think about your future?

As an addict, you are likely to only think about where your next 'hit' is coming from and it is unlikely that when you have been in the grips of your addiction, you have been able to think about the future. Thinking about the future is an essential part of your recovery though and it is important that you begin using your imagination, developing your aspirations and looking forward to what you hope for after your recovery.

#### Do you believe your recovery is possible?

You need to think about how possible you think your recovery really is. A belief in possibility is essential to your recovery and if it isn't something you currently have, you need to consider ways of growing and developing it. You should try and remember things you have achieved in the past, any examples of how you have previously overcome adversity and look for similarities between you and other exceptional individuals who have achieved anything that may have seemed impossible.

#### How often does your mood change?

You should think about how often your mood changes and if you can, consider the reasons for this. Consider how your mind feels - whether it is constant and solid or always changing? Do you find you have internal battles with yourself? It is important to consider how these mood changes might affect your ability to recover and sustain your recovery in the future.

#### Are your thoughts mainly positive or negative?

It is important that you consider whether your thoughts are largely positive or negative. Although you are facing a huge challenge and will be experiencing both physical and mental distress, you should consider whether you feel hopeful or hopeless. Do you have aspirations for the future or think the future is unlikely to change from the past? Do you have things you enjoy or things you look forward to however big or small they may be? It is important you share your thoughts and

moods with those around you so that you can get the support you need.

**Determining Statements:**

*Having worked through the key thinking points, you need to decide which statement is most relevant to you and read the advice detailed in the corresponding advice section.*

1. I am mainly optimistic and consistent in my outlook
2. I am mainly optimistic but inconsistent in my outlook
3. I am mainly pessimistic and consistent in my outlook
4. I am mainly pessimistic and inconsistent in my outlook

**Advice for Recovery:**

*Please read the section below that is most relevant to you based on the statement you have identified with previously.*

1. I am mainly optimistic and consistent in my outlook

This is a strong position to be in but it is important for you to ensure you are not masking any emotions, fears or challenges. If you are not in denial but are instead feeling positive about the possibility of creating significant change and having a successful and sustainable recovery, then you have probably won half the battle and have a good mindset for tackling your addictions.

2. I am mainly optimistic but inconsistent in my outlook

It is really positive that you have hope about the future and believe in the possibility of creating significant change in your life. Some inconsistency can be normal but it is important that you explore and understand why your mood changes, what the underlying issues are and if you are able to create tools and strategies for managing your mood or need medication to help you find consistency in your moods. To help you better understand your moods and the reasons for the inconsistency it may be beneficial to create a mind diary so that you can record your thoughts, emotions and the events or circumstances that have led to these changes.

3. I am mainly pessimistic and consistent in my outlook

If you are in this position, it is likely that you will need immediate intervention to help you. You are most likely to be at risk of self harm or suicide and if you are looking for ways to escape or brings thing to an end, you must contact the emergency services. You should contact someone immediately and explain the severity of your situation, asking them for help, guidance and support.

4. I am mainly pessimistic and inconsistent in my outlook

This is a typical position for many addicts to be in as they approach their recovery. It is important that you understand, appreciate and try to increase the inconsistencies in your pessimistic outlook. You need to hang on to your more positive moments to give you the hope, strength and determination you need to get through the initial stages of your recovery and should hope to see your outlook change as you begin to face your addictions and gain some level of control. If your

outlook doesn't change in the secondary stages of your recovery programme, it will be important that you explore possible reasons for your outlook which could include an underlying mental health problem which your care team will be able to help you with.

### **Mark's Outlook Story:**

When I went into my final recovery, I simply thought I was going to die. Prior to that, I rarely thought about anything other than feeding my addiction and my brain was occupied creating reasons, opportunities and finding the finances to make that possible. As I went through my initial physical detox, I began to feel better, my head became clearer and whilst I only ever take one day at a time, I was able to think about the future. Once I had been honest about my past, my thoughts and my feelings, I was able to get the right medication for my mental health which helped stabilise my mood and address some of the symptoms I was drinking to avoid. When I left my recovery programme, I found tools and resources that helped me control my addiction and my mindset, things that helped me better cope with life and ultimately build a future. Recently, I have found the strength to begin forgiving myself, forgiving others and giving back in a way that makes me feel proud and gives me a purpose.

### **Emma's Outlook Story:**

My addiction was a full time job and I couldn't see beyond this. If I ever dedicated any time to thinking about the future, it looked bleak, so I had another drink. I had resigned to the fact that my life was going to be miserable anyway so I may as well just drink so I didn't have to acknowledge it for a while. What made things worse was that I once had everything to live for. The world was my oyster and I could do anything if I just put my mind to it. Anything but quitting the booze. The view had changed from a long, hopeful road with a pot of gold at the end to a dark, empty, bottomless pit where the only way was down. How was I ever to turn this around? Thoughts of suicide were fleeting but the feeling of not wanting to wake up were ever present.

Somewhere along the line someone threw me a lifeline. Someone, something, something inside me? Who knows? All I knew was I had to grab it with both hands and climb with all my might. Upon entering the program, I had surrendered but no bones were made about the amount of work I'd have to put in and this both scared and excited me at the same time. The sun was peeping through the clouds inspiring me to climb harder and faster than I'd ever done in my life. Using my newly developed skills, tools and support mechanism, I learned to take one day at a time. After all, it was early days where getting out of bed had previously been an achievement and getting out of the front door felt like running a marathon. I was encouraged to set small and realistic goals that increased my self-confidence and self-worth. Once the cloud of my alcoholic brain began to lift, I saw hope. I saw hope in others. Slowly but surely I proved to myself that I could change my path and that I didn't have to make the journey alone. I looked forward to getting out of bed, enjoyed talking about what the day had brought and what I planned to do the next day and this was all so new and exciting. I'm not saying my life is perfect now but today, it's perfect for me. I find enjoyment in things I never thought possible. I think about my hopes and aspirations once again. I attend groups, meet amazing inspirational people, have reconnected

with my family and am making amends to people who are in and who have passed through my life. I know I can't fix everything in the past but I know, now, with the right tools and ongoing investment in myself, I can build a better future.

**Recognising 'Outlook' in others:**

The majority of people I work with are consumed and trapped by their addiction and are unable to think about anything else or see past that. I find it useful to ask individuals if they have ever achieved anything in their lives, help them remember what they enjoyed when they were younger, where they found pleasure and what their aspirations were as a child. Whilst few people will think it is possible, it often engages their imagination and allows them to simple explore the possibilities of a future free from addiction. We encourage people to take one step at a time, and one hour at a time initially. As people work through their recovery, I encourage them to keep a mind diary to help them explore their feelings, emotions and potentially identify mental health problems that are lying under their addiction.

## **Factor 9 - Resources.**

Whilst you are recovering, you are going to need access to resources and support. You need to understand which of those you currently have around you and which you need to source either from those around you or the many organisations and charities that offer support. It is important that you consider the resources you have and understand those that will help your recovery, hinder it or prove vital in your progress.

### **Key Thinking Points**

*It is important that you think through each of these key points and reflect upon them with honesty. Take time to really consider each of these points, make notes if necessary and if you feel comfortable, discuss with others.*

#### What is your current financial position?

It is important that you consider your current financial position and the role this can potentially play in your recovery. Whether you have financial assets or not, this will play a role in your ability to recover either by determining your ability to get drink and drugs, your ability to remain independent or the stress and anxiety that can often arise with financial pressure. It is important that you consider the financial resources you have available to you and the role you believe these will play in your recovery.

#### How regular is your income?

A regular income can provide stability and security and whilst you take the time to recover effectively, it is important that you consider how regular your source of income will be and how this will affect your levels of stress, your ability to function and ultimately, your ability to recover.

#### What tools and resources do you have to help with your addiction?

As you recover, you will need tools and resources to help you. It may be as simple as having regular food, heating and water or as complexed as somewhere to live and things to wear. You need to consider what you have, what you need and where you might be able to source them from.

#### Who do you have around you to support you in your recovery?

As you move through your recovery, it is important to understand who is around you that will be able to support you with the resources you are likely to need. Whether it is having somewhere to stay, money to borrow or food to eat. If you don't have people around you that will be able to help, it is important that you understand the role the support services will be able to play in this.

### **Determining Statements:**

*Having worked through the key thinking points, you need to decide which statement is most relevant to you and read the advice detailed in the corresponding advice section.*

1. I have a large number of assets and significant amount of support
2. I have a large number of assets but do not have a large amount of support
3. I do not have many assets but do have a significant amount of support
4. I do not have many assets and do not have a large amount of support

**Advice for Recovery:**

*Please read the section below that is most relevant to you based on the statement you have identified with previously.*

1. I have a large number of assets and significant amount of support

In this position, you are both fortunate and at risk. Whilst you do not have to worry about having the financial resources or assets to ensure you can function and have access to all that you need, the risk is that finances are not a limiting factor in you being able to access the drug or substance you are using. For many, finance is the factor that ultimately causes them to act or at least draws the attention of the services that intervene and provide the care and support you need. To help you with your recovery, it is advisable that you limit your access to funds and consider giving yourself an allowance or else allowing someone else to control of your money.

2. I have a large number of assets but do not have a large amount of support

If you have access to finance at least you will be safe and can reduce the time you spend worrying about financial pressures. However, without the support that can accompany that it is likely that you will be lonely, could be irresponsible and ultimately the finance you have could easily fund your addiction. You need to consider giving financial control to someone else, creating a budget or safeguarding funds for the future. It is important that you seek the support you need and still use the free services available to addicts despite your financial position and engage in the community of recovering addicts as this is where you are most likely to find support and the tools, insight and strategies you need to create a successful and sustainable recovery. You are in a reasonably vulnerable position and whilst your finances don't dictate the need, it is important that you alert the support services of your challenges and allow them to help you.

3. I do not have many assets but do have a significant amount of support

Whilst you may feel that you are dependent on others, you are in a strong position and will be able to make a successful recovery. In many ways, not having independent funds will prove to be a limiting factor in your ability to access the drugs you are addicted to. With regard to the support you are receiving, it is important that this does not hinder your recovery or your ability to think and behave independently. Whilst staying with friends and family is a favourable alternative to sleeping on the streets, it is important that you still alert the services to your situation and try and make it a temporary rather than a permanent solution. There will be lots of professional help available to support you in your recovery so you should be proactive and take it whilst you have the opportunity.

#### 4. I do not have many assets and do not have a large amount of support

If you are in the position, whilst you are likely to feel alone and helpless, you are in a position where you are most likely to surrender and allow the support services and health experts do their job. All of the services, finances and support you need is around you, you simply need to alert charities, the NHS and housing associations of your existence and your challenges and they will be able to help. A word of warning, however, is that whilst there are many people in place to help you, you will need to be proactive in your approach. You will need to go to appointments, get in line and complete forms and interviews in order to get the help, support and finances you need. Do not allow yourself to slip out of this system and ensure you complete the small tasks asked of you to ensure your recovery is delivered to you as quickly and efficiently as possible.

#### **Mark's Resources Story:**

When I went into my final recovery programme, I had nothing. No home, no clothes and no money. I had no one around me other than dealers and users and didn't really know what life would look like when I left hospital - but I knew I had to focus on getting clean and sober. Once I had accepted this, I was able to feel reasonably relaxed about what I had and what I needed. I was incredibly fortunate - a nurse brought me in a jumper for my stay in rehab and I was given a place at the YMCA where I was fed, watered and warm once I left the recovery programme. As the months have passed, I have been able to slowly build up the things I have needed and have found ways of using the standard benefits I have received in an economical way. I am fortunate enough to have friends and family that have been able to feed me and have been generous enough to buy me gifts or donate old clothes and furniture that have helped me slowly rebuild my life and become independent.

#### **Emma's Resources Story:**

Growing up, I didn't have material things in abundance but through a lot of hard work, in my twenties, I was reasonably well off. The houses, the cars, holidays, money in the bank. From the outside I was living the dream but in my head, it was often a nightmare. I would think nothing about heading into town and blowing £1,000 on a new handbag or buying expensive presents for everyone. Looking back, I can see I was trying to gain validation and acceptance. I felt like a square peg in a round hole. A phony and a fake. It didn't do me any favours. It didn't make me happier. But when the money ran out, I continued to seek contentment the only way I knew and eventually was in severe debt. I continued spending a large amount of money on alcohol. When the pot ran out, I'd get another credit card. Eventually I lost everything and lived purely hand to mouth. I've now realised that the material things do not count. Having money didn't make me any happier. It just made me more irresponsible, and now whilst I do not have much to show for it, I do have my sobriety and a level of contentment that money cannot buy. I make do with what I have and have been lucky enough to have generous & understanding friends and family.

I have met so many people in recovery, both professional and personal, who I will never forget

for their generosity in so many forms. Those who have helped without expecting anything in return but I can pay them back by staying sober.

It has taught me to be resourceful, and grateful. I'm thankful for what I do have. If I ever resent spending money on bills or shopping, I remember the times I would willingly hand over my last pennies for a drink. I don't have a car but every time I moan about getting the bus in the cold weather, I remind myself of the miles I would have walked to get supplies.

I'm proactive in my approach and often seek out free services to benefit myself and others. Anything from free meditation sessions to organising country walks or free events. Nowadays I can still smile whilst emptying out the penny jar!

### **Recognising 'Resources' in others:**

It is important for you to remember that you will find whatever you need to make a successful and sustainable recovery and will notice that it is much easier to find help, support and resources when you are clean and sober. My hope is that this book has been the first step in helping you find the most effective path for your recovery and that your journey will be successful. You will be able to find help accessing money and finding places to eat, old clothes and furniture from your GP, your careworker or charities designed to help people like us.