



A Holistic Approach to Recovery: Body, Heart, and Soul

This handout summarises the key concepts discussed in the group session on finding purpose and building a strong foundation for recovery.

1. Why This Matters for Your Recovery

- * Recovery often requires a profound shift in perspective, sometimes described as a spiritual awakening, to find lasting change.
- * Addiction can be understood as losing hope in your future self by remaining stuck in the pain of your past self.
- * While addiction may not be your fault, your recovery is your responsibility.
- * A holistic approach that addresses your physical, emotional, and spiritual needs is essential for optimal recovery. You cannot skip any of these areas.
- * Building resilience and learning to manage stress, rather than avoiding it, are crucial skills for staying in recovery.

2. The Core Framework: Body, Heart, and Soul

The session introduced a simplified model for recovery based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Instead of five complex levels, it can be understood as three core pillars that must be addressed in order:

- * **1. Body (Physiological & Safety Needs):** This is the foundation. It includes your physical health, safety, and security. You cannot work on higher needs if your basic physical needs are not met.
- * **2. Heart (Love & Esteem Needs):** This involves your relationships with yourself and others. It is about connection, belonging, self-belief, and compassion.
- * **3. Soul (Spiritual Enlightenment):** This is the highest level, representing your sense of purpose, hope, and connection to something larger than yourself. This is where a "spiritual awakening" occurs.

You cannot achieve spiritual well-being (Soul) without first caring for your emotional connections (Heart) and your physical health (Body).

3. The Addiction Lens: Breaking Free from the Past

- * Addiction is often a survival mechanism used to escape unavoidable pain, trauma, and



shame from the past.

- * It can be seen as being chained to a "wounded past self," which prevents you from embracing a "potential future self."
- * Recovery involves the difficult but necessary process of cutting the cords that bind you to the pain and trauma of the past.
- * This does not mean forgetting your past or your identity. It means not allowing past pain, anger, and shame to control your present and future choices.
- * By letting go of the past, you create space to build a new future self, one defined by recovery, connection, and fulfillment.

4. Practical Strategies for Recovery

Based on the Body, Heart, and Soul model, the following strategies were discussed:

Caring for Your Soul (Spiritual Enlightenment)

The acronym **SHINE** was presented as a guide:

- * **Self:** Develop a clear and compassionate sense of who you are, separate from your inner critic. Understand your values, purpose, and goals (VPG).
- * **Hope:** Cultivate hope for your future. A lack of hope is a medical emergency. If you have no hope, you must seek urgent help.
- * **Inspiration:** Find what inspires you, what you enjoy, and what brings you to life. Reconnect with your creativity.
- * **North Star:** Establish a guiding set of principles or a "moral compass" based on your VPG to navigate life's challenges without relapsing.
- * **Empowerment:** Build resilience by challenging yourself. The "104% Rule" suggests pushing yourself just 4% beyond your comfort zone (a concept known as hormesis) to grow without breaking.

Caring for Your Heart (Relationships)

- * **Relationship with Self:** Use tools like the "Miracle Question" (How would you behave tomorrow if the cords to your past were cut?) and the "Obituary Question" (What do you want to be remembered for?) to connect with your desired future self.
- * **Relationship with Others:**
 - * Recognise that loneliness is detrimental to physical and mental health and increases relapse risk.



- * You only need a few (3-5) very close, trustworthy friends (Dunbar's Number).
- * Establish and enforce healthy boundaries to protect yourself in relationships.
- * Learn interpersonal effectiveness skills (e.g., from Dialectical Behaviour Therapy - DBT).
- * Cultivate compassion for yourself and others. Holding onto anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to suffer.

Caring for Your Body

- * **Exercise:** There is no excuse not to exercise. It is essential for physical and mental health.
- * **Diet:** Aim for a whole-food, plant-based diet with lean meat and low-fat dairy.
- * **Sleep:** Prioritise good sleep hygiene, aiming for 8 hours per night.
- * **Nature:** Make an effort to connect with nature regularly.

5. Key Take-Home Messages

- * True recovery is a journey that involves your whole being—Body, Heart, and Soul.
- * Addiction is fundamentally about being trapped by your past. Recovery is about embracing your future.
- * Your recovery is your responsibility.
- * Nurture your physical health, cultivate supportive relationships, and find your sense of purpose.

6. Optional Reflection Questions

- * If a miracle happened tonight and the cords to your past pain were cut, what is the first thing you would do differently tomorrow? How would others notice?
- * What would your healthy, recovered "future self" say to your "past self" during a moment of crisis?
- * What do you want your obituary to say about you? What steps can you take today to move toward that vision?
- * What inspires you? What activities make you feel alive? How can you do more of that?