

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

RECOVERY GUIDE

A soft, practical guide to regulation, safety and returning to the Recovery Window across the three Sober Truth pathways.

Breathe. Soften. Return.

I am safe. I am loved. I am held.

THE SOBER TRUTH PRACTICE



Compulsive sexual behaviour • Sexualised substance use • Alcohol recovery

Break cycles. Heal patterns. Thrive.

Coaching and recovery support | Not therapy, medical care or crisis support

SECTION 01

Welcome to the guide

This guide helps me understand my nervous system state, recognise when I am being pulled out of balance, and return to enough steadiness to choose my next recovery action.

1 Read slowly

This is not a test. I use this guide gently, with curiosity and compassion.

2 Notice your state

I learn whether I am activated, shut down, or in the Recovery Window.

3 Practise early

I practise when calm, so the tools are available when risk rises.

4 Reach for support

If I am unsafe, in crisis, or unable to stay safe, I use urgent professional support.

Key idea

A craving, urge or alcohol thought can become louder when I am outside my Window. Regulation can give me space before reaction.

SECTION 02

Contents and pathway map

The same nervous system model is used throughout each Sober Truth programme. The examples change. The practice remains the same: notice, regulate, tell the truth and choose the next honest action.

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The shared movement

From activation towards regulation, from hiding towards support, and from the familiar story towards sober truth.

SECTION 03

Why the Window matters in recovery

When my system is pushed too high or too low, the addictive story can feel true. Learning my Window helps me return to enough safety to pause, reflect and choose.

Safety in the body

Can I breathe comfortably, feel my feet, notice my body and stay with myself?

Safety in thoughts and emotions

Can I feel without believing every conclusion the mind offers?

Safety in environment and relationships

Can I reduce access, ask for support, and move towards safer people or places?

Recovery sentence

My state is information, not identity. If I am outside my Window, I do not need shame. I need regulation, truth and support.

SECTION 04

The three Sober Truth pathways

The same nervous system model applies across all three programmes. What state am I in, what story is the mind selling, and what recovery action brings me back?

Compulsive sexual behaviour

Porn, apps, fantasy, chat rooms, secrecy, objectification, compulsive masturbation, sex workers or intimacy avoidance.

The Addict Mind may say: “Just look”, “You need release”, “This is harmless”, or “No one will know.”

Sexualised substance use

Alcohol or substances become linked with sexual behaviour, disinhibition, risk, apps, porn, shame or secrecy.

The Addict Mind may say: “One drink first”, “You deserve the rush”, or “This time will be different.”

Alcohol recovery

Evening drinking, stress, anxiety, trauma activation, daily habit, first-drink thinking, poor sleep and repeated regret.

The Alcohol Mind may say: “You need this to relax”, “Just one”, or “You cannot cope sober.”

SECTION 05

The zones of arousal

This is the core map. Hyperarousal is too much activation. Hypoarousal is too little activation. The Recovery Window is the zone where I can feel, think, pause and choose.



HYPERAROUSAL

Too much activation

Fight or flight energy, urgency, racing thoughts, anger, panic, pressure, impulsivity, obsessive loops or feeling unsafe.

Notice the state. I do not have to obey the story.



RECOVERY WINDOW

Enough regulation

Able to feel and think, present-moment awareness, curiosity, boundaries, tolerable feelings and asking for support.

Stay present. Choose the next honest action.



HYPOAROUSAL

Too little activation

Numb, flat, collapsed, disconnected, passive, “not there”, low in energy, or finding it hard to think or speak up.

Notice the state. I do not have to obey the story.

SECTION 06

Hyperarousal and the Addict Mind

Hyperarousal can make the internal sales pitch feel urgent. In this state, the body is activated and the mind may start bargaining, chasing relief or trying to escape.

Mind

Racing thoughts, obsessive loops, planning, bargaining and “just one” thinking.

Body

Heat, pressure, tension, restless energy and an urge to move or escape.

Story

“I need relief now.”
“I cannot sit with this.”
“This will fix it.”

Recovery move

Pause, breathe gently, leave the risky setting, contact support, delay acting and reduce access.

Questions to ask

What is my body doing? What is the Addict Mind or Alcohol Mind selling? What action brings me back before the chain continues?

SECTION 07

Hypoarousal and collapse

Hypoarousal can look like giving up, going flat, disappearing or numbing out. Scrolling, drinking or acting out may follow because nothing seems to matter.

This is a state, not the truth of who I am.

Signs

Numbness, heaviness, shame, disconnection, low energy, flatness, silence or withdrawal.

Addict Mind risk

"There is no point." "You have failed." "No one cares." "You may as well."

Recovery need

Gentle movement, warmth, food, connection, light, simple structure and one small action.

Support

Tell someone early. Ask for company, a call, a walk, a meeting, or professional support if risk is high.

SECTION 08

The Recovery Window

In the Recovery Window I am not perfect. I am present enough to notice what is happening and choose a response instead of becoming the story.

Signs I am in my Window

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☒ I can feel and think | ☒ I can ask for help |
| ☒ I can name the state | ☒ I can choose the next honest action |
| ☒ Feelings are tolerable | ☒ I remember my values |

Reflection

What helps me feel safe in my body?

What helps me tell the truth earlier?

Who helps me return to recovery?

SECTION 09

My personal Window map

This page helps me learn my own signs. My answers do not have to be perfect. The aim is recognition: the earlier I notice the state, the earlier I can return.

HYPERAROUSAL

My body

My thoughts

My emotion

My risk

RECOVERY WINDOW

My body

My truth

My support

My next action

HYPOAROUSAL

My body

My thoughts

My emotion

My risk

Daily reflection

Today my nervous system state was

The story the mind offered was

The recovery action that helped was

SECTION 10

Here and now practices

These practices are simple. They are not about performing calm. They help my attention return to the present moment and remind me that support is available.

1 **Centring**

If comfortable, one hand on the heart and one on the belly. Lengthen the spine gently. Breathe slowly and notice the movement of the breath.

2 **Grounding**

Feel the feet on the floor. Press gently through the heels and toes. Let the ground hold some of the weight.

3 **Alignment**

Notice the body from feet to head. Let the spine lengthen. Soften the jaw and shoulders. Breathe.

4 **Walking**

Walk slowly enough to feel the feet, knees, hips and shoulders. Let attention come out of the head and into movement.

SECTION 11

The power of breath

Gentle breathing can help me settle. I practise without forcing calm or taking large breaths. The aim is to create a little more space.

Simple breath

Breathe in gently and let the belly move naturally. Let the exhale leave without force. Try 5 to 10 comfortable breaths.

Bell jar breath

At the top of the inhale, imagine a rounded quality. Let the breath roll smoothly into the exhale, without holding it.

4 x 4 x 4 breathing

Inhale for 4 counts, exhale for 4 counts, for up to 4 minutes. No breath hold. Shorten the count or the practice if that feels easier.

Longer exhale

Breathe in gently. If comfortable, let the out-breath be slightly longer. If dizzy, breathless or more distressed, stop and breathe normally.

A phrase to return to

"I am safe. I am loved. I am held. I can breathe and return."
Use these words only if they feel helpful.

SECTION 12

Getting back into the Window

Different states need different responses. I do not need to analyse perfectly. I notice the state and try one manageable action that moves me towards safety.

Overwhelmed

Sit or stand with feet on the floor. Slowly scan the room and name five objects.

Shaking or trembling

If this is a familiar stress response, breathe gently and add warmth if helpful. Let the body settle without forcing it.

Numb

If comfortable, gently squeeze the forearms or thighs. Name what you can see, hear, smell, touch or taste.

Hypervigilant

Find a supported posture. Look around slowly and orient to the room. Notice where you are now.

Fast heart rate

For an assessed, familiar stress response, feel the floor and breathe naturally. Seek advice for new or persistent symptoms.

Collapse

If physically comfortable, press gently against a wall. Feel support through the arms, back and feet.

Shaking and a racing heart can also reflect substance effects, withdrawal or a medical problem. Do not assume they are stress. See page 18 for urgent support.

SECTION 13

More ways to return

Some states ask for stillness. Some ask for movement. Some ask for connection. I do not need to get it perfect. I need to move one step towards safety.

Disconnected

Slow down. If touch feels comfortable, gently squeeze the forearms, calves or thighs. Walk slowly and feel each step.

Frozen or panicked

Wrap in warmth if helpful. Breathe naturally. Repeat: "I can be here, right here, right now."

Rage or desperation

If physically comfortable, push gently against a wall without aggression. Feel the feet, release the pressure and reach for support.

The urge to disappear

Tell one safe person. Ask for contact or company. If I might harm myself or cannot stay safe, use the urgent support on page 18.

SECTION 14

Regulation into recovery action

Regulation helps me create space. I then take one recovery action before the old chain regains power. If danger is immediate, I seek safety and support straight away.

Pause

Name the
state

Breathe

Reach out

Reduce
access

Next
honest
action

Two paths after activation

Old path

React, hide, bargain, use, act out, drink.

Recovery path

Notice, regulate, tell the truth, reach out, choose.

My next recovery action

My state is

The story is

The next honest action is

SECTION 15

The Sober Truth separation practice

This is the core tool used across all three pathways. I separate the thought, body feeling, emotion, story and need. Then I return to truth and choose one action.

The Addict Mind or Alcohol Mind says

What is the lie, bargain or promise?

My body feels

Where do I feel activation, urgency, collapse or craving?

The emotion underneath may be

What am I feeling, or finding difficult to feel?

The real need is

What do I need: rest, support, safety, food, honesty or comfort?

My sober truth is

What does the grounded part of me know?

My next honest action is

What protects recovery now?

SECTION 16

Daily Window practice

This turns the guide into daily recovery. I do not need a perfect day. I need one honest moment where I notice my state and return to support.

Day	State noticed	What helped	Support used
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thu			
Fri			
Sat			
Sun			

Daily anchor

Breathe. Name the state. Choose support.
Take the next honest action.

SECTION 17

Closing guidance and support

This is a recovery support tool. It can help me notice my state, practise regulation and return to recovery action. It does not replace medical, therapeutic or crisis support.

Carry forward

When I am outside my Window, I need safety, regulation, truth, support and one grounded action.

When to seek additional support

Immediate danger. Call 999 or go to A&E if I cannot keep myself or someone else safe, or for an overdose or severe alcohol withdrawal, including hallucinations, severe shaking or seizures.

Urgent advice. For urgent mental health help in England, call NHS 111 and choose the mental health option, or ask for an urgent GP appointment.

Medical symptoms. Get medical advice before stopping or reducing alcohol if I may be dependent. Call 999 for palpitations that do not go away, or with chest pain, breathlessness or faintness.

Someone to talk to. Samaritans: 116 123, free, day or night. My GP, addiction service or existing crisis team can help with ongoing care.

The Sober Truth Coach

Break cycles. Heal patterns. Thrive.

[NHS alcohol support](#)

[NHS urgent help](#)

[NHS heart symptoms](#)

COACHING AND MENTORING

Would it help to work through this together

Sometimes a workbook helps you see the pattern.
Putting it into practice can still feel difficult.

Your free clarity call

We have 30 minutes to talk about what is happening, what you want to change and whether working together feels right. Ask questions and share as much as feels manageable. There is no pressure or obligation.

Paid coaching and mentoring

I bring together practical recovery tools and learning from my own journey through addiction and recovery. We explore your patterns, agree useful actions and build supportive accountability around putting them into practice.

If we decide to work together, we agree the focus, cost and support included before you commit.

Book a free 30-minute clarity call

calendly.com/thesobertruthcoach/freeclaritycall

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The workbook remains free. Coaching and mentoring are optional.

Coaching is not therapy, medical care or crisis support.
For urgent help, use the support information in this guide.