

Track 1: Module 1

Suburban Shift

Understanding Addiction from the Inside



What is Happening to Me?

A raw look at the moment you realize something isn't right – and you're finally ready to stop lying to yourself.

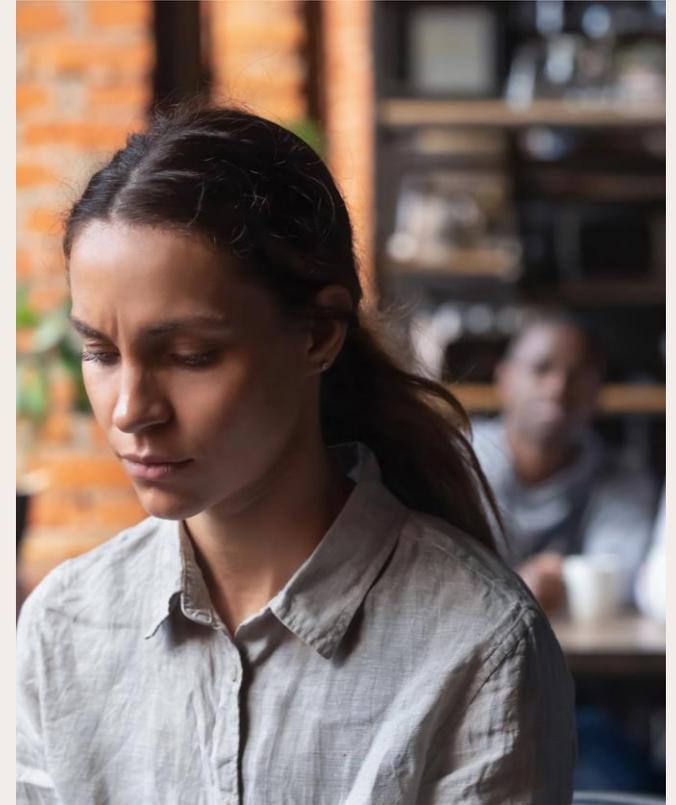
Module 1: Agenda

- Introduction
- Why you can't "just stop"
- How addiction hijacks the brain
- The shame-cycle
- High-functioning addiction
- What this moment means
- Where we go next



You're Not Crazy – You're Addicted.

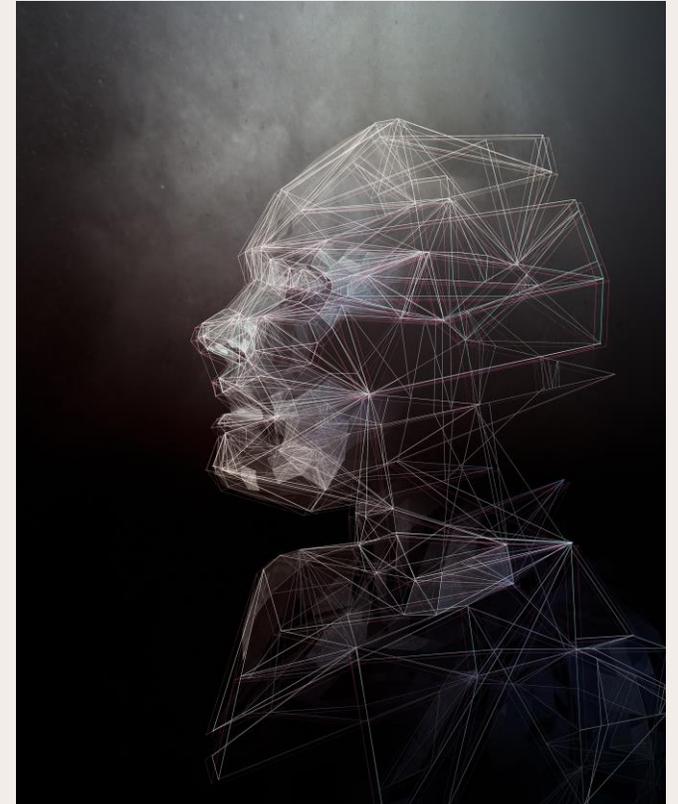
- You've probably asked yourself: "Why can't I just stop?"
- It's not about being weak, lazy, or broken. It's about your brain doing what it thinks it must do to keep you safe – even when it's destroying you.
- Addiction isn't a choice anymore. It might have started as one, but now it's a loop. A survival loop.
- What you're dealing with is chemical, emotional, and primal. That's why willpower alone hasn't been enough.



“I wasn't using to get high anymore. I was using to not fall apart”

Your Brain's Not Broken – It's Hijacked.

- Addiction re-routes your brain's reward system. It's like someone rewired your survival instincts.
- Your brain thinks: *"If I don't get this substance, I'll die."* Not literally – but emotionally, mentally, chemically...it *feels* that way.
- Dopamine – the feel-good chemical – stops being about joy. It becomes about relief.
- Eventually, your brain doesn't even ask if this is good or bad – it just wants to not suffer. It grabs the thing it's learned works (even if it's killing you).



The Shame Loop is a Killer



- Here's the loop:
→ You Use → You feel like shit → You promise to stop → You use again → Repeat
- Shame isn't just emotional. It's chemical. You feel worthless, and the brain remembers: *"I know how to not feel this. Just use."*
- The more you screw up, the more shame. The more shame, the more you use. That's not failure. That's addiction working exactly as it's designed to.
- Breaking the loop means getting honest. Not perfect. Just honest.

"It wasn't the drug that kept me stuck. It was the shame that came after."

Did You Know?



The brain begins forming conditioned responses to triggers within the first few uses of a substance.

This means sights, smells, places, or even emotions tied to early use can unconsciously activate craving later – even after years of sobriety.

These are called “cue-induced cravings”, and they’re one of the biggest relapse risks in early recovery.

Addiction Isn't Always Loud

- Some people crash and burn publicly. Others (maybe you) keep the job, the house, the smile – and die slowly behind the scenes.
- High-functioning addiction is still addiction.
- Keeping it together on the outside while falling apart on the inside makes it *harder* to get help. No one sees it. Maybe you don't either.
- Just because it's quiet doesn't mean it's not deadly.



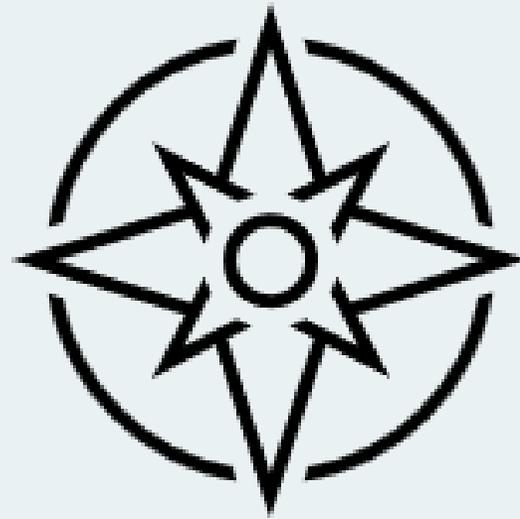
What You're Feeling is Real – But It's Not the End

- You might feel exhausted. Lost. Maybe like you've already failed too many times.
- But here's the truth: If you're still asking what's happening to you – you haven't given up yet.
- This moment – the WTF is going on with me moment – is where it starts for a lot of us. It's the point where the lies stop working, and the truth gets loud enough to listen to.
- You don't have to be fully ready – but you must stop lying to yourself.



“This moment hurts. But it’s the first honest one in a long time.”

Recovery Compass



Recovery Compass

- The Recovery Compass isn't a test – it's your checkpoint on the recovery map.
- Think of this as your GPS for recovery: 'You are here.'
- The questions will help you see where you really are right now.
- The Compass asks you questions in 4 key areas: *Awareness, Honesty, Coping, and Readiness.*
- Your answers will place you in one of 8 profiles: the **Denier, Hider, Rationalizer, Survivor, Tester, Seeker, Builder, or Climber.**
- Each profile comes with summarized results: *Where You Are, Why It Matters, and Your Next Moves.*



Profiles are snapshots, not labels. They're meant to describe a dominant pattern right now, not to define you permanently.

Recovery Compass

Profile Results

Overlap is natural. If you see yourself across multiple profiles, it reinforces the fact that recovery is a spectrum, not a straight line.

<i>The Denier</i>		<i>The Hider</i>		<i>The Rationalizer</i>		<i>The Drifter</i>	
Awareness	< 7	Awareness	7-10	Awareness	≥ 8	Awareness	6-9
Honesty	< 7	Honesty	< 7	Honesty	7-10	Honesty	6-9
Coping	< 7	Coping	< 8	Coping	7-10	Coping	6-9
Readiness	< 7	Readiness	< 7	Readiness	< 7	Readiness	6-9
<p>The Denier is at the very start of the cycle. They don't believe they have a problem, or they refuse to admit it. Excuses and minimalization are their main defense, and risk feels invisible. From their perspective, everything is "fine" – but the foundation is already cracking.</p> <p>Denial is the shield that keeps the problem alive.</p> <p>Excuses hide the damage, but don't erase it.</p> <p>Nothing changes until one truth is spoken.</p>		<p>The Hider knows more than they let on. They've crossed from casual use into patterns that cause issues, but the instinct is still to lie, cover up, and keep two separate lives running. Shame is the fuel here - pretending keeps them stuck and silently drowning.</p> <p>Shame grows stronger the longer you hide.</p> <p>Living a double life always cracks.</p> <p>One real truth said out loud breaks the cycle.</p>		<p>The Rationalizer sees the problem but convinces themselves it's "not the right time" or "not that bad." They're intelligent, often high-functioning, but their brilliance is turned into excuses. They know they're slipping, but they still believe they can outthink addiction.</p> <p>Excuses feel smart, but they're killing you.</p> <p>"Not yet" is the most dangerous lie.</p> <p>Every delay makes the next step harder.</p>		<p>The Drifter is stuck in limbo. They experiment with cutting back or quitting but never commit long enough for real change. They dip a toe in recovery, then retreat. They're curious enough to try but not willing enough to follow through - so they spin in circles.</p> <p>Half-in, half-out keeps you stuck in neutral.</p> <p>Testing recovery isn't the same as living it.</p> <p>One real commitment beats a dozen trials.</p>	

<i>The Survivor (Hopeless)</i>		<i>The Survivor (Willing)</i>		<i>The Seeker</i>		<i>The Climber</i>	
Awareness	≥ 10	Awareness	≥ 10	Awareness	≥ 10	Awareness	≥ 12
Honesty	≥ 10	Honesty	≥ 10	Honesty	≥ 10	Honesty	≥ 12
Coping	< 7	Coping	7-10	Coping	7-10	Coping	≥ 12
Readiness	< 7	Readiness	≥ 8	Readiness	≥ 10	Readiness	≥ 12
<p>The Hopeless Survivor sees the truth clearly. They admit the problem, but they're exhausted, ashamed, and out of tools. They've tried and failed so many times that hope feels like a cruel joke. This stage is dangerous because clarity without action leads to despair.</p> <p>You see it, but you don't believe you can beat it.</p> <p>Awareness without tools becomes pain.</p> <p>Asking for help once can restart everything.</p>		<p>The Willing Survivor is painfully honest and fully aware of their problem, but instead of despair, they're desperate to change. They want out - but they don't know how. This desperation is fragile, with no tools, it risks burning out, but it's also the spark that can ignite real recovery.</p> <p>Your honesty is now your weapon.</p> <p>Desperation can turn into action.</p> <p>One new tool can flip the script.</p>		<p>The Seeker is motivated and ready to fight for change. They've admitted the truth; they want recovery and are starting to pick up tools. But their footing is shaky. Relapse is still near, and momentum is fragile. This is the building stage - it's where things can either take root or collapse.</p> <p>Wanting isn't enough - structure matters.</p> <p>Every small win is proof you can do this.</p> <p>Consistency beats intensity every time.</p>		<p>The Climber is actively doing the work. They've stacked honesty, tools, and readiness into real momentum. Relapses may still be a risk, but they're learning to manage them. This stage isn't about survival - it's about growth, service, and climbing higher.</p> <p>Momentum is your new lifeline.</p> <p>Service strengthens your recovery.</p> <p>Don't get complacent - keep climbing.</p>	

Find your profile across the top, scan down the column, and notice what matches your reality. You may overlap more than one - that's normal. The goal is clarity, not perfection.

Recovery Compass



Profile x Timeline Matrix

<i>The Denier</i> 1	<i>The Hider</i> 2
<i>The Rationalizer</i> 3	<i>The Drifter</i> 4
<i>The Survivor (H)</i> 5	<i>The Survivor (W)</i> 6
<i>The Seeker</i> 7	<i>The Climber</i> 8

<i>Usage Frequency & Escalation</i>	First Experimental Use	Weekend / Occasional Use	Weekday Use	Daily use	Multiple Times Per Day	Waking Up & Using	Taper or Substitute Use	Early Sobriety Attempts
<i>Key Life & Health Events</i>	First Knod Out or Memory Gap	First Major Lie	First Missed Work or School Event	First Relationship Crack	First OD Scare	Arrest or Job Loss	Broken Family Structure	Repairing Consequences
<i>Relapse & Loop Moments</i>	"Just One More Time"	First attempt at Abstinence	White-Knuckle Abstinence	First Relapse	Shame → Use → Shame Loop	Repeated Trying & Failing	Shorter Relapses, Longer Gaps	Breaking the Loop & Managing Risk
<i>Turning Points</i>	First Genuine Admission to Self	Writing or Journaling the Truth	Telling One Safe Person	First Attempt at Help	First Small Success	First Glimpse of Hope	Building Consistency	Sustained Forward Momentum
<i>Risk & Survival Factors</i>	Using Socially	Using Alone	Mixing Substances	No Narcan	Crossing "never" lines	Loved Ones Intervene	Beginning Safer Practices	Narcan-Ready, Avoiding High Risk Situations
<i>Time-Based Milestones</i>	Days of Active Use	Weeks of Active Use	Months of Growing Pattern	Years in Cycle	First Failed Quit Attempt	Long Cycle of Repeated Failures	Longer Gaps between Relapses	Sustained Time Period of Sobriety

Now that you know your profile, here are the first steps that match where you are. Start small, stay consistent, and let these actions move you forward.

Recovery Compass

Profile Actions – Module 1

<i>The Denier</i>	<i>The Hider</i>	<i>The Rationalizer</i>	<i>The Drifter</i>
Admit one truth out loud - even if it's just in the mirror. Saying the words breaks the silence that denial feeds on.	Try a 24-hour "zero-lies" challenge. For one full day, don't minimize, sugarcoat, or cover up your use. Notice how hard it feels.	Write down your "not yet" excuses. (I'll stop after the holidays... when work slows down... once I fix XYZ.") Cross off one. Excuses lose power when they're challenged.	Pick one recovery experiment this week. That could be attending a meeting, calling a counselor, or telling one person the truth. Keep it small and doable.
Write down your top 3 excuses for why "this isn't a problem." Look at them on paper, then rip or burn the page. Make it harder to hide behind them.	Make two lists: "What people think is happening in my life" vs "What's actually happening." Compare them. The gap between the two is where the hiding lives.	Do a cost-of-waiting exercise. Write what another month of use would cost you (physically, emotionally, financially). Put a number to it.	Track one day of use. Write down when, why, and what triggered it. The point isn't judgement - it's pattern-spotting.
Track every "I'm fine." Keep a tally in your phone or notebook for a week. IT will show you how often you're lying to yourself and others.	Tell one safe person one real thing. Doesn't have to be the whole story - but share on truth that you've never said out loud.	Test a 24-hour experiment. Go one day without your substance or behavior. Track the cravings, emotions, and thoughts that come up. That's data, not failure.	Write one "pro" and "con" about your use. Don't write 10 - just one each. Sometimes the single con outweighs all the rationalizations.

<i>The Survivor (Hopeless)</i>	<i>The Survivor (Willing)</i>	<i>The Seeker</i>	<i>The Climber</i>
Draw a trigger map. Write down your top 3 stressors and what usually happens after them (Ex: fight > shame > drink/use). See the loop on paper.	Swap one coping move. The next time you're triggered, replace your go-to behavior with something neutral (walk, cold shower, music, call someone).	Create a "safe list". Write down 3 people/resources you can call when urges hit. Keep it in your wallet or phone.	Lock in your routine. Morning plan + evening reflection. Write it down, make it habit. Structure keeps momentum alive.
Write a "before and after" of your last relapse. What were you feeling before, what did you do, how did you feel after? This helps you see the pattern more clearly.	Carry a pause card. Write "WAIT 5 MINUTES" on an index card. Pull it out every time you want to use. That space often changes the outcome.	Practice one coping tool daily. Pick something small (journaling, breathing, quick prayer, meditation). Consistency beats intensity here.	Call one new resource today. Doesn't matter if it's a peer, a counselor, or a support meeting. Keep building your network.
Ask for help once this week. Doesn't have to be big - text someone you trust, or just say "I'm struggling" to one person. Break isolation.	Start a 2-minute AM/PM routine. Morning: write one word about how you feel. Night: write one word about how the day went. It builds awareness and honesty.	Write your "why." One sentence about why you want recovery (not what others want for you). Put it somewhere you'll see every day.	Shift into service. Share your story with one person, offer support to someone else, or volunteer. Helping others strengthens your own climb.

Next Module Preview: **How Did I Get Here?**

- We're going to dig into your story, to understand what's under the hood.
- Individuals don't get addicted without reason or cause. Something led you here.
- If we can name it, we can start to undo it.



Thank You

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