

Living with opioid use disorder

Opioid use disorder, often called OUD, is a medical condition that can affect anyone—regardless of race, gender, income level, or social class.

Using opioids over long periods of time changes the structure of your brain. It can also change how your brain works. OUD may impact your judgment, decision-making, and self-control.

Even after you've started your recovery journey, living with OUD can be difficult. You may find there are temptations and triggers throughout your day.

Studies show that a combination of medicine, counseling, and support from your community increases your chances for a successful recovery. This resource is meant to help you along your personal recovery journey.

FOLLOWING A CONSISTENT PATH

Recovering from OUD is a journey. Whether you're just starting your recovery journey (for the first time or after a relapse) or you've been in recovery for a while, it may help to think about it in 4 steps:

1

Stop opioid use

- Focus on controlling and managing withdrawal symptoms
- Complete detox and move toward stabilization



2

Learn recovery skills

- Recognize risks and triggers
- Develop a plan, maybe with a counselor, to prevent relapse



3

Stay in recovery

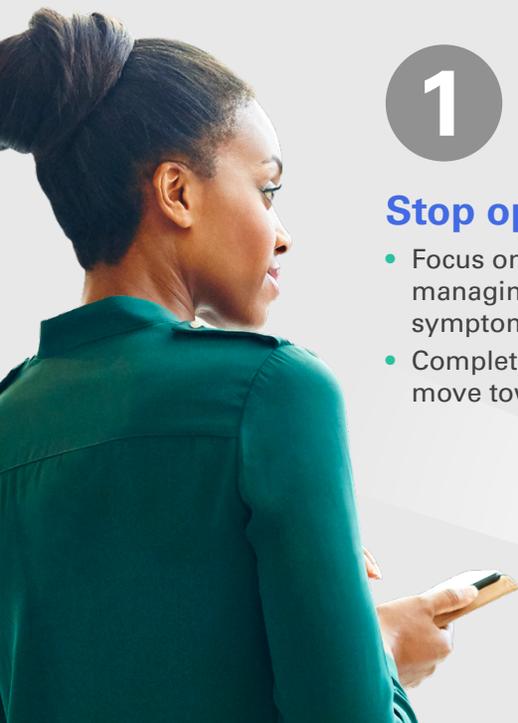
- Create a routine that supports your health
- Build a support network
- Find new ways to enjoy yourself without using



4

Thrive in recovery

- Take advantage of new opportunities with your network, job, and community



Preserving your decision-making power

Humans have a limited capacity for decision-making. Studies show that sometimes we can run out of the mental energy needed to make decisions. This is called “decision fatigue.”

Understanding your limited capacity to make decisions is especially important if you are in recovery. **The choice not to use is a conscious decision that takes mental energy.**

Making the most of your decision-making abilities may help you say no to addictive substances or behaviors. Here are some tips to help you avoid decision fatigue:

Notice when you are at risk

Become aware of when you're most vulnerable to automatic use

Fuel your brain

Eat healthy and regular meals to give your brain energy and help stabilize your blood sugar

Prioritize rest

Get plenty of rest. Try to make important decisions in the morning when mental energy is highest

Find ways to stay relaxed

Try deep breathing, meditation, or yoga to stay calm and capable of good decision-making

Conserve mental energy

Decrease the number of daily decisions by setting up routines. Delegate some decisions to others

Reduce the # of “NOs”

Try to plan ahead to avoid situations and people that may trigger your desire to use

Reduce temptations

Move temptations out of reach or convenience

Recharge with movement

Even just 5 minutes of exercise during the day can increase your mental energy



Creating a strong foundation for your recovery journey

The **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** is a great resource to help in your recovery journey. Based on its work with thousands of people in the OUD community, SAMHSA recommends focusing on the following 4 pillars to help with your recovery. The questions within each pillar can help you build the foundation of your personal recovery journey.



Health

Overcoming your disease and its symptoms, as well as prioritizing your overall health

- What can I do that is active?
- Is there an exercise program that I can begin?
- How can I make sure to get the proper amount of sleep?
- How can I plan to eat healthy? Can I do meal prep and plan more in advance?



Home

A safe and stable place to live

- Is my current living situation safe?
- Does it provide temptations and triggers that make me want to use?
- Is there somewhere else I could live, possibly with a relative or a roommate?
- Would a sober living facility or recovery housing in a dormitory be a good idea for me?



Purpose

Finding and engaging in meaningful and fulfilling activities

- What are my short-term and long-term goals?
- What interests, values, and skill sets do I have?
- Do I have a unique skill set that I can use to give back?



Community

Developing relationships that provide support and friendship

- What activities and interests do I have that might help me find a new, supportive community?
- Would I benefit from joining a recovery community or other community organization?
- Are there charities or organizations where I could volunteer?



Staying in recovery

Staying in recovery involves creating a community of support and continuing to take action to prioritize your health and well-being.

Realizing you're not alone is an important step in recovery. But few recognize how many people around them are willing to help.

Nurturing your relationships can help you build a diverse safety net. Start by thinking about the people already in your life who can help you, and build from there.



Identify the positive, supportive people in your life

A strong support system can help keep you focused on your recovery journey



Connect with peers (virtually and/or in person)

You may meet peers through the recovery community, family, and enjoyable activities



Use available tools and resources

- Find a [local support group](#) or [community-based organization](#) or explore [additional resources](#) to stay connected
- Find a [healthcare provider](#) in your area who can help you decide on a treatment plan that may help you with your journey



Talk to your doctor

Talk to your healthcare provider about treatment options that may be tailored to your needs to help you on your recovery journey

