THE ADDICTION CYCLE

Understanding the cycle is the first step to changing it.

1 TRIGGER

Something happens that causes stress, discomfort, or an emotional reaction.

Triggers can be people, places, things, feelings, or situations.

2 CRAVING

The desire or urge to use a substance or engage in a behavior to feel better or to avoid the trigger.

3 RATIONALIZATION

Making excuses or justifying the choice to use. Thinking, "Just this once" or "I can handle it."

4 USE

Using the substance or engaging in the behavior to get relief, feel good, or numb the pain.

5 SHORT-TERM RELIEF

The use brings temporary relief or pleasure. The emotional discomfort fades—for a little while.

6 GUILT & SHAME

Feelings of guilt, shame, regret, or disappointment set in. Thinking, "Why did I do that again?"

7 THE PROMISE

Making promises to yourself or others that this will be the last time. Saying, "I'll never do it again."

The cycle can feel never-ending, but recovery is possible. With support, self-awareness, and healthy coping, you can break the cycle and create a new path forward.

YOU CAN BREAK THE CYCLE

- Notice your triggers
- Use healthy coping skills
- Reach out for support
- Be kind to yourself
- Keep showing up

RECOVERY IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION.

Every step you take matters. You are stronger than you think.