

I Know I Have an Addiction. I Use It to Cope. Why?

If you're using something to cope, it means one thing first: you found a way to survive pain. That instinct isn't the problem. The tool is hurting you now — and understanding why it hooks you is the first step out.

Why coping turns into addiction

- **It works — at first.** Substances reliably numb pain, quiet anxiety, or create feeling where there's numbness. Your brain learns "this helps."
- **The brain rewires.** With repetition, the brain starts needing the substance to feel normal — not even to feel good. That's chemistry, not weakness.
- **The pain underneath stays untreated.** Trauma, depression, anxiety, grief — the substance covers the wound without healing it, and the wound drives you back.
- **The rebound is worse.** Withdrawal, hangovers, and crashes amplify the very feelings you were escaping — so you use again. That's the trap, and it's engineered by the substance, not by you.

What this means about you

- Addiction is a treatable health condition, not a moral failure. Major medical organizations have said so for decades.
- Wanting to stop and not being able to is a symptom of the condition itself.
- Many people with addiction also live with depression, trauma, or suicidal thinking — treating both together works far better than treating either alone.

You survived this long for a reason. The goal isn't to take away your coping — it's to replace it with coping that doesn't take pieces of you with it. SAMHSA's free, confidential helpline: **1-800-662-4357** (24/7).

In crisis or struggling? Call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, free, 24/7) · Chat at 988lifeline.org

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