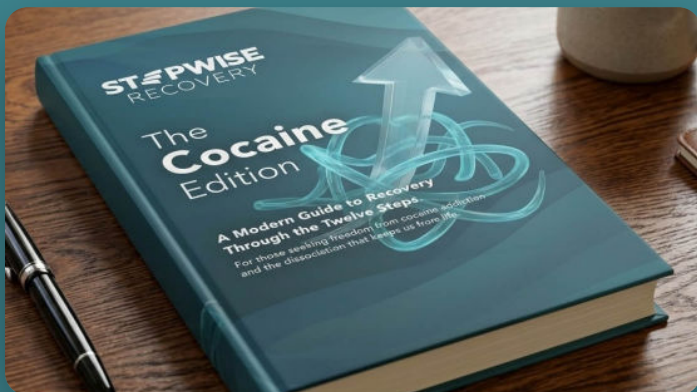


STEPWISE RECOVERY

FREE PREVIEW · NO EMAIL REQUIRED



The **Cocaine Edition**

A Modern Guide to Recovery Through the
Twelve Steps

This preview contains the full contents pages and the complete Chapter 2 — *My Story: From Confidence to Chaos* — exactly as it appears in the printed book.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Front Matter

Legal Notice & Disclaimers.....	iv
How to Use This Book.....	xiii
Quick Reference Guide	xxi

Part I: The Problem and the Solution1

Chapter 0: Preamble: An Invitation to Identify.....	3
Chapter 1: A Medical Opinion: What Doctors Now Understand About Cocaine Addiction	9
Chapter 2: My Story – From Confidence to Chaos.....	27
Chapter 3: There Is a Solution – The Double-Bind Path to Surrender.....	39
Chapter 4: More About Cocaine – Relapse & Insanity	49
Chapter 5: We Agnostics Today – Openness to Greater Power	63

Part II: The Foundation..... 77

Chapter 6: How It Works – The Design for Living.....	79
Chapter 7: Step One – Powerlessness & Unmanageability ..	91
Chapter 8: Step Two – Willingness & Hope.....	103
Chapter 9: Step Three – Decision & Commitment.....	117

Part III: The Work 131

Chapter 10: Step Four – Shadow Work & Moral Inventory	133
Chapter 11: Step Five – Sharing & Relief.....	147
Chapter 12: Step Six – Readiness to Change	161

Chapter 13: Step Seven – Humility in Action	175
Part IV: The Practice	189
Chapter 14: Step Eight – Making the Amends List.	191
Chapter 15: Step Nine – Amends in Action	205
Chapter 16: Step Ten –	
Daily Practice & Emotional Balance	221
Chapter 17: Step Eleven – Conscious Contact	237
Chapter 18: Step Twelve – Carrying the Message.	253
Appendices	271
Appendix A: Prayer & Meditation Toolkit.	273
Appendix B: Resources & Helplines	287
Appendix C: Glossary of Terms	299
About Stepwise Recovery	309

Chapter 2: My Story – From Confidence to Chaos

The Beginning

I need you to understand something before I tell you my story: I wasn't looking to become an addict. I was just a scared kid trying to escape the fear and loneliness that had followed me since childhood.

School was torture. From nursery onwards, I was the weird one who couldn't speak in class but went mental at home. Constant tantrums, uncomfortable in my own skin, not allowed certain foods because they'd send me off the rails. Years later they'd diagnose ADHD and dyslexia, but back then I was just difficult, different, wrong.

I watched other kids make friends, get girlfriends, succeed at everything while I sat in the bottom sets for every subject. My younger brother was the golden boy: top footballer, popular with everyone, everything came easy to him. Meanwhile I was trying on different personalities like clothes that didn't fit. Class clown one week, hard man the next, skater, grunger, anything to find somewhere I belonged.

That feeling of being fundamentally inadequate, of needing to be someone else to be acceptable, that's what cocaine promised to fix. One line and suddenly I was enough. More than enough. I was who I'd always wanted to be.

First Contact

Sixteen years old, house party in Manchester. Everyone was doing it, passing wraps around like they were nothing. My first line was in a grotty bathroom, off the back of someone's phone. Within seconds, everything changed. My anxiety disappeared, words flowed perfectly, I was funny, confident, magnetic. This was who I was meant to be.

The progression seemed manageable at first. Weekend parties became Thursday nights too because the weekend starts on Friday, doesn't it? Then Wednesday became the new Thursday. Within eighteen months, I was the one people called, always holding, always knew where to get more, always the last one standing when everyone else had gone home.

I told myself it was different from proper drugs. You couldn't get physically addicted to cocaine. It wasn't like heroin. You could stop whenever you wanted. The lies we tell ourselves to keep using. The truth is, by the time you realise you're addicted, you're already lost.

The Escalation

By nineteen, I was working in bars and restaurants, perfect for someone developing a cocaine problem. The whole industry runs on it. Long shifts fuelled by trips to the toilet, after-work sessions that lasted until dawn. Everyone was doing it, so it felt normal.

Started with sharing a gram between four people on special occasions. Within a year, I was buying three grams just for

myself on a Tuesday. The money vanished faster than I could earn it. Two and a half grand a month wages, all gone, plus borrowing from anyone who'd lend.

My routine became mechanical: wake up rough, line to function, work wired, more lines throughout the shift, drinks after to take the edge off, more cocaine to counter the alcohol, Valium to finally sleep. Wake up and repeat. The cycle was relentless.

But here's what really happened in those early days: I completely lost control almost immediately. Had people held hostage in my own home during a paranoid episode, convinced they were stealing from me. Screaming at friends with weapons in my hands, absolutely psychotic from being up for days. And the next day? Just apologies and promises it wouldn't happen again. But it always did.

The Double Life

I became a master of deception. Eye drops for dilated pupils, concealer for dark circles, gum for the jaw grinding. Told my family I was climbing the career ladder while I was falling apart. They were proud of their successful son who was actually doing lines in restaurant toilets between serving customers.

The paranoia crept in gradually, then all at once. Started thinking colleagues were talking about me. Then customers. Then strangers on the street. Convinced everyone knew, everyone was watching. Started carrying two phones, deleting messages obsessively, checking windows constantly.

The mad thing was, even when I was certain I was being followed, certain the police were coming, certain I was having a heart attack, I'd do another line. The solution to cocaine problems was always more cocaine.

The Physical Destruction

Two years in, my body started failing. Constant nosebleeds, couldn't smell anything, sinusitis that never went away. The inside of my nose was destroyed, just raw tissue and pain. Started smoking it instead, told myself it was healthier.

Then came the real destruction. From running marathons to unable to climb stairs without chest pain. My nose actually collapsed inward. At twenty-eight, wearing a heart monitor like an old man. The doctor showed me scans of my heart next to a healthy one. Mine looked decades older, damaged beyond my years.

The progression was relentless:

- Year 1: Weekend warrior, still fun, still social
- Year 2: Daily use, calling in sick, borrowing money
- Year 3: Smoking crack, paranoid episodes, violence
- Year 4: Complete psychosis, near death, total isolation

Staying up for three, four, five days became normal. By day two, shadows moved. By day three, voices started. By day four, complete psychosis. Tearing apart my flat looking for hidden cameras, ripping open cushions, unscrewing light fixtures. Finding "evidence" that was just old wires or blinking router

lights.

The Money

The financial destruction was catastrophic. Started with spending my tips, then wages, then overdraft. Credit cards maxed for cash advances. Payday loans at criminal interest rates. Borrowed from family with elaborate lies about car repairs and stolen wallets.

When legitimate credit ran out, things got darker. Selling everything I owned: designer clothes my parents bought me, electronics, jewellery from my grandmother. Each time swearing it was the last time, just needed to get through this week.

Then dealing to fund my habit. Told myself I was being smart, buying wholesale. But you can't deal what you're addicted to. Every batch meant for selling ended up in my lungs. The debt to suppliers grew until I was doing things I can barely write about. Things that still wake me up at night with shame.

Four grand a month, every penny on cocaine. My dealer gave me bulk discounts. Should have been a warning sign when your dealer thinks you're buying too much.

The Isolation

Cocaine starts social but ends in solitude. Those deep conversations at parties became solo sessions in locked bathrooms. The confidence it gave became paranoia that

pushed everyone away.

My girlfriend would talk and I'd be calculating how long until I could use. She'd touch me and I'd be planning my escape to the bathroom. She'd cry about us and I'd be thinking about scoring. "You're here but you're not here," she said. She was right. I was a ghost haunting my own life.

When she left, took her stuff while I was on a three-day binge, part of me was relieved. One less person to hide from. One less person to disappoint. One less obstacle between me and the drug.

Family became strangers. Locked in my room for days, they thought I was depressed. I was, but that wasn't why I wouldn't come out. I was in there, paranoid, knives hidden under cushions because I was certain people were coming for me. They'd leave food outside my door like I was an animal. I'd wait until they slept to retrieve it.

The Mental Collapse

Three years in, my mind snapped. Not metaphorically, literally felt like something broke. The paranoia became psychosis. Wasn't just thinking people were watching, I knew they were. Heard them discussing my every move. Saw cameras in lights, recording devices in smoke alarms.

I destroyed everything looking for surveillance equipment. Landlord found me in the wreckage, crying and laughing simultaneously, trying to explain the conspiracy that didn't exist. Lost my flat, started sofa surfing, then car sleeping, then

properly homeless.

The worst part was the violence. During paranoid episodes, I hurt people I loved. Put a knife to someone trying to help me, convinced they were part of the plot against me. The shame of that still burns.

The Family Breakdown

My parents aged decades watching me disappear. They went from concerned to terrified to defeated. My dad, strongest man I knew, cried when he found me unconscious, pipe still warm beside me.

They tried everything. Changed the locks, I broke windows. Paid for private rehab, I left after three days. Interventions where I'd agree to anything then use the moment I left. They were fighting a war they couldn't win.

My brother stopped speaking to me after I stole his savings. Three thousand pounds he'd worked summers to save, gone in a week. The look on his face wasn't anger. It was grief, like I'd died but my body kept walking around.

My mum said words that still haunt me: "You're not my child anymore. I don't know who you are." She was right. I wasn't anyone anymore. Just a vehicle for cocaine consumption, a ghost haunting my childhood home.

The Rock Bottom

Six stone, that's what I weighed near the end. Six feet tall and six stone. Bones visible through skin, clothes hanging like I was still on the hanger. People stared with pity, the look you give someone dying.

Woke up one morning covered in my own piss and blood, no memory of three days. Dealer calling, worried I'd died owing money. Parents had given up knocking. I was alone with my destruction.

The things I did for money in those final months, I can barely admit to myself. Selling myself, telling myself it was temporary. But you can't get back on your feet when every penny goes on the thing that knocked you down.

I knew I was dying. Not abstractly, but with complete certainty. My organs were failing, my mind was gone, my soul had departed. Twenty-eight years old and praying for death because at least then the wanting would stop.

The Turning Point

Hospital bed, no memory of arriving. The nurse who'd seen me before looked at me with such sadness. "You're going to die if you don't stop." Something about how she said it, like she was already mourning me, broke through.

My dad was there, had been called when they found me. He took my hand and said five words: "I can't bury my son."

In that moment, the wall I'd built around the truth cracked. I

saw myself clearly: a skeleton in a hospital bed, choosing white powder over life itself. The game was over. I'd lost everything there was to lose.

"I need help," I said. Words I'd never meant before. "I can't stop and I'm going to die."

Real tears came then. Not self-pity tears of comedowns, but tears of complete defeat. And in that defeat, finally, impossibly, was hope.

The Surrender

That same day, straight from hospital to a meeting. Church hall, circle of chairs, smell of bitter coffee. I was shaking, sweating, probably stank. Nobody cared. They'd all been where I was.

When they spoke about powerlessness, about the obsession, about choosing drugs over everything, I knew I was home. Different substances but same disease. They weren't bad people trying to be good. They were sick people trying to get well.

Someone said the craving is like wanting to scratch an itch that's killing you. That was it exactly. Cocaine had become the problem and the solution, the poison and the medicine, the thing killing me and the only thing keeping me alive.

They gave me a white keyring and told me to keep coming back. I did. One day, one meeting, one moment at a time. And slowly, impossibly, it began to work.

The Truth About Cocaine

Here's what I know now: cocaine is the perfect liar. It promises confidence but delivers paranoia. It promises connection but creates isolation. It promises success but guarantees destruction.

That first line that made you feel like yourself? That wasn't you. That was the drug hijacking your brain's reward system. Every line after was just chasing that first lie, getting further from yourself with each attempt.

The physical damage can heal. The heart can recover, the nose can repair, the brain can rewire. But learning to exist without chemical confidence, to socialise without stimulants, to be yourself without enhancement, that's the real work.

I'm three years clean as I write this. Not counting days anymore, just living them. Building a life I couldn't have imagined when I was paranoid and desperate. Not a perfect life, but a real one. Present for all of it.

If you recognise yourself in this story, if you're reading this between trips to the toilet for another line, timing your use to avoid the crash, justifying everything with elaborate lies, you're not alone. You're not uniquely broken. You're not beyond help.

I thought I was. I was wrong. There is a solution.

That's what comes next.

Chapter 2: My Story

If you see yourself in this story, know that recovery is possible. Turn the page to discover the solution that has worked for thousands who thought they were beyond help.

Ready to go deeper?

What you've just read is one chapter of nineteen. The full book walks the complete path — from understanding what cocaine does to the brain, through every one of the Twelve Steps, to rebuilding a life you don't need to escape from.

- 19 chapters, 350 pages — written by people who have recovered from cocaine addiction
- The complete Six-Lens Framework applied to every Step
- A medical chapter on what doctors now understand about cocaine
- Practical tools, honest stories, and a quick-reference crisis guide

Get the full guide

stepwiserecovery.com/guides/cocaine-edition

Available in paperback and digital — from £9.99

Our 1-in-10 Pledge. For every ten guides sold, we donate one to someone who can't afford it — through treatment centres and prison recovery programmes.

Need help right now?

Samaritans: 116 123 (free, 24 hours) · FRANK: 0300 123 6600
Narcotics Anonymous UK: 0300 999 1212 · SHOUT: text 85258

The Twelve Steps referenced in this book are paraphrased and adapted. Stepwise Recovery is not affiliated with, endorsed by, or connected to Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, or any Twelve Step fellowship. © Stepwise Recovery Ltd 2026. All rights reserved.