ADDICTIONS

What is addiction? When do you call yourself an addict, and when do you realize you need help?

According to the American Society of Addiction Medicine, addiction is a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and a person's life experiences. People with addiction use substances or engage in behaviors that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences.

When most people hear the word addiction, they think of someone strung out on drugs or passed out drunk in a gutter. But addiction comes in many forms, and some of them aren't obvious to anyone, sometimes not even to the person struggling.

I've lived as what's often called a "functioning addict." From the outside, I appeared in control, healthy, even successful. That's why when I admitted to having addictions, some people didn't believe me or took it lightly. But addiction doesn't always look like rock bottom.

I don't love labels, and the word addiction can carry a heavy stigma. But I've come to understand that not every habit that becomes addictive starts out as harmful. Some, like exercise or healthy eating, can seem beneficial. But when they cross into obsession and start affecting your physical health, mental state, or relationships, that's when it becomes a problem.

Aside from substances like drugs and alcohol, there are countless behavioral addictions: gambling, sex, food, shopping, social media, technology. The list goes on. And in today's world, smartphone and social media addiction is probably one of the most common, yet overlooked.

A lot of this can be traced back to dopamine, the brain's reward chemical. Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are designed to stimulate the brain's reward system, creating cycles of anticipation, validation, and return. Every "like," comment, or view feels like a hit of validation. It's no wonder we keep going back for more. Even the simple ping of a notification can trigger a rush - pulling us into a cycle of craving connection, approval, or distraction.

Addictions as Adultery

We call them addictions. God calls them adultery.

Addiction isn't just about unhealthy habits: it's about misplaced love. Every time I ran to alcohol, drugs, sex, porn, perfectionism, or people-pleasing for comfort, I was essentially saying, "This will satisfy me more than God can." That's not just bondage; that's spiritual adultery.

Scripture reminds us of this hard truth:

"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."
James 4:4

When we give our hearts, minds, and bodies over to something other than Christ, we cheat on the One who loves us most. Addiction is a false covenant. It promises satisfaction but delivers emptiness. This does not mean God abandons us in addiction, but that He loves us enough to call us back from anything that competes for our hearts. It mimics intimacy, promises relief, and demands loyalty, yet never truly loves us back.

For me, addiction always came down to worship. What was I worshipping at that moment? Was it control? Numbness? The illusion of love? The rush of performance? Each one of those was a substitute savior. Each one pulled me deeper into shame and further from freedom.

But God, in His mercy, began to expose the lies. Addiction told me I couldn't live without it. Jesus told me I couldn't truly live with it. One by one, He's been breaking those spiritual ties, dismantling those idols, and teaching me that freedom doesn't come from numbing my pain; it comes from surrendering it.

Addiction is adultery.

But deliverance is reconciliation. Every chain broken is another vow restored to the Bridegroom who has never stopped loving me.

Witnessing the Grip of Addiction

Even as I faced my own struggles with addiction, I watched how its grip affected others around me. While my own addiction was more private and my parents didn't fully know or understand it until I began speaking publicly, a family member's struggle was more evident.

I saw how addiction didn't just impact the individual; it rippled through the entire family, touching friends, loved ones, and anyone who cared deeply for them. Enabling behaviors, frustration, worry, and heartbreak all became part of the unspoken daily reality. I prayed daily for their salvation and for the chains of addiction to be broken. I also noticed how it affected my parents, how much they cared, and how deeply they felt the pain of watching someone they loved struggle.

Addiction is a stronghold, and I came to understand how demonic its grip can be. Thankfully, today that person is free from its influence, and seeing that deliverance has fueled my deep passion to connect with those who suffer, including myself. I know firsthand what it feels like to watch someone struggle, to feel powerless to help them, and to hope and pray for their freedom.

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Alcohol Abuse: Numbing Pain and Unlocking Truths

How alcohol became both a refuge and a confessional, and the journey from dependence to deliberate sobriety.

Alcohol was one of the first ways I coped with the pain and trauma in my life. Early on, it became a tool to numb difficult emotions and escape from the turmoil that had been building since childhood. Growing up in Ireland, drinking underage is quite common and culturally not really frowned upon, so it didn't feel out of the norm to start drinking quite young.

Alcohol soon quietly held sway over my emotions. For me, it became the only time I could truly feel and express my emotions. It was when I could let the anger of my abuse and the pain of my childhood surface.

One night in the UK, when I was in my early twenties, stands out with painful clarity. I drank until I was completely intoxicated, and I uncontrollably revealed to some friends the secret I had carried in the deepest corners of my heart: my childhood sexual abuse. They assumed my father had been involved, simply because of the way I had spoken about men and the protective walls I had built around myself. That assumption cut me to the core and made me furious, because my dad had done nothing but protect me when he discovered the truth. In that night of reckless honesty, every ounce of fear, anger, and shame I had buried for years poured out. I was a raw, unrecognizable mess, so drunk that I blacked out entirely, with no memory of them taking me home and putting me to bed.

That night showed alcohol's dual nature: it was both a numbing tool and a forced confessional. It allowed me to speak truths I had long held inside, even if it left me feeling ashamed and hating myself afterward. I realized it unlocked emotions I couldn't otherwise access, but the cost was high, and the relief was fleeting.

During my time in the UK, I drank pretty heavily not only on nights out but at every show I was playing. This pattern began to trickle into the days when I wasn't performing, and alcohol became a normal part of my socializing and daily life. Even if I wasn't getting drunk every night, it was something I was doing almost every day, a constant background presence in my routines.

When I joined Thundermother in Sweden, alcohol was everywhere. It was freely offered in every dressing room, backstage, and after shows. I used to receive a full bottle of Jameson whiskey at every venue on tour, and taking shots became almost a ritual, a way to warm up before performing, and I noticed that my voice seemed "normal" only after a few drinks. It was an insidious cycle: on tour, it felt like part of the job, part of the camaraderie. But once I was off tour and back on my own, I realized I was drinking every night, even alone, simply out of habit. What had started as a coping mechanism and occasional release had quietly evolved into a full-blown addiction.

In later years, drinking shifted from addiction to conviction. Alcohol was no longer a compulsive escape but a choice I approached carefully, grounded in self-awareness and faith. Staying sober became an intentional practice, not because I was chained to a bottle, but because I wanted to maintain clarity, emotional honesty, and spiritual health.

Alcohol had once been both a refuge and a confessional, but through healing and faith, I found a deeper, lasting source of strength that no drink could ever provide. Sobriety, for me, became less about rules and more about relationship: choosing clarity over escape, and presence over numbing.

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Perfectionism: The Hidden Addiction

Striving for flawlessness and how it hijacked my self-worth for years.

One of the most intense addictions I've battled, and one that ruled my life for years, is perfectionism.

The American Psychological Association defines perfectionism as a broad personality trait characterized by striving for flawlessness and critical self-evaluation, often driven by concerns about others' opinions.

That was me to a T. I needed to be perfect. Everything in my life had to look perfect, sound perfect, feel perfect. If it didn't, I felt like a failure. And when I failed even in small ways, I punished myself. Hard.

Growing up, I would physically hurt myself or destroy things when I made a mistake on a school assignment. I now see just how distorted my self-worth was. I didn't believe I had value unless I was performing at 100%. Like many other addictions, perfectionism escalated. The "high" of achieving something wore off quickly, so I pushed myself harder, set bigger goals, and beat myself up when I didn't reach them. My self-esteem became directly tied to my achievements.

Today, I still catch traces of it, but I don't let it run the show. I've learned to let go of the idea that people will think less of me if I don't hit 100%. I've learned that being human is okay. That my friends and loved ones don't care if I'm flawless. And most importantly, I don't need to be perfect to be worthy. What once felt like discipline, I now recognize as fear dressed up as excellence. God didn't call me to be flawless. He called me to be faithful.

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Food and Binge Eating Disorder: Comfort, Control, and Healing

The complex relationship with food, emotional triggers, and the path toward mindful eating and self-compassion.

Food addiction is one of the most overlooked and least understood types of addiction. People don't tend to take it as seriously as others, but in my experience, it can be just as destructive. The tricky part is, unlike drugs or alcohol, you can't avoid food. We need it to live. That makes it an addiction that's incredibly hard to escape from. The very thing you are trying to manage is also the very thing you need to consume to stay alive, which makes healing especially challenging.

Food has been both a comfort and a battleground in my life. I developed a complicated relationship with eating from a young age. I wasn't taught how to manage my emotions, so I used food to soothe myself. Later, I used restriction and bingeing to feel in control or to punish myself.

Culturally, I grew up in a home where we were expected to finish everything on our plate, whether we were hungry or not. Wasting food simply wasn't an option. I was reminded often of the starving children in other parts of the world who would love to be in my position, and that created a deep sense of guilt around leaving anything behind. That mindset still lingers today. It pains me to see plates half-eaten in restaurants, especially here in America where food waste is rampant.

But having a complex around food isn't healthy either. I'm learning now to find balance, to honor my body's signals and stop eating when I'm full, rather than forcing food into my system out of guilt or habit. It's a work in progress, but one that brings more peace and freedom with each step.

Binge eating became one of my most dangerous addictions. It wasn't about hunger. It was emotional. I could eat until I felt physically sick, and I still wouldn't stop. There were moments I couldn't breathe from the pressure in my stomach. One time, I even collapsed from eating too much too fast.

I had convinced myself I could "balance it out" by over-exercising or restricting the next day. It was a vicious cycle. Shame would follow every episode, and I'd isolate myself, too embarrassed to admit how bad it had gotten.

Eventually, I sought help. I came to realize that food wasn't the enemy; my relationship with it was. I had tied so much of my worth to how I controlled what I ate, how I looked, or what the scale said. Now, I'm learning to eat with mindfulness and grace. I no longer weigh myself. I focus on how I feel, not just how I look.

As I've gotten older, my body has naturally changed, and I'm learning to accept the woman I'm becoming. Some days, it's easier than others. It's still a journey, but one that I now walk with far more compassion toward myself than I ever did before.

It's no surprise we can become addicted to food. Highly palatable foods can activate the brain's reward pathways, including those involving dopamine, which may contribute to patterns of craving and compulsive eating. The comfort is real, even if it's temporary.

When I tell people I've struggled with binge eating, I'm often met with disbelief or worse, laughter. Some people assume I'm joking because I don't "look" like someone who had a food addiction. In fact, most think I don't eat enough. But that couldn't be further from the truth. Food has always been a comforter in times of stress, a filler in moments of loneliness, and a quick source of happiness when I couldn't find it anywhere else. For someone who's never experienced this, it may sound simple: just stop eating, right? But it's like telling an alcoholic to just stop drinking.

Social settings were a trigger. Despite the discipline I've developed in so many areas of my life, food is the one that has tested me the most. I've gone so far as to throw a half-eaten bag of chips in the

trash, only to dig them out minutes later. Eventually, I started pouring something gross over the food just to force myself to stop. It may sound extreme, but it was my reality.

These days, if I eat a full bag of chips or overconsume, I do it with grace. I don't punish myself. I've learned that when we eat from a place of love rather than guilt, our bodies respond differently. Stress around food can affect digestion, appetite, and our relationship with eating, something I didn't fully understand until much later in life.

As a child, I could eat anything and never gain weight. I didn't think about calories. I loved food. It wasn't until adulthood that it started becoming a problem.

One of my biggest challenges hasn't just been what I eat; it's *how* I eat. For years, I rarely sat down to enjoy a meal. I was constantly eating on the go, in the car, while cooking, standing at the kitchen counter. There was no mindfulness, no presence, just habit and survival mode. But that's something I've been working on. I'm learning to slow down, to sit, to be present, and to actually savor my food. It really does make a difference.

Over time, I've seen many counselors, but it wasn't until I met with a nutritional therapist who specialises in eating disorders that things finally started to click. During our first session, the very first question he asked me was about my relationship status. I told him I was single and had been for a while. Without missing a beat, he gently acknowledged what I already knew deep down: loneliness was playing a major role in my food struggles.

At first, he wasn't even sure he could help me. He said I was incredibly well-informed and self-aware. But as I was leaving the clinic, I began bingeing in my car, right there in the parking lot. In my frenzy, I nearly hit him with my vehicle as I was pulling out. The clinic called an hour later and urged me to return as soon as possible. At that moment, he realized just how serious my condition really was.

We began meeting twice a week, and for the first time, I started to feel a shift. Instead of only focusing on the mental side, we began addressing the physiological aspects: how my body was responding, not just my mind. It didn't bring instant healing, but it sparked progress.

One of the hardest steps I took was cycling off fasting/intermittent eating. My body had grown so accustomed to extended periods without food that eating more regularly felt wrong. I felt guilty, like I was breaking a rule. But gradually, I began to notice positive changes, one of the biggest being the return of my menstrual cycle after years of absence. That was a huge breakthrough. It was my body telling me, "Thank you for nourishing me."

Eventually, I returned to intermittent fasting, but this time with a completely different mindset. Today, I no longer binge. Social situations around food no longer terrify me. I have healthy boundaries in place, and most importantly, I've stopped punishing or shaming myself. In those settings, I pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide my self-control.

My faith played a massive role in this healing journey. Learning to see my body as a temple, respecting it, and inviting God into my healing process brought the transformation I had been

searching for. I believe food struggles are not just physical or mental; they are deeply spiritual. And when I surrendered those chains to Him, He helped me break free from the bondage I had carried for far too long.

If you've battled food addiction or disordered eating, please know this: you are not suffering alone. And if you ever feel led to share your story, I encourage you to do it. There is still so much stigma surrounding this subject. Your voice could be the very thing that helps someone else feel seen, understood, and less ashamed.

It certainly would have helped me. If food is still a battleground for you, healing does not mean immediate peace; it means inviting truth and compassion into the fight.

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Weighing Myself and Counting Calories: Chasing Control, Losing Peace

How obsession with numbers replaced nourishment, and the journey to freedom from scales and tracking.

As previously mentioned, there was a time when I became obsessed with the scales. I was never particularly concerned about my weight in terms of size or appearance, but the numbers held a strange power over me. Seeing even a slight change, up or down, would affect my mood for the day. It became a game, a daily competition with myself. And because I'm so naturally competitive, I had to check every morning, sometimes even more than once, just to see if I had "improved" since the day before.

I wasn't chasing thinness. I was chasing control.

Along with weighing myself, I also fell into the trap of counting every single calorie I consumed. Every bite was calculated, measured, and tracked. I could tell you the exact number of calories in a banana, a tablespoon of peanut butter, or a piece of dark chocolate. Food stopped being enjoyable. It became math. I wasn't eating to nourish myself; I was eating to hit a number. And if I went over that number, even by a little, I'd feel like I had failed.

The anxiety around food was overwhelming. I'd spend hours thinking about what I had eaten or what I would be "allowed" to eat next. It drained my joy. It took up space in my mind that could have been filled with peace, creativity, or connection. I know I'm not alone in this. So many people live under that quiet torment, where food becomes fear instead of fuel.

Eventually, I realized how unhealthy these habits were. They no longer served me, and they certainly didn't bring peace. Today, I don't own a set of scales and I don't count calories. I don't weigh myself unless absolutely necessary. The only time I know my weight is when I'm at a doctor's office for a check-up.

During one doctor's appointment in 2025, I had to step on the scale. I glanced at the number and, for a brief moment, felt disappointed. I had expected it to be lower. But I caught the thought

before it could spiral. I reminded myself that my value is not tied to a number on a machine or a number in an app. That old mindset no longer rules me.

This is why I've made the decision never to keep a scale in my home or track my food obsessively. I know myself too well. For me, it's not about the weight; it's about the mindset. And I refuse to let comparison, even with my past self, take away from the freedom I've worked so hard to reclaim.

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Exercise: From Lifeline to Obsession to Balance

How fitness served as escape, discipline, and eventually a source of joy and spiritual alignment.

Exercise, for me, is far more than a daily habit; it's a lifeline. It has been a consistent outlet throughout my life, one that began in childhood and never let up. Sports were woven into my early years, from GAA football, camogie, and basketball to Irish dancing and eventually competitive running, both cross-country and track. I didn't plan to be a runner, but after excelling in a school PE class timed trial, my coach encouraged me to join the cross-country team. That single nudge changed the trajectory of my life.

What started as a healthy discipline became a necessary escape from the chaos around me. It kept me out of trouble and gave me a reason to stay focused. But over time, it also morphed into an obsession. I became addicted to the rush of winning, of pushing harder, and being better than I was the day before. I chased exhaustion like it was a badge of honor. If I wasn't wiped out by the end of a session, I felt like I hadn't done enough.

Even now, I wrestle with that mindset. I've gotten better at listening to my body, but there are still moments where the drive to feel the high of physical exertion overrides common sense. That's why I emphasize balance, not just for others, but to remind myself.

My routine isn't average, and I know that. It's structured like that of a professional athlete, and I don't expect anyone else to follow it. But I also know what works for me, both physically and mentally. When I'm consistent with movement, I feel strong, focused, and mentally sharp. It helps regulate my emotions, combats anxiety, and gives me purpose.

Wherever I go, I find a way to move. Whether I'm traveling for shows or on a tight schedule, I make time for fitness because it centers me. I'm a creature of habit, and movement is my medicine.

But I've also learned that exercise, like anything, can become unhealthy if it's driven by fear, shame, or obsession. And I've had to reckon with that, especially during times of extreme fatigue and burnout. I've suffered the consequences of pushing too far: hospital visits, panic attacks, and even rhabdomyolysis. So I say this from a place of experience: movement is powerful, but only when paired with rest, nourishment, and self-awareness.

Exercise is my way of connecting body, mind, and spirit. It's where I process, release, and rebuild. And today, I treat it with more reverence than I ever did before. It's no longer punishment; it's partnership.

Learning to rest has been one of the hardest things for me. I was raised in an environment where being busy was equated with being productive, and productivity meant value. Slowing down made me feel guilty, as though I wasn't doing enough. But the truth is, rest is not weakness. It's obedience. Even God rested. And for someone like me, with a high-performance mindset, learning to rest was just as much a discipline as learning to train.

Now, I listen earlier. I no longer glorify exhaustion. I give myself permission to take a day off and observe the biblical Sabbath. I spend six days a week in the gym lifting weights, while on the seventh day, I simply walk and use the sauna without doing any weight training. Rest, I've learned, is sacred. It is where healing happens.

As for body image, this has probably been my longest war. Growing up, I hated the reflection staring back at me. No matter how fit I was, I could always find flaws. Even when I achieved my most "chiseled" physique, I still felt unworthy. But the closer I got to God, the more I began to understand beauty in a different way. Not the world's version, but His.

I've stopped chasing a body that looks perfect and started stewarding a body that feels strong, capable, and at peace. I remind myself daily that my worth isn't tied to my waistline or how lean I look in a photo. The scale doesn't define me. His Word does. That being said, I still enjoy looking lean and fit, and I appreciate feeling good about my appearance. It gives me a healthy boost of confidence.

Today, I move for joy, not punishment. I rest because I trust. I eat because I love my body, not because I'm trying to shrink it. And I keep my eyes on the truth when the lies creep back in. If you're navigating this journey, give yourself grace. It's not about being perfect. It's about becoming whole. And wholeness doesn't happen overnight; it's built one surrendered day at a time.

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OCD / Type A / Compulsive Planning / ADHD: Anchoring Through Structure

Managing control, routines, and wiring differences while learning to give yourself grace.

For as long as I can remember, I've struggled with obsessive tendencies and a deep need for structure. As a child, I would not leave the house unless my socks matched my underwear, down to the colors and patterns. My clothes were always laid out the night before, my school bag packed, and my lunch organized. Everything had to be just right.

Looking back, I now see that was my way of feeling in control. When everything around me felt unpredictable or overwhelming, routine became my anchor. And truthfully, it still is. Even today, all my clothes and food are prepared the night before. I'm meticulous in being organised. If I'm traveling, I start packing in advance, making checklists and double-checking everything. And when I'm out on the road, I keep as close to my daily routine as I can. Some people might find that stressful, but for me, it's calming. I sleep better knowing things are ready. I don't want to make decisions in the morning. I just want to get up, do my morning routine, and start the day from a place of calm.

I have many rituals. If I don't get through my list or if something unexpected derails my schedule, it can cause me stress. But I've had to learn that not everything will go as planned and that's okay. Each day brings new tasks and unexpected challenges. I've learned to prioritize what has a deadline and give myself grace on the rest.

Because I run my brand and career independently, there's no such thing as a clear start or finish time. It's all on me. So I've become very Type A when it comes to time management and planning. I don't cope well with last-minute changes, especially when someone asks to move a meeting earlier or later. I've tried to become more flexible over time, but when people say, "Just go with the flow," it irritates me. If I lived like that, nothing would get done!

What many don't see is that I'm often working around other people's schedules too. When someone cancels or shifts things unexpectedly, it has a domino effect, and in the music industry, that can be damaging. You don't want to gain a reputation as someone who's always canceling or running late. People remember that. That's why I've built a system that works for me as best as possible. It's not about being rigid; it's about being reliable. Structure helps me show up with excellence and integrity, and it keeps me from spiraling into stress or disorganization. It's about protecting my time, energy, and mental wellbeing. Structure helps me stay grounded.

There are days and weeks, however, when my schedule becomes busier than I'd like. During those times, I often feel the enemy trying to keep me in a state of anxiety over my workload or the days ahead. That's when I have to pray harder, and God usually reminds me to focus only on the day at hand.

People often say my routine would stress them out, but for me, it's what brings peace. A lot of days I physically write down my schedule so I stick to a 'plan' because when I don't have a structure in place, I lose time and then end up upset with myself for not being productive. So I'm learning to give myself more margin. Life is unpredictable, and building in space for grace has helped me immensely.

Growing up, rest wasn't something we really practiced. We were always on the go. I got used to being busy, and even now, I wrestle with feeling guilty for sitting down to relax. It's like I have to "earn" my rest. I never wanted to be perceived as lazy. I've also seen how some people use busyness to avoid their own problems, pouring everything into work or distractions so they don't have to face what's broken in their personal lives. I did the same in one of my past relationships. I kept us so busy that I didn't have to deal with how unhappy we truly were. It wasn't about him, it was about me. Sitting down to relax isn't something I crave. I find much more enjoyment through movement. So while my body may not be resting, I feel it's a way for my mind to switch off for a while, especially when I'm in the gym.

I've also battled procrastination. I'll sometimes do everything but the one thing I really need to do, and then stress myself out as the deadline approaches. Still, somehow, I always get it done. It may not be the most efficient system, but it's mine and I've made peace with it. And I'm willing to keep growing and healing.

I tick every box for someone with ADHD and spectrum traits. I didn't fully explore this growing up, but the older I get, the more I recognize how deeply it affects me. I've often wondered how I can function the way I do and still manage the demands of my career. But I also know that many creatives are wired differently and that difference is what gives us our fire. I've never wanted to dull that fire with medication, and because I came from a holistic upbringing, medication was only used when absolutely necessary.

I can't handle too much noise. I get easily overstimulated by environments with too much going on. It's ironic given the industry I work in. Loud venues, chaos, and constant socializing all drain me. I've also never liked tight clothing or anything touching my face. I despise masks. I don't like wearing sunglasses. These may seem like small quirks, but they're part of a much bigger picture of how I process the world.

There are benefits to the way I'm wired too. I get a lot done. I have boundless energy. I have a fire inside me that rarely dims. I've learned to work with my wiring instead of against it.

I've found myself questioning whether ADHD is sometimes overused as a blanket term. However, I've since learned that being able to focus deeply on something interesting does not necessarily rule out ADHD. It makes me wonder if we sometimes use the label not because we're truly unable to pay attention, but because we're overwhelmed, overstimulated, or simply disinterested in certain environments that aren't nourishing or aligned with how we're wired.

And what concerns me even more is how quickly doctors prescribe medication without first digging deeper. All too often, especially among children, a pill is thrown at the "problem" rather than addressing the root issue, whether that be trauma, diet, overstimulation, poor sleep, emotional dysregulation, or spiritual imbalance. It concerns me how readily powerful stimulant medications can sometimes be prescribed without sufficient attention to each person's broader circumstances, even though I recognize that, when appropriately prescribed and monitored, they can be life-changing for some.

Most of the common ADHD medications, like Adderall and Ritalin, are classified as stimulants. Chemically speaking, Adderall is made from amphetamine salts, which are in the same drug class as methamphetamine. While the formulation, dose, and medical use are different, both affect dopamine and norepinephrine. That is why stimulants can be effective, but also why they carry risks when misused.

This isn't about judgment. I know that for some, these medications can be life-changing and necessary. But we need to be more discerning. More cautious. Because if we're not careful, we risk normalizing powerful substances without enough attention to root causes, long-term effects, and whole-person healing.

I believe we need more holistic approaches, more honest conversations, and more courage to look beneath the surface. We're quick to label and medicate, but slow to heal. And I don't believe we were created to live numbed or sedated.

I believe we were created to live free.

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Prescription Stimulants / Adderall: Searching for Focus, Finding Faith

Navigating medication, trauma, and spiritual discernment to reclaim clarity and peace.

As mentioned, Adderall is a commonly prescribed medication for ADHD and narcolepsy. That's how I was first introduced. After years of people suggesting I "should try something" because I clearly had ADHD traits, I became curious. I'd never been diagnosed, nor had I seen a doctor about it, but eventually, a friend offered me half of their prescribed dose to see how I'd respond.

I remember taking it and heading straight out for a run. At the time, I was running and training regularly, but this gave me a noticeable boost. I felt more alert, energized, and hyper-focused. My skin would tingle, and for a moment, I understood why so many people got hooked. But even then, I knew, based on how naturally high-strung I already was, that this wasn't something I should be playing with. I felt how easily it could become a crutch, and I stayed away from it as best I could.

That changed in 2020 when I became entangled in a deeply toxic relationship. More about that further on. During that time, someone took advantage of my vulnerability and curiosity and began feeding me extremely high doses of Adderall (and psychedelics). It was a deeply traumatic period in my life. But what was meant to destroy me ultimately became the pathway to discovering my faith.

When that person was finally removed from my life, I was left physically and emotionally depleted. I didn't realize it at the time, but I had become dependent on Adderall just to get through the day. I was still functioning, still showing up, but now relying on something artificial to stay motivated, alert, and "normal."

Eventually, I made an appointment with my doctor. I was honest, partially, and shared that I wanted to explore the possibility of having ADHD and whether Adderall might help under proper supervision. I underwent a psychological evaluation, and unsurprisingly, I was approved for a prescription. I was also advised to begin therapy, which I did.

Looking back now, I wish I'd never gone down that road. Deep down, I think I already knew it wasn't right for me. But I was still shaken from what I had just been through, and I was desperately trying to stabilize myself. Unfortunately, the therapist I saw used energy-based healing practices that ended up triggering more trauma from the experience I had just survived. I felt lost, even more disoriented than before.

But by the grace of God, that was also the same year I encountered Jesus.

My faith walk began at the end of 2020, and while it hasn't always been smooth, it's been the most transformational journey of my life. Slowly but surely, I began letting go of the things that were holding me captive. I started questioning whether I actually had ADHD or if my natural personality, combined with trauma, anxiety, and spiritual strongholds, had just made me feel broken or different. The more I leaned into prayer and scripture, the more I realized that I didn't want anything altering my state of mind or spirit anymore.

Even under medical supervision, Adderall made me extremely anxious, jittery, and emotionally disconnected. We tried adjusting the dose and switching brands, but it became clear: I couldn't function on it. My spirit ultimately rejected it. And so with prayer, support, and the strength I could only find in Jesus, I quit cold turkey. I've never looked back.

I want to be clear: this is my story. I share this not to discourage medical care, but to encourage deeper discernment. The body, mind, and spirit were never meant to be treated in isolation. As we evolve, more and more medical professionals are beginning to recognize this connection.

I'm not a doctor, and I would never suggest that anyone come off medication without proper guidance. What I am saying is that for me, healing didn't come through a pill. It came through surrender. It came through faith. It came through learning to hear God's voice over the noise of my own inner chaos.

Today, people who've known me for years often tell me there's a peace around me they've never seen before. That's not something I fabricated; it's the fruit of deliverance. I feel more at ease in my body and mind than I ever did while medicated. My energy now comes from the Lord. In fact, every morning when I wake, I ask Him for sleep mercies and renewed strength. I invite Him to scan my body, every ache, every weakness, and fill me with His healing and peace.

My motivation is grounded in purpose. And while I still experience stress, fatigue, and anxiety like anyone else, I no longer live in bondage to those feelings. They pass. And I'm no longer afraid of them.

Jesus did for me what no prescription could. He met me at rock bottom, pulled me out of the mess I was drowning in and gave me a new life. I'm living proof that restoration is possible, even when it feels like all is lost.

Once the medications were out of my system and the chaos of that season began to fade, I found myself staring at a body and mind I didn't fully recognize anymore. I had come through the fire but with smoke still in my lungs. The work wasn't done. Detoxing from the chemicals was only one part of it. Now comes the rebuilding.

It wasn't just about regaining strength or resetting my nervous system. It was about learning how to be kind to myself again. For so long, my default setting had been "survival." I didn't know how to rest. I didn't know how to sit still in my own presence without feeling like I needed to fix something. My nervous system had been so overstimulated for so long that peace felt foreign. I had to teach myself what calm even felt like.

I began to study the connection between trauma and the body. I dove into books, podcasts, and teachings about how our past doesn't just affect our memories; trauma can also influence our nervous system and physical responses. The tension in my shoulders. The gut flares. The chronic fatigue. It wasn't random. It was residue. I had to do more than stretch or eat clean; I had to release. To grieve. To forgive. To let go.

One of the most helpful books I found on this subject was The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma by Dr. Bessel van der Kolk. Dr. van der Kolk is one of the world's leading experts on trauma and has spent decades researching how deeply trauma impacts both the mind and body. What stood out to me is how he explains that trauma doesn't just affect our memories; it can change how our brain and nervous system respond to stress and have lasting effects on our physical health.

Part of rebuilding meant nurturing my inner world. I began to slow down long enough to be still with God and let Him show me the places that were still bleeding. My relationships shifted too. I became far more protective of who I allowed into my life and what kind of energy I welcomed.

The sad truth is there were moments, and still are, when people used the name of Jesus as a weapon, trying to manipulate, control, or claim spiritual authority over me. It's deeply painful, especially when it comes from those who appear to walk with God. But healing has taught me that peace is non-negotiable.

If someone doesn't feel safe, emotionally, spiritually, or even energetically, I now create distance. Not out of bitterness, but out of boundaries. Protecting your peace is not unloving. It's wise. It's honoring the Holy Spirit within you.

Thankfully, my discernment has grown stronger. I've learned to test the spirits, weigh words and actions against the truth of Scripture, lean on trusted voices when someone claims to speak on God's behalf, and examine their spiritual fruit. Checking somebody's spiritual fruit means observing the evidence of their walk with God through their actions, words, character, and lifestyle over time. Jesus said:

"You will know them by their fruits."
Matthew 7:16

This means that the fruit of the Spirit should be evident in a believer's life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (**Galatians 5:22–23**).

If someone claims to follow Jesus but consistently walks in pride, manipulation, division, or deceit, it's a red flag. Their fruit doesn't match their faith. Testing their fruit isn't judging; it's using discernment, as Scripture instructs, to protect your spirit and walk in truth. Not every "Christian" influence is truly Christlike. Not every spiritual voice deserves access to your heart.

And that's okay. You're allowed to take your time. You're allowed to pause and pray. You're allowed to listen for God's voice above all the others.

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Tanning and Appearance Obsession: Chasing Approval in the Sun

The dangerous highs of sun and tanning obsession and learning to embrace your natural self.

While doing some research on addiction, I was surprised, though, in hindsight, not entirely, to learn that tanning is actually considered one of the lesser-known forms of addiction. Ultraviolet (UV) rays from sunlight trigger the release of endorphins, those "feel-good" chemicals in the brain. And I've always gravitated toward anything that gives me a high. Tanning gave me that high, every time.

Even as a child, I was obsessed with the sun. I still have a deep love for the sun. These days, I limit my exposure, but back then, not even the threat of skin cancer could keep me out of the sun with no sunscreen or away from tanning beds. I wanted the glow. I craved the warmth. When the sun is out, I'm in it. It makes me feel alive. I've had mild sunstroke more times than I can count and second-degree sunburns, but I didn't care. I was a completely different person in summer. I came to life when the heat hit my skin.

Growing up in Ireland, we weren't spoiled with sunny summers. But we always went on family holidays to Spain, and from the moment the sun rose, I was out on the lounge. My mom would apply sunscreen religiously, but I would wrestle her, throw tantrums, and often wash it off because I believed it stopped me from tanning. I'd skip family excursions just to stay by the pool and soak up every bit of sunshine. I deeply regret that now. I missed out on special moments and valuable time with my family all for a tan that faded in a week.

The problem was, the only way I could tan was by burning first. Severely. I would burn to the point of blistering, and I'd be in so much pain that I couldn't sleep. But even then, I would continue lying out in the sun, peeling sunburn on top of sunburn. I would cry in pain, but at the time, I thought it was worth it.

My obsession didn't stop there. After vacations, I became desperate to maintain my tan. I'd ask to go into town with my mom under the guise of helping her shop, but I'd sneak off to the local tanning salons and squeeze in as many 20-minute sessions as I could. Sometimes I'd fit in three different salons to get my 'fix'. Looking back, I see how reckless and dangerous that was. Honestly, I'm amazed I don't look like a leather handbag at this point.

And yes, it gets worse. I was so desperate to tan at home that as a child I would put cooking oil on my face and stick my head in the oven, thinking the heat would "bake" me into a glow. Spoiler: it didn't work. I was left with a greasy scalp, a red face, and absolutely no tan. It sounds funny now, but at the time, it wasn't. I was desperate, and it was rooted in deep insecurity. I got bullied at school for having greasy hair. It only added to my shame.

On one school break, we went on holiday, and the weather wasn't great. I didn't tan much, so I came home looking pale. I panicked. I couldn't show up at school without a tan. I reached for self-tanner to fake a glow, but I went overboard. The next morning, I looked like an Oompa Loompa. When I walked into school, the mocking began. My classmates sang the song from Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and laughed at me. I fought back tears and lied, saying it was natural. No one believed me. I felt like a complete fraud.

I didn't know why I needed their approval so badly or why I felt I looked better with a tan. Maybe I thought it made me appear healthier or more attractive. All the girls I envied had tans. I just wanted to feel beautiful. I wanted to feel wanted.

Growing up, I loathed my face. Especially when freckles appeared from sun exposure. I'd cover my face with a towel while sunbathing, barely able to breathe, just to avoid getting them. I would burn from the neck down and hide my face from the light. If I did get freckles, I would scold myself, then run to the pharmacy to buy expensive "fade out" creams to try to erase them. I was convinced they made me look uglier than I already felt. I would cry in front of the mirror, hating the reflection staring back at me. I despised my image.

Over the years walking with Christ, I've worked hard to build a healthier relationship with the sun, my body, and my appearance. I now allow the sun to hit my face and embrace any freckles. I haven't touched a sunbed in decades and never plan to.

And no, I don't put my head in ovens anymore!

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Shopping: Seeking Fulfillment in Things

How the pursuit of material possessions masked deeper needs and became a coping mechanism.

Shopping was one of my long-standing struggles, both in-store and online. Whether it was the thrill of walking through a mall or the dopamine hit from clicking "add to cart," it became a way to fill a void. A momentary escape. A false sense of control when everything else in my life felt uncertain.

When I moved to Nashville, I arrived with just a single suitcase. I had sold most of my belongings and was starting over, fresh city, fresh start. But it didn't take long before I began accumulating things again. At first, it felt harmless. I was buying items to make my place feel like home, to feel grounded in the unfamiliar. But very quickly, shopping became something else entirely. It became a crutch. A way to fill the silence. A way to feel something.

This pattern wasn't new. Every time I moved to a new country, whether it was the UK, Sweden, or the United States, I would arrive with only a few suitcases. Yet within months, I'd find myself surrounded by far more than I'd started with. My environment always filled up faster than I did internally. I was chasing comfort through things, hoping they would anchor me in a new place, but they never truly did.

Even as a child, I felt a rush from buying new clothes, products, or accessories even if I didn't need them. The act of spending made me feel powerful, like I was gaining worth. I didn't always understand the why, but I was hooked on the feeling. It became an early coping mechanism, a source of control, comfort, and identity.

As I got older and began earning my own money, the problem escalated. Especially once online shopping became the norm. I emptied out my bank account more than once chasing the thrill of "new", trying to satisfy something deeper that material things could never touch.

My closets became a mirror of the inner clutter I hadn't addressed. They were overflowing with items still bearing tags. It wasn't about the items. It was about the chase, the illusion of control, the distraction from loneliness, the thrill of feeling "enough" for a fleeting moment.

Eventually, I began asking myself a question before every purchase: "Do I really need this, or am I trying to fix something emotional?" More often than not, the answer was the latter.

Learning to sit with my emotions instead of numbing them through spending has been a slow but powerful shift. Today, I only buy what I need and I find far more joy in giving to others than in acquiring for myself. That old high no longer controls me. I've learned that what I was really seeking couldn't be found in a shopping bag. It had to be found within.

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Porn, Promiscuity, and the Cost of Compromise: When Pleasure Becomes Bondage

How seeking validation and escape through sexual behavior led to shame, brokenness, and the need for true healing.

I share this not to shock, but to shed light for the sake of others who may be silently struggling.

For a long time, I struggled with excessive pornography consumption and patterns of promiscuity, two things rarely talked about, especially when it comes to women. There's so much shame wrapped around this subject that many suffer in silence, feeling like they're the only ones. But I've learned that bringing things into the light is the first step to freedom.

There's a heavy stigma. Society often paints porn as a "man's issue," and when women admit to watching it or becoming addicted, it's met with disbelief, shame, or silence. But it's real. And it's more common than many realize.

My story isn't unique, but it is deeply personal. After losing control of my body at such a young age through sexual abuse, I subconsciously sought to reclaim that control in the only way I knew how - through my own choices around sex and intimacy. There are studies that show a direct link between early trauma and later promiscuity, especially in women. When someone experiences a loss of agency or bodily autonomy, they often try to take that power back but in ways that can become self-destructive.

It became a coping mechanism. It wasn't about love, or even desire. It was about trying to feel wanted. Trying to feel something. Trying to quiet the noise inside. But every encounter left me emptier than before. Pornography only fed the cycle, separating intimacy from emotion, distorting my view of connection, and reinforcing deep feelings of shame and self-disgust.

For years, I carried that shame silently, judging myself harshly, convinced I was broken. That no one could ever truly love me if they knew. God began to restore what was broken. Through Him, I've been able to reclaim my body and mind, this time through truth, not trauma. I began to see my body as a temple, not something to be used or exploited, not by others, and not by myself. I started to understand intimacy in a new light, one rooted in purity, peace, respect, and covenant.

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship."
Romans 12:1

I've been celibate since 2021 and I will remain celibate until marriage. That decision is not born out of fear or legalism, but out of love. Love for myself, for my future husband, and most importantly, love for God. It's a commitment I make daily not because it's easy, but because it's worth it. Celibacy did not heal me - Jesus did. Celibacy simply became the fruit of that healing.

If you're someone who has struggled in this area, please know this: you are not alone. You are not dirty. You are not too far gone. God's grace covers it all, and He can redeem every part of your story. I'm living proof of that.

We live in a world where sex is used to sell everything, from music to clothes to toothpaste - and I've seen firsthand how dangerous and degrading that can be. In the entertainment industry especially, it's everywhere. It's expected. But I made a decision early on that I wouldn't use my body to get ahead, no matter how tempting the shortcut might have looked.

Even when doors were dangled in front of me - backstage conversations, power plays, wealthy and well-known men trying to use their influence to offer me deals - I never gave in. I knew what they were really after. They weren't offering opportunity; they were baiting compromise. I've been propositioned, groomed, and pressured by people in positions of power who assumed I'd trade my dignity for a fast track to success. But they underestimated me.

After everything I've been through, especially with sexual abuse and trauma, there's no way I could ever give myself over to that kind of exploitation again. I refuse to play that game. I've fought too hard for my self-worth to hand it over for a song placement or a few extra followers.

That's why pornography grieves me. Not just because of what it does to men and women spiritually, mentally, and emotionally, but because it normalizes the exploitation I've spent a lifetime healing from. It tells both the viewer and the one being viewed that their value is in their body, not their soul. That they're objects to consume, not human beings to love.

If I had taken that route, maybe I wouldn't be grinding as an independent artist doing the job of ten people just to stay afloat. But I wouldn't be able to sleep at night. I wouldn't be able to stand on stage with my head high, knowing I've gotten here through God-given talent, integrity, and hard work - not manipulation or compromise.

What we consume matters. What we tolerate matters. And what we allow to define our worth matters. I know who I am. And I know Whose I am. That's why I choose purity. That's why I speak up. Because in a world trying to sell you a cheap imitation of love, I've tasted the real thing and it doesn't come from a screen or a deal. It comes from Jesus.

The world will try to define you by your past. But God will always define you by your potential and His promises.

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Chewing Gum: A Small Habit, a Big Reflection

How something seemingly harmless revealed deeper patterns of compulsion, distraction, and the search for comfort.

Of all the addictions I've faced, this might sound like the craziest, but it's very real to me. Chewing gum has been a long-standing habit, and while it may seem trivial to others, it became a daily crutch.

I still carry it to this day, though not to the extreme I once did, as I now balance it out with Ricola lozenges. It might sound silly, but for me, it was another way to cope and that's the truth.

I used to chew obsessively. I'd pop in two or three pieces, chew for five minutes (if that), spit them out, and replace them immediately. At my peak, I was going through between 55 and 75 pieces a day.

It didn't start off that extreme, and for a long time, I didn't think much of it until one day a few years ago, when I collapsed from severe abdominal cramps. At the time, I suspected that the ingredients in the gum, especially the artificial sweeteners, were aggravating my already sensitive digestive system. With IBS, it was like pouring fuel on a fire.

That moment forced me to dig deeper and search for healthier alternatives. I found a Swiss brand called Pür, which uses more natural ingredients. Around the same time, I also discovered Ricola herbal lozenges. Those two became my go-to replacements. I do have triple subscriptions to both on Amazon and keep packs stashed in every bag, drawer, suitcase, and car. So it's still about finding the balance.

Looking back, I can see how it wasn't really about the gum. It was a buffer, something I used to curb my appetite or keep myself from emotional eating. It sounds almost comical that one compulsion helped manage another, but that's often how addiction works. You remove one behavior and, unless you deal with the root, something else slips in to take its place. And I'm okay with a Ricola or two helping me bridge the gap until my next meal.

That's why I had to be honest with myself. This wasn't about minty freshness - it was about comfort, control, and distraction. And until I addressed what was really driving the behavior, the cycle kept repeating itself.

Today, I'm happy to say I'm in a much healthier place. I still chew gum and enjoy Ricola, but I'm no longer controlled by them. It took self-awareness, discipline, and a lot of prayer - but I got there. And I know I'm still on a journey.

Because if there's one thing I've learned, it's this: when you invite God into even the smallest things, healing follows. Nothing is too small for Him to redeem.

Facing the Giants

Addictions had a grip on me that felt impossible to break. The shame, the secrecy, the endless cycles of trying and failing - they all felt like giants towering over my life. For years, I focused on their size, on how impossible they seemed to overcome. But one truth began to shift everything: “Don’t tell God about your giant; tell the giant about your God.”

I realized that my focus didn’t need to be on the strength of my struggles, but on the power of the One who fights for me. My giants didn’t vanish overnight, but as I started declaring God’s truth over my life, the weight of shame, fear, and temptation began to lose its hold. I learned that victory isn’t about my ability to control everything - it’s about trusting Him to do what I cannot.

With that perspective, I could face temptation differently, not with fear or self-condemnation, but with faith and the confidence that God’s power is greater than any struggle I encounter. Each step of surrender, obedience, and honesty became an act of spiritual warfare. Addiction loosened its grip. Shame no longer had the final word. Fear stopped being my compass.

Today, the giants still try to speak, but they no longer lead. I’ve learned that victory isn’t found in my strength, my discipline, or my perfection - it’s found in remembering who God is and who I am in Him. The same God who defeated giants in Scripture continues to do so today, and He has done it in my life.

Reflection

Looking back, I can see how easily addictions and sin crept into my life, often disguised as comfort, escape, or coping. What felt harmless at first slowly shaped my thoughts, choices, and even my sense of self. Yet through awareness, prayer, and surrender, I began to understand that freedom isn’t about perfection. It's about progress and letting light reach the places that were once hidden. These struggles are no longer sources of shame, they are reminders of grace, growth, and the ongoing work of transformation.

As I came to understand these patterns, I began to notice the subtle ways habits could take root in daily life; how small choices, repeated over time, could either support my freedom or keep me trapped.

God often exposes our smallest crutches not to shame us, but to show us how deeply He wants access to every coping mechanism we lean on.

Prayer

Lord, thank You for seeing me as I am - every struggle, every craving, every chain that binds me. I surrender my addictions to You, knowing that only You can bring true freedom.

Break every stronghold, heal every wound, and restore my heart to delight in You alone. Fill me with Your Spirit, guide my steps, and teach me to live in the liberty and peace that only You provide.

In Jesus' name,
Amen.