

Supplementary table 1. Thematic table connecting themes, sub-themes and codes

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes	Examples of initial codes			
1: Recovery is a broad process of change because addiction is interwoven with everything	Recovery is more than not using drugs	Being abstinent is not the same as being in recovery	Not using drugs did not improve situation			
			Experiencing problems while in recovery			
			Changed environment or moved for recovery			
			Addiction is also in other behavior	Problems with sexual behavior and relations while in addiction		
				Mental health problems linked to addiction		
				Doing 'good' as part of recovery		
	Broad recovery goals	Having practical goals was important		Achieving a day routine		
				Achieving financial stability		
				Acquiring a job		
				Trying to become happier		
		Expecting emotional gains	Trying to achieve serenity			
2: Recovery is reconsidering identity, seeing things in a new light		Gaining control	Considering and taking care of own needs			
			Staying close to myself			
			Getting to know myself			
			Identity change	Adopt non-user identity		
				Dealing with vulnerabilities		
				Diagnosis of behavior		
			Seeing things in a new light	Is controlled use possible for me?		
				Learning about self through helping others		
		3: Recovery is a staged long-term process		Planting a seed	Past events facilitated change	Emotionally touched by an encounter
						Life impacting events
			Previous recovery attempts helped later attempt			
	Stages of recovery	Turning points	Period to stabilize			
			Intense focus on recovery			
			Maintaining recovery			
			Broadening recovery goals			
		Changing meaning of recovery	Broadening recovery goals			
			Finding new sources of motivation			
			Being able to do new things			
	Recovering or recovered?	Finding new things to recover	Broadening recovery goals			
		Moving on	Detaching from addiction / recovery identity			
		Becoming rebellious or stubborn in recovery	Finding an own way to maintain recovery			
4: Universal life processes are part of recovery		Normal or universal processes	Becoming older			
			Changing lifestyle preferences			
			Not so different from people without addiction experiences			
			Insights from recovery apply to other things	People without addiction experiences benefit from recovery insights or experiences		
				This should be taught at schools		
				Everyone needs a bit of recovery		