

Celebrated DJ and recovered from severe addiction, Brandon Block calls on Brits to Unite for Recovery as he is announced as the official charity ambassador for UK SMART Recovery

- **New campaign launched to stamp out stigma as data reflects that drug and alcohol addictions are amongst the most stigmatised conditions¹**
- **Brits urged to walk ‘around the globe’ to support Unite for Recovery campaign**

Brandon Block, the celebrated electric House, Funk, Disco and Soul DJ has announced his support of addiction recovery charity SMART Recovery, a free self-help, mutual support programme that helps people work together to examine or change addictive behaviours. The announcement of Brandon’s support for SMART, which has helped over 5,000 people a week in the UK since it was founded nearly 20 years ago, coincides with the launch of its new global fundraising campaign, Unite for Recovery. Together, Brandon and SMART Recovery are calling for people to sign up or donate to Unite for Recovery to stamp out addiction related stigma.

In England, there are over an estimated 600,000 people addicted to alcohol², over 400,000 people addicted to gambling³, more than one in ten teens addicted to video games⁴ and more than 5% of the population addicted to shopping⁵, furthermore, approximately 2.6% of adults in England and Wales report being frequent users of drugs.⁶ 70% of substance abusers in the UK are in full-time employment, and each year 3 million employees clock in at work under the influence of substance like narcotics, opiates and others.⁷

The societal impacts of addiction, ranging from poor mental and physical health, family breakdown and devastation to billions lost in the economic impact are severe. With just a small fraction of people in treatment, Unite for Recovery aims to smash addiction related stigma to get more people living a balanced life. Supported by big high street names including NatWest, Clintons and Morgan Sindall, the campaign is challenging people to get active by walking.

Famous for his high energy sets at super clubs including Ministry of Sound, Turnmills and Miss Money Penny’s, Brandon, who has an upcoming UK tour this summer, cemented his superstar DJ status in the 90s through residencies at well-known Ibiza clubs. Parallel to his career going from strength to strength, Brandon suffered from severe anxiety, paranoia and imposter syndrome which led to drug dependencies, particularly cocaine. He hit rock bottom in 1996 when, suffering from Hepatitis C and tuberculosis, he had half a lung removed and was told he had two weeks left to live unless he changed his lifestyle. It is at this point that Brandon made the concerted decision to quit drugs. During his recovery, Brandon discovered SMART which he credits as instrumental in his recovery journey.

Brandon Block, DJ, SMART Recovery ambassador, life coach and founder of wellness charity Happy Days for Everyone, said: “Life is designed to be stressful and cause anxiety, learning how to cope with this and helping to create a feeling of empowerment is what SMART does. SMART helped me change my thinking, understand addiction and progress on my recovery journey long term, the programme gave me a new lease of life and that’s why I’m so passionate about it.”

Block continued: “My struggles with drug dependency are well documented. I’m proud to say that I’ve been able to use these public struggles as a force for good. I’m using my own personal experiences to call on people to join me in supporting SMART Recovery’s Unite for Recovery campaign. We’re aiming to collectively walk the circumference of the earth – 24,901 miles – to bring together the recovery community. Getting involved couldn’t be easier, all people have to do is sign up, choose a target of two, four or six miles a day and then get walking.”

Doubling down on efforts to stamp out addiction related stigma, the campaign aims to get people talking about addiction by giving everyone who signs up the chance to explain why they are uniting for recovery.

Charlie Orton, Chief Executive of UK SMART Recovery said: “Analysis shows that drug addiction has been rated as the most stigmatised condition, followed closely by alcohol addiction which has been rated fourth. This stigma creates feelings of shame, guilt and fear, emotions that are often so strong that they will

delay people seeking help when they need it, alarmingly, in many instances for up to five or six years. By beginning conversations about addiction, we hope to change this depressing status quo so we can create a healthier environment for people to step forwards and get the help they need to live life beyond addiction.”

Orton continued: “We’re incredibly proud to welcome Brandon to the SMART team as the charity’s first ever celebrity ambassador and we hope the British public will join him by supporting the Unite for Recovery campaign. Not only will getting involved help others, as everyone knows, getting active also has great health benefits such as sleeping better, having more energy and having fun – so by supporting us, people will also be helping themselves.”

From signing up, fundraising and donating, to sharing information and addiction recovery stories with friends, family and colleagues in the workplace, there are lots of ways to support Unite for Recovery. To sign up or find further information, visit: www.uniteforrecovery.org.uk

Funds raised will help SMART continue to support its volunteers who provide the SMART programme through mutual aid groups completely free at the point of care.

Ends

Notes to editors

About SMART Recovery

SMART Recovery is a self-help, mutual support program that offers the chance for people to work together to examine and change problem behaviours. Group participants are there to help themselves and each other. We know that mutual support programs are effective in helping people to achieve their recovery goals. They also substantially reduce healthcare costs relative to other interventions and have a fundamental place in a person's continuum of care.⁸ SMART meetings also have the advantage of being free, easily accessible, and ongoing.

Problem behaviours may relate to drinking, drug taking, gambling, food, shopping, internet, sex, and other issues. SMART also helps participants manage associated problems, such as depression, anxiety, and anger.

SMART Recovery is a practical and solution-focused program. It uses evidence based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Motivational Interviewing (MI) tools and techniques to help people achieve their goals.

Further information about SMART Recovery can be found at: www.smartrecovery.org.uk

About Unite for Recovery

Unite for Recovery is a global campaign that challenges people to get active this summer to bring together the recovery community. It will raise funds for SMART Recovery so that they can continue to provide their 4-point programme to all those who need it completely free at the point of care. SMART Recovery helps people wanting to live a life beyond addiction by discovering their power of choice.

This year's campaign theme is walking around the world to bring together the recovery community. The campaign aims to clock up total miles walked by participants around the world to reach a collective goal of 24,901 miles, the Earth's circumference.

As well as signing up, fundraising and donating to Unite for Recovery, there are lots of others ways to support this year's campaign such as sharing it friends, family and amongst the workplace, talking it about addiction and sharing stories related to addiction.

Unite for Recovery is supported by big high street names including NatWest, Clintons and Morgan Sindall.

This campaign has been supported by grant funding from Camurus Ltd.

To sign up or find further information, visit: www.uniteforrecovery.org.uk

-
- ¹ [Kelly JF, Westerhoff CM. Does it matter how we refer to individuals with substance-related conditions? A randomized study of two commonly used terms](#)
 - ² [Alcohol statistics | Alcohol Change UK](#)
 - ³ [Behavioural Addictions | UK Rehab \(uk-rehab.com\)](#)
 - ⁴ [Behavioural Addictions | UK Rehab \(uk-rehab.com\)](#)
 - ⁵ [Behavioural Addictions | UK Rehab \(uk-rehab.com\)](#)
 - ⁶ [Drug misuse in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)
 - ⁷ [Readers Digest | The Hidden Cost of Substance Abuse in the UK Workplace](#)
 - ⁸ [Victoria Manning, et al. The role of peer support and mutual aid in reducing harm from alcohol, drugs and tobacco in 2020](#)