

T H E M A T R I X M O D E L



Relapse Prevention Group Handouts

**INTENSIVE OUTPATIENT
ALCOHOL & DRUG TREATMENT**

A 16-Week Individualized Program

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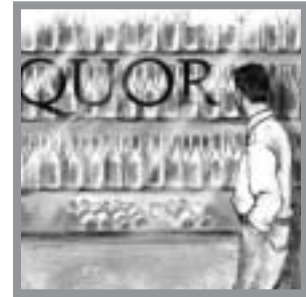
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Alcohol: The Legal Drug

It is often difficult for patients to stop drinking when they enter treatment. Some of the reasons for this include the following:

1. Triggers for alcohol use are everywhere. It is sometimes hard to do anything social without facing people who are drinking.

Do you have friends who get together without drinking? If so, write their names here.

2. Many people use alcohol in response to internal triggers. Depression and anxiety seem to go away when people have a drink. It's difficult for them to realize that sometimes the alcohol causes the depression.

Does feeling a certain way make you want to have a drink? Explain.

3. If a person is addicted to an illicit drug and uses alcohol less often, alcohol may not be viewed as a problem. The problem isn't recognized until the person tries to stop drinking.

Have you been able to stop drinking since you entered treatment? Explain.

4. Alcohol affects the rational, thinking part of the brain. It is hard to think reasonably about a drug that makes thinking clearly more difficult.

Have you ever been sober at a party and watched people drink and "get stupid"? If so, describe the experience.

ALCOHOL: THE LEGAL DRUG | *continued*

- 5. Because alcohol dulls the rational brain, it promotes less controlled activity in the lower brain. This results in alcohol helping people become more sexual, less self-conscious, and more social. When you are used to using alcohol to increase sexual pleasure and help you socialize, these activities feel uncomfortable without it.

Do you depend on alcohol for sexual or social reasons? Explain.

- 6. Many of us grow up using alcohol to mark special occasions. It is hard to learn how to celebrate those times without drinking.

What special occasions did your family celebrate with alcohol?

How do you celebrate now?

- 7. In many families and social groups, drinking is a sign of strength, of being “with it,” or of being sophisticated. Our culture encourages drinking.

Do you feel less “with it” when you are not drinking? Explain.

ALCOHOL: THE LEGAL DRUG

8. The habit of drinking gets to be part of certain activities. It seems difficult, at first, to eat certain foods, go to sporting events, or relax without a beer or other drink.

What activities seem to go with drinking for you?

• • •

It is important to remember that everyone who stops drinking has these problems at first. As you work through the difficult situations and spend more time sober, it does get easier.



Triggers for alcohol use are everywhere. It is sometimes hard to do anything social without facing people who are drinking.



Boredom

Often, people who stop using drugs and alcohol say life feels boring.

Some of the reasons for this feeling might be these:

1. A structured, routine life feels different from an addict lifestyle.
2. Brain chemical changes during recovery can make people feel flat (or bored).
3. Drug and alcohol users often have huge emotional swings (high to low and back to high). Normal emotions can feel flat by comparison.

People with longer sobriety rarely complain of continual boredom, so these feelings do change. Meanwhile, there are some ways to help reduce this feeling.

1. Review your recreational activity list. Have you started doing things that you enjoyed before using drugs and alcohol? Have you begun new activities that interest you?
2. Can you plan something to look forward to? How long has it been since you've taken a vacation?
3. Talk about this feeling with a mate or close friend. Does he or she feel bored, too? Does he or she have any interesting suggestions?
4. Try going back to scheduling. Forcing yourself to write out daily activities helps you see where you can schedule in more interesting experiences.
5. Do something risky that will further your personal growth. Sometimes boredom results from not challenging yourself enough in your daily living.

• • •

Which of the above might work for you? It is important to try new ways of fighting the bored feeling. Untreated, it can be a trigger and move you toward relapse.



Avoiding Relapse Drift

How It Happens

Relapse does not suddenly occur. It does not happen without warning, and it does not happen quickly.

The gradual movement, however, can be so subtle and so easily explained away (denied) that often a relapse feels like it happened suddenly. This slow movement away from sobriety can be compared to a ship gradually drifting away from where it was moored. The drifting movement can be so slow that you don't even notice it.

Interrupting the Process

During recovery, each person does specific things that work to keep him or her sober. These "mooring lines" need to be clearly stated and listed in a very specific way so they are understandable and measurable. These are the ropes that hold the recovery in place and prevent the relapse drift from happening without being noticed.

Maintaining a Recovery

Use the Mooring Lines Recovery Chart (page 9) to list and track the things that are holding your recovery in place. Follow these guidelines when filling out the form:

1. Identify four or five *specific* things that are now helping you stay sober (for example, working out for twenty minutes, three times per week).
2. Include items such as exercise, therapist and group appointments, scheduling, outside spiritually based meetings, and eating patterns.
3. Do not list attitudes. They are not as easy to measure as behaviors.
4. Note specific people or places that are known triggers and need to be avoided during recovery.

The checklist should be completed regularly (probably weekly). When two or more items cannot be checked, it means that relapse drift is happening. Sometimes things loosen your mooring lines. Vacations, illnesses, and holidays sometimes cannot be controlled. The mooring lines disappear. Many people relapse during these times. Use the chart to recognize when you are more likely to relapse and decide what to do to keep this from happening.

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Mooring Lines Recovery Chart

In becoming sober, you have had to learn to adopt certain new behaviors—behaviors that work for you to keep you sober.

It is too easy to accidentally drop one or more of these mooring lines and allow your recovery to drift toward relapse. Charting the new behaviors and occasionally checking to make sure the lines are secure can be very useful.

Use the chart below to list those activities that are very important to your continuing recovery. If there are specific people or things you need to avoid, list them. Then look back at your list regularly and check those items that you are continuing to follow to stay anchored in your recovery.

Mooring Line Behaviors	Date (✓)	Date (✓)	Date (✓)	Date (✓)	Date (✓)
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
I Am Avoiding	Date (✓)	Date (✓)	Date (✓)	Date (✓)	Date (✓)
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					



Work and Recovery

Check which of the following statements describe your situation:

- _____ 1. I am employed in a demanding job that makes inpatient treatment impossible.
- _____ 2. I am working in an unsatisfactory job and thinking of making a change.
- _____ 3. I am working in a situation in which recovery will be difficult.
- _____ 4. I am working with a schedule that has to be changed to make treatment work.
- _____ 5. I am unemployed and need to find a job.

• • •

People in any of the above situations have to deal with certain problems that can make treatment more difficult. Some of the problems are outlined below; the numbers correspond to the list above.

1. People in this situation always have to look at priorities. Outpatient treatment may have been selected because work is a number one priority. The problem is that treatment won't work unless it is given a 100 percent effort. That means that for a while, treatment has to take priority over work. Once longer-term sobriety has been achieved, the recovery can shift to maintenance intensity, and work can again be a major focus.
2. It is a generally accepted fact that during recovery, major changes (in jobs, relationships, and other areas) should be delayed for six months to one year whenever possible. There are many reasons for this:
 - a. People in recovery go through large changes themselves and sometimes change their views on personal situations.
 - b. Any change is stressful, and major stress is to be avoided as much as possible during early recovery.

WORK AND RECOVERY | *continued from other side*

3. Some jobs lend themselves to recovery more than others. Work situations that are difficult to combine with outpatient treatment include the following:
 - a. Situations in which it is necessary to be with other people who are drinking or using
 - b. Jobs that make large sums of cash money available at unpredictable times
4. Some jobs require long or unusual hours. Often, the very nature of the schedule has contributed to the drug or alcohol problem in the first place. The first task, if you have such a job, is to work with your therapist (and your boss or someone else at your job) to make your schedule work for your recovery. Without this initial intervention, your recovery will not stand a chance. Recovery is much too difficult a process unless it is your number one priority while you are in treatment.
5. When people are out of work, treatment becomes more difficult:
 - a. Looking for work is often a necessary priority.
 - b. Without blocks of time spent at work, there is so much free time that it is difficult to fill it and provide the structure that makes outpatient treatment effective.
 - c. Resources are often more limited, making factors like transportation and child care more of a problem.

• • •

There are no easy solutions to these problems. It is important to be aware of the issues so you can plan to make your recovery as strong as possible.



When people are out of work, resources are often more limited, making factors like transportation and child care more of a problem.



Guilt and Shame

Guilt is feeling bad about what you have done.

(“I am sorry I spent so much time using/drinking and not attending to my family.”)

• • •

Shame is feeling bad about who you are.

(“I am hopeless and worthless.”)

Guilt

What are some things you have done in the past that you feel guilty about?

Feeling guilty is a healthy reaction. It often means you have done something that doesn't agree with your values and morals. It is not unusual for people to get into situations where they do things they feel guilty about. What is important is making peace with yourself. Sometimes that means making up for things you've said and done. Sometimes it means realizing you are feeling guilty unnecessarily.

Remember:

1. It's all right to make mistakes.
2. It's all right to say, “I don't know,” “I don't care,” or “I don't understand.”
3. You don't have to explain yourself to anyone if you're acting responsibly.

Do you still feel guilty about the things you listed? What can you do to improve the situation(s)?

GUILT AND SHAME | *continued from other side*

Shame

Check the statements that apply to you:

- _____ I feel ashamed of being addicted.
- _____ I feel weak because I couldn't or can't stop drinking or using.
- _____ I feel stupid because of what I have done.
- _____ I feel like I am a bad person because I am involved with alcohol or drugs.

• • •

No one knows all the reasons that some people can stop using once they decide to and other people cannot. Research shows some of the reasons have to do with family histories, genes, and individual physical differences in people. They do not have to do with some people being bad, stupid, or weak. Addiction affects people differently.

What we do know is that you cannot recover by these means:

1. Trying to use willpower
2. Trying to be strong
3. Trying to be good

It takes two things to make recovery work:

1. Being smart
2. Working hard

• • •

Everyone who is successful at recovery will tell you, "It was the hardest thing I ever did." No one can do it for you, and it will not just happen to you.



Staying Busy

Learning to schedule and to provide a structure of activities to support your recovery is an important first step in outpatient treatment. Staying busy doing things is important for several reasons:

1. Often, relapses begin in the mind of a person who has nothing to do and nowhere to go. The addicted brain begins to think about past using, and the thoughts can start the craving process.

Has free time ever been a trigger for you? Explain.

How could you respond to prevent relapse if the trigger occurred again?

2. When drug and alcohol use gets severe enough, the user will often begin to isolate. Being around other people is uncomfortable and annoying. Being alone results in fewer hassles.

Did you isolate yourself when you used? Explain.

Does being alone now remind you of that experience? Explain.

STAYING BUSY | *continued from other side*

3. Being involved with other people and doing things keep life more interesting. Living a drug- and alcohol-free life can sometimes feel pretty tame. You begin to think being sober is boring, and using is exciting and desirable. People have to work at finding ways to make sobriety fun.

What have you done lately to have fun?

4. When people are involved in an addictive lifestyle, many of the things they used to do and people they used to do them with get left behind. Beginning to reconnect or to build a life around drug- and alcohol-free activities and people is critical to a successful recovery.

How have you reconnected or built new activities and people into your life?

...



Beginning to build a life around drug- and alcohol-free activities and people is critical to a successful recovery.

Motivation for Recovery

Ask any group of people just starting recovery *why* they want to stop drinking and using right now, and you will get many different answers:

“I was arrested, and it’s either this or jail.”

...

“My wife says if I don’t stop, we are finished.”

...

“Last time I used, I thought I was going to die; I know I will if I use again.”

...

“They are going to take the children from us unless we stop.”

...

“I’ve been drinking for twenty years now; it’s time to change.”



Which of the people quoted above are most likely to be successful in recovering? It seems logical to think that people who want to stop drinking and using for themselves, and not because someone else wants them to, are more likely to do well in treatment. However, that may not be true. Research shows that the reasons people stop using have little bearing on whether they will be able to successfully lead a drug- and alcohol-free lifestyle.

What does make a difference is whether they can stay drug and alcohol free long enough to appreciate the benefits of a different lifestyle. When debts are not overwhelming, when relationships are rewarding, when work is going well, and when health is good, the recovering addicted person *wants* to stay drug and alcohol free.

**Fear will get people into treatment,
but fear alone is not enough to keep them in recovery.**

MOTIVATION FOR RECOVERY | *continued from other side*

1. List some of the specific reasons you first entered treatment (medical problems, family pressure, job problems, depression, and so on).

2. List some of the specific reasons you are continuing to work on the recovery process today.

3. Do you feel that your reasons for stopping drug and alcohol use initially are the same as your reasons for staying sober today? Explain.

• • •



Truthfulness

During Addiction

Not being truthful is part of addiction. It may be very hard to meet the demands of daily living (in relationships, in families, in jobs, and so on) and use drugs and alcohol regularly. As the addiction progresses, so do the activities that are necessary to obtain, use, and recover from the drug or alcohol use. It becomes more and more difficult to keep everything going smoothly, and addicted people often find themselves doing and saying whatever is necessary to avoid problems. Truthfulness is not always a consideration.

In what ways were you less than truthful during your addiction?

During Recovery

Being honest with yourself and with others during the recovery process is critically important. Sometimes being truthful is very difficult:

- You may not seem to be a “nice” person.
- Your therapist or group members may be unhappy with your behavior.
- You may be embarrassed.
- Other people’s feelings may be hurt.

Trying to be in recovery without being truthful will make you feel crazy. It will make everything you are doing seem like a waste of time.

Has truthfulness been difficult for you in recovery? Explain.

TRUTHFULNESS | *continued from other side*

Being partly honest is not being truthful. Do you ever

- Decide to let someone believe a partial truth?
- Tell people what they want to hear?
- Tell people what you wish were true?
- Tell less than the whole truth?



Attending groups, attending meetings, going to a hospital, or going to a therapist are all a waste of time and money without truthfulness. Recovery from addiction is impossible without truthfulness.



Total Abstinence

Have you ever found yourself saying any of the following?

“Having a beer (or glass of wine) is not really drinking.”

“I only drink when I choose to—my drinking is not out of control.”

“I don’t really care about alcohol. I only drink to be sociable.”

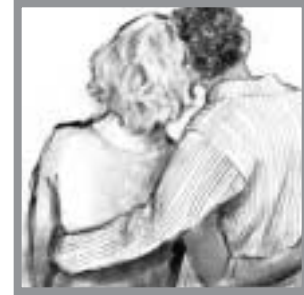
“My problem is my drug use. Alcohol (or pot) is not a problem for me.”

If you entered the program to stop using a specific drug, you may have wondered why you were asked to sign an agreement stating your willingness to also stop using other drugs and alcohol. There are many reasons total abstinence is a necessary goal for recovering people. A few of them are the following:

- Follow-up studies show that stimulant users are eight times more likely to relapse if they continue using alcohol and three times more likely to relapse if they use marijuana. You can greatly reduce your chances of relapsing by maintaining total abstinence.
- Places and people associated with drinking are often the very places and people that are triggers for drug use.
- When you’re learning to handle problems without resorting to drug or alcohol use, using another drug or alcohol to numb the uncomfortable learning process
 1. Blocks your chance to practice coping without running away.
 2. Puts you at risk for becoming dependent on the alcohol or secondary drug.
- As one patient said, “When I invite one friend over (alcohol), they all want to come.”

• • •

Remember: You are committing to be totally drug and alcohol free only while you are in treatment. If it’s more difficult than you expected, maybe you are more dependent than you thought.



Sex and Recovery

Sexual activities can be divided into two categories:

Intimate Sex

This kind of sexual activity involves a significant other. The sex is a part of the relationship. Sometimes the sexual feelings are warm and mellow, sometimes they are wild and passionate, but they result from and add to the feelings each partner has for the other.

Impulsive Sex

Sexual activity in this category is a compulsive behavior. It can be used and abused in the same way substances are used and abused. It is possible to become addicted to impulsive sex. The partner in this type of sexual activity is usually irrelevant. There may or may not be another person involved. If there is, the person is a vehicle for the high. There is little, if any, relationship involvement.

1. Are you familiar with these two kinds of sex? Explain.

2. How is impulsive sex linked to your drug or alcohol use?

3. Have you ever had a healthy, intimate sexual relationship? Explain.

• • •

Impulsive sex is not part of a healthy recovering lifestyle. It can be the first step in the relapse process. Like secondary drug or alcohol use, impulsive sex can trigger a relapse and result in use of the primary drug of choice.



Relapse Prevention

Why Is Relapse Prevention Important?

Recovery is more than not using drugs and alcohol.

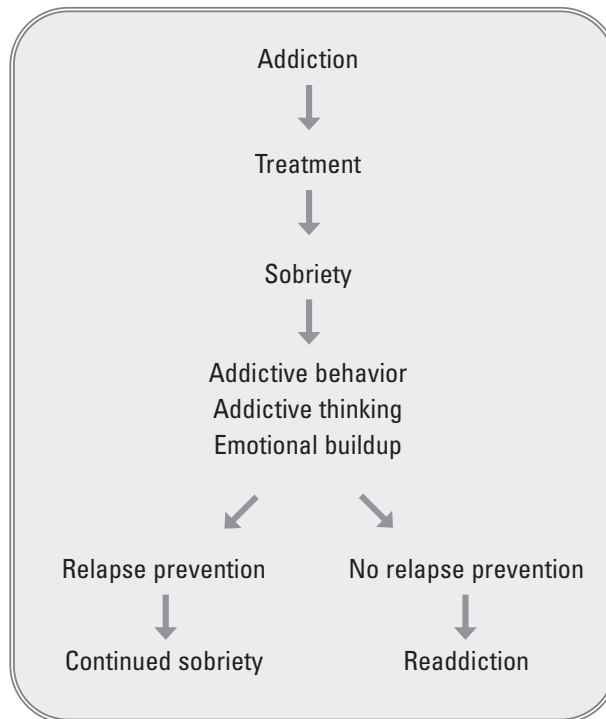
The first step in treatment is stopping drug and alcohol use.

The next step is not starting again. This is very important, and the process for doing it is called relapse prevention.

What Is Relapse?

Relapse is going back to drug or alcohol use and to all the behaviors and patterns that go with that. Often the behaviors and patterns return before the actual drug or alcohol use. Learning to recognize the beginning of a relapse can help the recovering person stop the process before actual use begins.

The choice is explained in the chart on the right.



What Are Addictive Behaviors?

The things people do as part of drug or alcohol use are called addictive behaviors. Often, these are things the addicted person does to get drugs or alcohol, to cover up drinking or using, or as part of the use. Lying, stealing, being unreliable, and acting compulsively are types of addictive behaviors. Describe yours:

RELAPSE PREVENTION | *continued from other side*

What Is Addictive Thinking?

In Twelve Step programs, these kinds of thoughts are called “stinking thinking.” They are thoughts that make using or drinking seem okay. Some examples are “I can handle just one drink,” “If they think I’m using, I might as well,” or “I have worked hard. I need a break.” What might your brain say to you?

What Is Emotional Buildup?

Feelings that don’t seem to go away and just keep getting stronger cause emotional buildup. Sometimes the feelings seem unbearable. The kinds of feelings that can build are boredom, anxiety, sexual frustration, irritability, and depression. Are any of these familiar to you now, or were they in the past? Explain.

The important step is to *take action* as soon as you recognize the danger signs. Check actions that might work for you:

- _____ Calling a therapist
- _____ Calling a Twelve Step friend
- _____ Going to a Twelve Step or other outside support meeting
- _____ Beginning to exercise
- _____ Taking a vacation
- _____ Talking to your spouse
- _____ Using time scheduling
- _____ Other _____



Trust

1. Have drugs or alcohol affected the trust between you and people you care about? Explain.

2. Does someone not trusting you ever make you feel like using? (“If you are going to treat me like I’m using, I might as well use.”) Explain.

When an addicted person is using, it is very difficult for him or her to have an open, honest relationship with any other person. Things are said and done that destroy the trust and damage the relationship. The drug or alcohol use becomes as important or more important to the user than other people.

When drug and alcohol use stops, the trust does not return right away. One or both people may want the trust back, but trust is a feeling, and people cannot make feelings happen. It takes time for feelings to change. To trust means to feel certain you can rely on someone or something. People cannot be certain because they want to be. Only time can make the difference.

Recovery is a long process. Learning to trust again is part of that process. It may be one of the last changes to occur.

3. How do you deal with suspicions about drug and alcohol use?

TRUST | *continued from other side*

4. How do you feel when you are not trusted?

5. What can you do to help the process of reestablishing trust?

...





Be Smart, Not Strong

“I can be around drugs or alcohol. I am certain I don’t want to use, and once I make up my mind, I’m very strong.”

...

“I have been doing well, and I think it’s time to test myself and see if I can be around friends who are using. It’s just a matter of willpower.”

...

“I think I can have a drink and not use speed. I never had a problem with alcohol anyway.”

Staying drug and alcohol free does not depend on strength. People who are able to maintain abstinence do it by being smart. They know that the key to not drinking and not using is to keep far away from relapse situations. The closer you get, the more likely a relapse becomes. If drugs or alcohol appears unexpectedly, and you are close to them and to friends who are drinking and using, your chances of using are much greater than if you weren’t in that situation. Smart people stay sober by avoiding triggers for as long as possible.

DON’T BE STRONG. BE SMART.

How smart are you being? Rate how well you are doing in avoiding relapse:

	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	EXCELLENT
1. Practicing thought stopping	1	2	3	4
2. Scheduling	1	2	3	4
3. Keeping appointments	1	2	3	4
4. Avoiding triggers	1	2	3	4
5. Not using alcohol	1	2	3	4
6. Not using drugs	1	2	3	4
7. Avoiding drug and alcohol users	1	2	3	4
8. Avoiding drug and alcohol places	1	2	3	4
9. Exercising	1	2	3	4
10. Being truthful	1	2	3	4
11. Going to Twelve Step or other outside support meetings	1	2	3	4

Total Recovery IQ _____

Defining Spirituality

What does *spirituality* mean to you?
Check those definitions that seem to apply.



1. Spirituality is

- A person's relationship with God
- The deepest level from which a human being operates
- The philosophical context of a person's life (values, rules, attitudes, and views)
- The same as religion

The second and third definitions describe spirituality in a broad sense. Many people believe that these broad definitions are the most useful way to think of spirituality. They view being spiritual as something that has to do with a person's spirit or soul, as distinguished from the physical nature. Some people believe the level and degree of spirituality in a person's life will dictate the quality of life. In *Finding Inner Peace* (1988), Earnie Larsen suggests you can assess the quality of your spirituality by answering the following questions:*

2. How much is enough? (What do you want from life, and are you getting it?)

3. Upon what is my security based? (What would it take to destroy you?)

4. Who do I have to be before I approve of myself? (What qualities are most important to you?)

DEFINING SPIRITUALITY | *continued from other side*

5. What does *success* mean to me? (What does “making it” mean?)

6. What would be the most comfortable and easy way for me to increase the spiritual aspects of my own life, should I choose to do so?

• • •

In order to have a drug- and alcohol-free life for a long period of time, the recovering person has to be comfortable within himself or herself. Gaining a sense of spirituality gives many people the inner peace that makes using drugs and alcohol unnecessary. The Twelve Step programs provide one way to gain or regain a love of yourself and of life.



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Taking Care of Business and Managing Money

Maintaining a full-blown addiction takes lots of time and energy. There may be very little time or thought given to normal responsibilities during an addictive period. The lifestyle of an addicted person is usually one that is obviously irresponsible.

Taking Care of Business

When recovery begins, forgotten and neglected responsibilities come flooding back. It is sometimes overwhelming to think about all the things that need to be done. It is also frustrating and time consuming to catch up on so many responsibilities.

Determine where you stand with regard to taking care of your business by thinking about the following questions:

1. Do you have outstanding traffic tickets?
2. Have you filed all your tax returns to date?
3. Are there unpaid bills you need to make arrangements to pay?
4. What repair and maintenance needs of your house or apartment are necessary?
5. Does your car need to be serviced or repaired?
6. Do you have adequate insurance—health, home, car, and life insurance?
7. Do you have a checking account or some way to manage your finances?
8. Are you handling daily living chores (such as grocery shopping, laundry, and cleaning)?

If you try to do all this at once, you may feel overwhelmed and hopeless. Take one or two items each week and focus on clearing up one area at a time. Dealing with these issues will help you regain a sense of control over your life.

1. The first item of business I need to take care of is

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS AND MANAGING MONEY | *continued*

2. I will start by

3. The second item of business I need to take care of is

4. I will start by

Managing Money

Being in control of your finances is being in control of your life.

5. When people with addictions are actively using, their out-of-control lifestyle is often reflected in monetary ways. Check any of the following that have been true for you.

_____ Any money over _____ is a trigger to buy drugs or alcohol.

_____ I have used money secretly to buy drugs or alcohol.

_____ I have to deal with large outstanding debts.

_____ I have been negligent in paying taxes.

_____ I owe money on traffic warrants.

_____ I gamble with my money.

_____ I spend compulsively when I feel bad.

_____ I frequently argue about money with family members.

_____ I have stolen money.

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS AND MANAGING MONEY

Often, when patients first enter treatment, they choose to give control of their money to someone they trust. Having another person handle your money will not work unless it is done at your request. In making the decision, you are controlling your own finances and asking the trusted person to act as your banker.

When you and your therapist decide you can safely handle money again, you can begin working toward gaining financial maturity. You may choose to have some of the following goals:

- Arrange to pay off large debts in small, regular payments.
- Budget your money in a way similar to scheduling your time.
- Arrange spending agreements with anyone who shares your finances.
- Use bank accounts to help you manage your money.
- Live within your means.
- Eventually, have a savings plan.

6. List any other financial goals you have.

• • •



Relapse Justification I

Once a person decides not to use drugs and alcohol anymore, how does he or she end up doing it again? Does it happen completely by accident, or is there some way of avoiding the relapse?

Relapse justification is a process that happens in people's minds. If a decision has been made to stop using and drinking, but the addiction still has strength, the game gets tricky. The addicted part of the brain invents excuses that move the addicted person close enough to relapse situations that accidents can and do happen. You may remember times when you were planning to stay drug or alcohol free, and such a situation happened before you used again.

Use the questions below to help you identify justifications your addicted brain might use. You can then interrupt the relapse process.

Accidents or Other People's Influence

Does your addicted brain ever try to convince you that you have no choice or that an unexpected situation caught you off guard? Have you ever said one of the following statements to yourself?

- It was offered to me. What could I do?
- An old friend called, and we decided to get together.
- I was cleaning my house and found drugs I'd forgotten about.
- I had friends come for dinner, and they brought me some wine.
- I was in a bar, and someone offered me a beer.
- Other _____

Catastrophic Events

Is there one unlikely, major event that is the *only* reason you would use? What might such an event be for you? How would using drugs or alcohol improve the situation?

- My spouse left me. There's no reason to stay clean.
- I just got injured. It's ruined all of my plans. I might as well use.
- I just lost my job. Why not use?
- Other _____

RELAPSE JUSTIFICATION I | *continued from other side*

Specific Purposes

Has your addicted brain ever suggested that using a certain drug or alcohol is the only way to accomplish something?

- I'm gaining weight and need stimulants to control how much I eat.
- I'm out of energy. I'll function better if I'm using.
- I need drugs to meet people more easily.
- I can't enjoy sex without using.
- Other _____

Depression, Anger, Loneliness, and Fear

Does feeling depressed, angry, lonely, or afraid make using seem like the answer? Is it really?

- I'm depressed. What difference does it make if I use or not?
- When I get mad enough, I can't control what I do.
- I'm scared. I know how to make the feeling go away.
- If he or she thinks I've used, I might as well use.
- Other _____

What might you do when your addicted brain asks these questions?

• • •



Taking Care of Yourself

Addicted people often do not take care of themselves. You may not have enough time or energy to attend to health and grooming when you are using. How you look becomes unimportant. Health is secondary to drug and alcohol use. Not caring for oneself is a major factor in loss of self-esteem among people with an addiction. To “esteem” something means you value it. You acknowledge its importance.

Recovering people need to recognize their own value. In recovery, your own health and appearance become more important as you care more for yourself. Their importance is part of starting to like and even respect yourself.

Attending to the following will strengthen your image of yourself as a healthy, drug- and alcohol-free, recovering person:

1. Have you seen a doctor for a thorough checkup?
2. When is the last time you went to the dentist?
3. Have you considered getting a “new look” the next time you cut your hair?
4. Are you paying attention to what you are eating? Is it too much, too little, or of adequate nutritional value?
5. Do you still wear the same clothes you wore during your using episodes?
6. Do you need to have your vision or hearing checked?
7. What exercise do you do regularly?
8. Is your caffeine or nicotine intake out of control?

If addressing all these things at once is too overwhelming, work on one or two items each week. Decide which are the most important and do them first. As you look and feel better, you will increase both the strength and the pleasure of your recovery.

The first thing I need to do to take care of myself is

• • •



Dangerous Emotions

For many people, certain emotional states are “red flag” feelings, often viewed by people in recovery as “the reason I use.” It seems, to people in recovery, that if they could avoid ever feeling lonely, angry, or deprived, they would never relapse. The emotional trigger leads to automatic use.



The most common negative emotional triggers are the following:

Loneliness: It is difficult to give up friends and activities that are part of a drug- and alcohol-using lifestyle. Being separated from friends and family leaves people feeling lonely. Often, nonusing friends and family members are not ready to get together with the addicted person. They are not ready to risk getting back into a relationship that didn’t work earlier. The recovering person is stranded between groups of friends, and the feeling of loneliness can become a driving force that moves him or her back to using.

Anger: The intense irritability experienced in the early stages of recovery can result in floods of anger that are, for many people, instantly triggering. The rage comes directly from the limbic area, the addicted brain. Once a person is into that frame of mind, it is a short trip to drug or alcohol use and possibly a long trip back to the rational state of mind.

Deprivation: Becoming drug and alcohol free is a real accomplishment. Usually, recovering people feel very good and proud about what they have been able to do. Recovery is a positive thing. Sometimes situations exist that make recovering people feel like they have to give up “good times and good things.” Recovery becomes a negative state. It becomes a sentence, something to be endured. Feeling that using behavior is positive, and sober behavior is negative, quickly leads to relapse.



It is important to be aware of these “red flag” emotions. Allowing yourself to be flooded with these powerful negative emotions is allowing yourself to be swept rapidly toward relapsing.

1. Have any of these emotional states been a trigger for you in the past? Explain.

DANGEROUS EMOTIONS | *continued from other side*

2. Are there any other negative emotional states that are dangerous for you? Explain.



One of the goals during the recovery process is learning to separate thoughts, behaviors, and emotions. Once you learn this, it is possible for you to control what you think and how you behave. So that you are not always acting only on your feelings, it is important to recognize and begin to try to understand your emotions.

Many people find writing to be a good tool for recognizing and understanding how they feel and why they feel that way. It is not necessary to be a good writer to use this tool. It is often used by people who do not like to write and who have never written much in the past. Follow these simple instructions and try a new way of getting to know yourself:

- Find a private, comfortable, quiet place just for writing, and try to write a little each day.
- Begin by taking several deep breaths and relaxing.
- Write in response to a question that you have asked yourself about your feelings. (“What am I feeling right now?” “Why am I angry?” “Why am I sad?”)
- If something is bothering you, and you can’t get started writing, ask yourself the following:
 - What is going on?
 - Is there really a problem, or am I making the situation bigger than it is?
 - How do I really feel about this?
 - What can I do about this?
- Allow the words to flow; forget spelling or punctuating correctly.

Doing this can help prevent you from blaming other people and things for how you feel. Any time you write about something, it becomes much clearer to you. It can also help you avoid the emotional buildup process that often leads to relapse.





Illness

Getting sick is a setup for relapse. “How can that be?” you might wonder. “It’s not my fault that I get sick. I don’t have control over getting the flu or getting colds. How is it a setup?”

There are a number of ways that people can be less than healthy:

- Getting a cold, the flu, or some other infection
- Having serious dental work done
- Having surgery
- Experiencing severe PMS or premenstrual cramping

These situations and others like them make you weaker than normal. When you are physically weaker, you also have less mental energy. Fighting a substance abuse problem requires a good deal of mental energy.

What are some of the things that happen when you are ill and have less energy?

- Visits to the clinic are canceled.
- AA, CA, or NA meetings, or other outside support group meetings, are missed.
- Exercise is impossible.
- Medication taking—or even abusing—can occur.

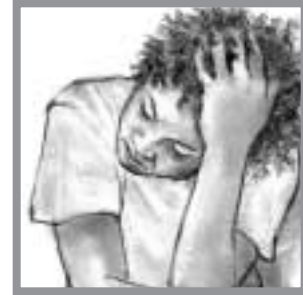
Imagine if all these things happened at once for any length of time, even if you were feeling strong.

As a result of the above, many people report that when they are ill

- It is difficult to cope with hours or days of free time now that everything has been canceled.
- The lack of structure is a trigger.
- Being in bed and not feeling well reminds them of “after-using time.”
- Being alone for long periods of time is a trigger.

In order to keep all the negative effects of illness from interfering with your recovery, it is important to allow yourself as little “sick time” as possible. If you push to restart recovery behaviors as soon as possible after an illness or difficult medical condition, you will feel stronger and your recovery will be stronger.

• • •



Recognizing Stress

Stress is what a person experiences as the result of difficult or upsetting events, particularly those that continue for a period of time.

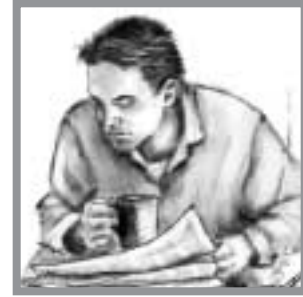
Stress is the experience people have when the demands they make of themselves or those placed upon them are greater than what they feel they can handle. Sometimes we are unaware of this emotional state until the stress is producing physical symptoms.

Check any of the following problems you have experienced in the past thirty days:

- _____ Sleep problems
- _____ Difficulty falling asleep
 - Waking up off and on during the night
 - Having nightmares
 - Waking up early and being unable to fall back to sleep
- _____ Headaches
- _____ Stomach problems
- _____ Chronic illness
- _____ Fatigue
- _____ Moodiness
- _____ Irritability
- _____ Difficulty concentrating
- _____ General dissatisfaction with life
- _____ Feeling overwhelmed

• • •

If you have checked two or more of these items, you need to think about reducing stress immediately. By becoming more aware of stress and learning ways to cope, you can further ensure your continuing recovery.



Relapse Justification II

Once a person decides not to use drugs and alcohol anymore, how does he or she end up doing it again? Does it happen completely by accident, or is there some way of avoiding the relapse?

Relapse justification is a process that happens in people's minds. If a decision has been made to stop using and drinking, but the addiction still has strength, the game gets tricky. The addicted part of the brain invents excuses that move the addicted person close enough to relapse situations that accidents can and do happen. You may remember times when you were planning to stay drug or alcohol free, and such a situation happened before you used again.

Use the questions below to help you identify justifications your addicted brain might use. You can then interrupt the relapse process.

Addiction Is Cured

Does your addicted brain ever try to convince you that you can use just once or use just a little?

- I'm back in control. I'll be able to stop when I want to.
- I've learned I'll only use small amounts and only once in a while.
- This drug (or alcohol) was not my problem—another one was.
So I can use this and not relapse.
- Other _____

Testing Yourself

Would your brain like to prove you could be stronger than drugs or alcohol? It's very easy to forget that being smart, not being strong, is the key to staying sober. Have you ever had any of the following thoughts:

- I'm strong enough to be around drugs and alcohol now.
- I want to see if I can say no to drinking and using.
- I want to see if I can be around my old friends.
- I want to see how meth feels now that I've stopped.
- Other _____

RELAPSE JUSTIFICATION II | *continued from other side*

Celebrating

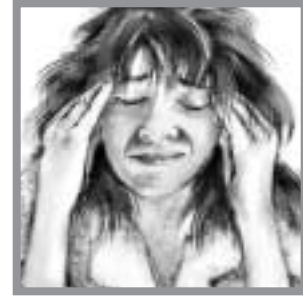
Both the addicted brain and other people may encourage you to fall for the following:

- I'm feeling really good. Using once won't hurt.
- I'm doing so well. Things are going great. I owe myself a reward.
- This is such a special event that I want to celebrate.
- Other _____

• • •



**Does your addicted brain ever try to convince you that
you can use just once or use just a little?**



Reducing Stress

The following questions should be answered as honestly as possible to help identify which parts of your daily living are most stressful. Take steps to correct these problems, and you will reduce stress in your life.

1. Your time, energy, and money are all you have to give. Are you investing them in work that you enjoy and that satisfies you?

Yes _____ No _____

2. Focusing on the present means giving your attention to the task at hand without past and future fears crippling you. Are you usually able to stay in the here and now?

Yes _____ No _____

3. Do you appreciate things like music, reading, nature, and personal relationships? (Or are you overly focused on having money and things?)

Yes _____ No _____

4. Are you forcing yourself to do things that increase your self-confidence?

Yes _____ No _____

5. Do you tackle large goals by breaking them into smaller, more manageable tasks?

Yes _____ No _____

6. Are you careful to make your environment peaceful?

Yes _____ No _____

7. Can you and do you say no when that is how you feel?

Yes _____ No _____

8. Do you know how to use self-relaxation techniques to relax your body, and do you allow time in your day to do them?

Yes _____ No _____

REDUCING STRESS | *continued from other side*

9. Are you careful to avoid large swings in body energy caused by taking in excess sugar and caffeine?

Yes _____ No _____

10. Are there specific ways you deal with anger and get it out of your system physically?

Yes _____ No _____

• • •



Learn how to use self-relaxation techniques to relax your body, and allow time in your day to do them.



Managing Anger

Anger is an emotion that leads many people to relapse. This is particularly true early in treatment. Anger is frequently experienced as a slow, building process during which you constantly think about the anger-producing issues. Sometimes it seems that the issue causing the anger is the only important thing in life. Often, a sense of victimization accompanies the anger. “Why do I get all the bad breaks?” “How come she doesn’t understand my needs?” “Why won’t he just do what I want him to do?”

1. Does any of this seem familiar to you? Explain.

2. How do you recognize when you get angry?

3. How do you express anger?

- Do you hold it in and eventually explode?
- Do you become sarcastic and passive-aggressive?

Are there any positive ways to deal with anger? Consider these methods:

- Talk to the person you are angry with.
- Talk to a therapist, a Twelve Step sponsor, or another person who can give you guidance.
- Talk about the anger in an outside support group meeting.
- Write about your feelings of anger.
- Take a break to change your frame of mind.
- Exercise.
- Other _____



Acceptance

“Just say no” is good advice to help prevent experimentation with drugs and alcohol. It is *not* an answer to addiction. Overcoming addiction requires that you recognize the power of addiction and accept the personal limitations that occur as a result of it. Many people experience this acceptance when they enter treatment. But entering treatment is just the *first* act of acceptance. It cannot be the *only* one.

One of the biggest problems in staying drug and alcohol free, and one of the major reasons for what is called “white-knuckle sobriety,” is the refusal to “let go” and accept that a human being has limits. Accepting a substance abuse problem is not a statement of weakness. Does having diabetes or a heart condition mean you are a weak person?

Accepting the idea that you have become a substance abuser does not mean you cannot control your life. It means there are some things you cannot control, and one of them is the use of drugs or alcohol. If you continue to struggle with trying to control the addiction, you give it more power.

There is a paradox in this recovery process. People who accept the reality of addiction to the greatest degree benefit the most in recovery. Those who don’t fight with the idea of quitting are the ones who win the fight. The only way to win this fight is to surrender. If you continue to fight, the addiction will slap you to your knees. The longer you fight, the further you get slapped down.

You do not need to “hit bottom” to begin recovery.

1. I am addicted. Yes _____ No _____
2. I hope someday I can use and drink again. Yes _____ No _____
3. I need to work on acceptance of

...



Making New Friends

*A blessed thing it is for any man or woman to have a friend,
one human soul whom we can trust utterly,
who knows the best and worst of us,
and who loves us in spite of our faults.*

— Anonymous

Nothing in the whole recovery process is more important than relationships. Friends and family are mirrors that reflect who we are. It has been said, “You will become like those people with whom you spend your time.” Use the following questions to help you think about your friendships:

1. Do you have any friends like the one described in the poem above? If yes, who are they?

2. Have you become like the people around you? Explain.

3. What is the difference between a friend and an acquaintance?

4. Where can you make some new acquaintances that might become friends?

MAKING NEW FRIENDS | *continued from other side*

5. To whom are you a friend?

6. What behaviors do you need to change to be better able to have honest relationships?

...





Repairing Relationships

During the course of a substance abuse problem, it is not unusual for people to get hurt. Because the actively addicted person often cannot take care of himself or herself, he or she certainly cannot take care of others.

In recovery, it is often helpful to think about whom you have hurt during your substance abuse and whether you need to do anything or say anything to repair the relationships that are most important to you. In the Twelve Step programs, this process is called “making amends.”

1. What are some of the past behaviors you might want to make amends for?

2. Are there things you neglected to do or say that need amending?

3. How are you planning to go about making the amends?

4. Do you feel that being in recovery and stopping the use of drugs and alcohol is enough? Explain.

REPAIRING RELATIONSHIPS | *continued from other side*

These repair actions do not have to be complicated. Some acknowledgment on your part of the hurt caused by the abuse of drugs and alcohol will probably go a long way to reduce conflict in your relationships. Not everyone will be ready to forgive, but an important part of this process is beginning to forgive yourself. Another part of the relationship repairing has to do with your forgiving others for things that happened as part of the substance abuse process.

5. Whom do you need to forgive?

6. What resentments do you need to let go of?

• • •

Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.



1. What does the above saying mean to you?

2. What do you know you cannot change?

3. What have you changed already?

...



Compulsive Behavior

Many addicted people enter treatment just to stop using drugs and alcohol. They do not intend to change their lives entirely. When they enter treatment, they are told that recovery requires making other changes in the way they are living their lives. The lifestyle changes recommended are focused on getting the recovering person back in control of his or her life.

1. In what ways was your life out of control?

2. Have you noticed yourself behaving excessively in any of the following ways? Check all that apply to you.

- Working all the time
- Using prescription medications
- Abusing other illicit drugs
- Drinking too much caffeine
- Smoking more
- Eating foods high in sugar
- Exercising to the extreme
- Compulsively masturbating
- Gambling
- Spending too much money
- Engaging in compulsive sexual activities
- Other _____

COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR | *continued*

3. What changes have you tried to make so far?



Does the following sound familiar? “I stopped smoking, drinking, and drug use. It was hard. Then one day I gave in and had a cigarette. I felt so bad that I had messed up, I ended up using.” This behavior is called the abstinence violation syndrome.

4. Do you have a similar story from the past? Explain.

5. Are you making major lifestyle changes in this recovery process? Explain.

6. Is it uncomfortable to make these changes?

Yes _____ No _____

7. Are you avoiding being uncomfortable by switching to other compulsive behaviors? Explain.

COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR | *continued*

8. Are there changes you still need to make?

Yes _____ No _____

If so, what are they?

Prevention

Once you are aware of the things that are triggers for you, you can take steps to prevent a relapse. Here are some suggestions of things you can do in order to prevent a relapse:

1. *Prevent exposure to triggers.*

Stay away from people, places, and activities that you associate with drug and alcohol use.

2. *Stop the thoughts that may lead to relapse.*

There are many techniques that can be used to do this. Some examples of thought-stopping techniques are

- Relaxation—take three slow, deep breaths.
- Snapping—wear a rubber band loosely on your wrist, and every time you become aware of a triggering thought, snap the band and say “no!” to the thought.
- Visualization—imagine an on/off switch in your head. Turn it to “off” to stop the triggering thoughts.

These techniques can be very effective in preventing a relapse. It helps to have different pictures or thoughts ready to replace the triggering thoughts. Try these techniques and use those that work best for you.

COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR

3. *Schedule your time.*

Put structure into your day and fill blocks of free time with activities such as spending time with nonrisky friends, exercising, or doing volunteer work.

4. *Do something completely different.*

Get out of town. Go to a movie or watch a video. Go to a meeting.

What are some other things you could do to prevent a relapse?

What do you plan to do the next time you're aware of being in a relapse situation?

...



Dealing with Feelings and Depression

Feelings

Can you recognize your feelings?

Sometimes people don't allow themselves to have certain emotions (for example, feeling angry is not all right, or feeling good means trouble is coming). When you mislabel emotions (saying "I am upset" but meaning "I am depressed" or "I am angry") or deny them, you cannot begin to deal with them.

Are you aware of outward signs of certain feelings?

Maybe you get an upset stomach when you are anxious, or you bite your fingernails when you are stressed, or you yell when you are angry. Think about several emotions that trouble you. Identify how they show physically, what you say to yourself when you're expressing them, and how you behave in response to them.

Can you identify the cause of the feelings?

Emotions can be caused by external events. They can also be caused by internal messages. If you believe you should not feel angry, for instance, you might deny the anger, and the feeling will build up inside you. If you find yourself blaming others for how you feel, you need to recognize that you decide what to feel, and others cannot make you feel any certain way. Be aware of feelings that might be primarily physiological, such as PMS, biological depression, or the Wall.

How do you cope with your feelings now?

Another way of determining how you cope is to look at how your feelings affect you and others around you. For instance, do your constant feelings of anger or depression interfere with your relationships with others? Do people avoid dealing with you, try to keep you from getting upset, or try to make you feel better? Focus on one or two emotions you need to learn to cope with better.



DEALING WITH FEELINGS AND DEPRESSION | *continued*

What are some new coping strategies?

Once you have identified what you feel, you may want to consider expressing it. You can express feelings indirectly (to a trusted group, friend, or therapist), or you can express feelings directly to the people about whom you have the feelings. You will need to learn when direct expression is appropriate and when it is not. You can also make changes in your thinking that can help diminish the feelings. You can change “I am so angry she doesn’t agree with me, I feel like using or drinking” to “It’s all right for someone not to agree with me, and using will not make anything better.” Changing behavior and doing something different are other ways of coping with feelings.

The idea here is not to let out-of-control feelings drive you back to using. Learning to deal (cope) with emotions means allowing yourself to feel and live life with a balance of thinking and feeling, which then determines your behavior.

Depression

One feeling that typically needs to be dealt with in recovery is depression. Although we know drug use, alcohol use, and depression are related, it is not yet known if this relationship exists because depressed people use more or if drug and alcohol use causes depression. Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

Most people report having problems with depression from time to time during recovery. For some people this depression, left untreated, can result in relapse. Therefore, it is important to be aware of signs of depression and to be prepared to cope with the feelings.

1. Symptoms of depression include the following (check all that apply to you):

- Having low energy
- Overeating or not eating
- Having sad thoughts
- Losing interest in career or hobbies
- Sleeping more than usual
- Having a decreased sex drive

DEALING WITH FEELINGS AND DEPRESSION

- _____ Having increased thoughts of drinking
- _____ Having insomnia
- _____ Stopping Twelve Step attendance
- _____ Stopping an exercise program
- _____ Avoiding social activities
- _____ Having feelings of boredom, irritability, or anger
- _____ Having crying spells
- _____ Having suicidal thoughts or actions
- _____ Stopping normal activities such as work or cleaning house

2. List any other signs that you recognize as signaling the beginning of depression.

3. Healthy responses to depression may include the following:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| _____ Increasing exercise | _____ Talking to a spouse |
| _____ Planning some new activities | _____ Talking to a friend |
| _____ Talking to a therapist | _____ Considering evaluation
for medication |

4. List any other ways you have of effectively coping with depression.

• • •



Twelve Step Programs (or Other Spiritual Groups)

What is AA?

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is a worldwide organization that has been in existence since 1935. AA holds free, open meetings throughout the day and evening, seven days per week, to help people who want to stop being controlled by compulsive disorders.

Are these meetings like treatment?

No. They are groups of recovering people helping each other stay sober.

Does a person need to enroll or make an appointment?

No, just show up. Times and places of meetings may be available in your treatment program or by calling AA directly.

What are CA and NA?

CA stands for Cocaine Anonymous, and NA for Narcotics Anonymous. There are also Gamblers Anonymous, Pills Anonymous, Marijuana Anonymous, Crystal Meth Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Emotions Anonymous, and more. The groups are similar, although the specific focus may differ.

Spin-off support groups that use the Twelve Steps include Al-Anon, Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACA), Codependents Anonymous (CODA), and Adult Children of Dysfunctional Families. Often people go to more than one type of group. Most people “shop around” for the type of group and the specific meetings they find most comfortable, relevant, and useful.

What are the Twelve Steps?

The basis of the self-help groups are the Twelve Steps. These are beliefs and activities designed to provide a program for sobriety. There is a strong spiritual aspect to both the Steps and AA.

What if a person is not particularly religious?

One can benefit from AA without being religious or without working the Twelve Steps, and many people in AA fall into the nonreligious category. These people think of the Higher Power in the Steps as a bigger frame of reference or a bigger source of knowledge, and not necessarily as “God.”

TWELVE STEP PROGRAMS (OR OTHER SPIRITUAL GROUPS) | *continued from other side***What does AA offer?**

AA offers the following benefits:

- A safe place to go during recovery
- A place to meet other people who don't use drugs and alcohol
- A spiritual component to recovery
- Emotional support
- Exposure to people who have achieved long-term abstinence
- A worldwide network of support that is always available

• • •

It is strongly recommended that you attend AA, CA, or NA meetings while you are in treatment. Ask other patients for help in choosing the best meeting for you, and sample several different meetings. Try to be open to what you can get out of AA; it may offer social, emotional, or spiritual support, or it may merely offer something to do.





Looking Forward: Dealing with Downtime

Structure is important. Scheduling is important.

Balance is important. Downtime is important. So you're making it work.

Recovery is working because you're working at it. Now what? Do you feel like something is missing? Do you feel like you need to take a break from the routine and get excited about something?

If you are in the Wall stage, you may not be able to feel much excitement about anything. Some of the flat feeling in recovery may be a result of one of the following factors:

- The recovery process the body is going through prevents you from feeling strong feelings of any kind.
- Normal life feels less exciting than life as an addicted person.

There is a trick people use to put a sense of anticipation and excitement into their lives. It is possible to plan certain things and to look forward to them. Some people think of this as building islands—*islands of rest, recreation, or fun; islands to look forward to so that the future doesn't seem so endless and routine. The islands don't need to be big, extravagant things. They can be things like*

- Going out of town for a three-day weekend
- Taking a day off work
- Attending a baseball game
- Visiting relatives
- Going out to eat
- Visiting an old friend

The islands do need to be things you really look forward to doing. They also need to be spaced closely enough so that you don't get too stressed, tired, or bored in between, thereby threatening your recovery.

List some past islands:

What are some possible islands for you now?

 LOOKING FORWARD: DEALING WITH DOWNTIME | *continued from other side*
Downtime*The Problem*

Being in recovery means living responsibly. Deciding what to do, acting intelligently, and constantly staying “with it” can be exhausting. It is easy to run out of energy and become tired and negative. Life can become a cycle of sameness: getting up, going to work, coming home, lying on the couch, going to bed, and then doing it again the next day. People in recovery who allow themselves to get to this state of boredom and exhaustion are very vulnerable to relapse. It is difficult to resist anything or anyone when your energy level is so low.

The Old Answer

Drugs and alcohol provide quick relief from the above state. Using or drinking is an easy, fast way to get relief. All the reasons for not using chemicals are quickly forgotten when the body and mind desperately need refueling.

The New Answer

Each person needs to decide what can provide a refreshing, satisfying break from the daily grind. What works for you may not work for someone else. There are choices as to what you can do in your downtime, but there is no choice as to whether it is necessary to find a downtime activity that works. The more tired and beaten down you become, the less energy there is to use in dealing with anything.

Notice how often you are feeling stressed, impatient, angry, or shut down emotionally. These are signs of needing more downtime. Try some of the activities listed below:

Walking	Bicycling	Going to church
Taking a class	Watching TV	Cooking or eating
Going to the movies	Listening to music	Lying in the sun
Reading	Painting or drawing	Talking with nonusing friends
Playing sports	Fishing	Going to Twelve Step meetings
Writing	Playing with a pet	Playing a musical instrument
Learning meditation/yoga	Exercising	
	Shopping	

What will you do now on a day when you’re stressed and in the past might have said, “I really need a drink” or “I need to get high today”? What will your downtime activity be?



One Day at a Time

Recovering people do not usually relapse because they cannot handle one particular day or one particular situation. Any given day or any single event is usually manageable. Things become unmanageable when the recovering person allows events from the past or fears of the future to contaminate the present.

Beating yourself up with the past makes you less able to handle the present. You are allowing the past to make your recovery more difficult when you find your addicted brain saying things like

“I can never do anything right. I have always blown every opportunity.”

“If I try to do something difficult, I will fail. I always do.”

“I am always letting people down. I have always disappointed everyone.”

1. Can you think of a recent situation in which you allowed the past to make the present more difficult? Explain.

Allowing what *might* happen to overwhelm you is projecting into the future. You cannot deal with the unknown. You can only deal with what is happening right now, today. You are filling yourself with fear when you begin telling yourself things like

“Tomorrow something will happen to ruin this.”

“That person is going to hate me for this.”

“I will never be able to make it.”

2. What are some things you tell yourself to produce fear of the future?

3. What are some other things you can tell yourself to bring you back to the present?



Recreational Activities (Optional)

Read this list of suggested activities and interests and circle ones you might explore in the future:

Acting/dramatics	Fishing	Volleyball	Weight lifting
Singing	Marksmanship	Boxing	Badminton
Amateur radio	Taking snapshots	Go to movies	Home decorating
Darkroom work	Flower arranging	Painting/drawing	Rowing/boating
Archery	Mechanics	Volunteer work	Woodworking
Designing clothes	Talking on the phone	Camping	Scouts, PTA, coaching
Jogging	Baseball/softball	Go to the park	Sailing
Skin diving	Flying/gliding	Playing cards	Wrestling
Attending auctions	Metalwork	Walking	Civic organizations
Dining out	Tennis	Canoeing	Sculpture
Judo/karate	Basketball	Go to plays/lectures	Writing poetry/songs
Squash/handball	Folk dancing	Playing a musical instrument	Collecting coins, antiques, and so on
Attending concerts	Model building	Watching sports	Horseback riding
Driving	Traveling	Carpentry	Sewing
Kite flying	Bicycling	Golf	Writing letters
Sunbathing	Football	Political activities	Cooking/baking
Attending swap meets	Motorboating	Watching TV	Horseshoes
Electronics	Video games	Ceramics/pottery	Shuffleboard
Knitting/crocheting	Billiards/pool	Green Peace	Crossword puzzles
Surfing	Fraternal organizations	Reading	Hunting
Auto racing	Motorcycling	Waterskiing	Sierra Club
Encounter groups	Visiting friends	Checkers	Dancing lessons
Leatherwork	Bird-watching	Gymnastics	Ice-skating
Swimming	Gardening	Religious activities	Sightseeing
Auto repairing	Mountain climbing	Weaving	Social dancing
Fencing	Visiting museums	Chess	Jewelry making
Listening to music	Bowling	Hiking	Child-related activities
Table tennis/Ping-Pong	Go to garage/yard sales	Roller-skating	Skiing
Backpacking	Needlework		



Holidays and Recovery (Optional)

Holiday seasons are often a hard time for people in recovery. Many things can happen to increase the risk of relapse. Review the list below and check the items that might cause problems for you and your recovery program during the holidays:

- _____ More alcohol and drugs at parties
- _____ Money stress due to gift buying
- _____ Increased stress due to heavier traffic
- _____ Increased stress due to crowded shopping areas
- _____ Interruption of normal routine
- _____ Stopping exercise
- _____ Stopping spiritual meetings
- _____ Stopping therapy
- _____ Party atmosphere
- _____ More (or no) contact with family
- _____ Increased emotions from holiday memories
- _____ Increased anxiety regarding triggers and cravings
- _____ Stress from not having time to meet responsibilities
- _____ Dealing with New Year's Eve and other party occasions
- _____ Extra free time with no structure
- _____ Other _____

HOLIDAYS AND RECOVERY (OPTIONAL) | *continued from other side***Scoring:**

Mild: If you checked one to three items, you are lucky. The holidays produce only a slightly increased risk of relapse.

Moderate: If you checked four to six items, the holidays add lots of stress to your life. Relapse risk is related to how well you cope with increased stress. Your score indicates that you need to plan carefully for your recovery during the holidays.

Severe: Seven or more items checked indicates that the holidays add a major amount of stress to your life. Relapse prevention means learning how to recognize added stress and taking extra care during dangerous periods. Your score indicates the holidays are one of these periods for you.

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No one has to relapse. No one benefits from a relapse. Think about your recovery plan. Add some meetings. Schedule your time. See your therapist. Use the tools that have helped you in recovery to stay drug and alcohol free through this stressful time.