

Understanding Relapse

What is Relapse?

Relapse is a process of falling back into old behavior. Relapse begins at least 90 days before you take your first _____ drink, drug, raging episode, gorging, internet surfing, gambling, codependent action or before the addiction takes place.

Things that can lead to relapse include:

- Blowing off your support groups / accountability meetings
- Not making wise choices about “company” you keep
- Feeling that you have “the problem” under control
- Isolating
- Not working out stresses and problems at home, work or school, and when these build up or a crisis happens, you go back to _____
- Not dealing with stresses such as problems with your finances, with your relationships, health, or with the legal system
- Not handling negative feelings such as boredom, loneliness or anger
- Giving in to cravings or urges to use, justifying your actions or thoughts
- Not doing a daily inventory – analyzing yourself, struggles, emotions, attitudes, etc.
- Becoming “self-centered” and prideful
- Not focusing on something greater and more powerful than yourself (e.g. your passions, vision, purpose, higher power)

To avoid relapse: AKA “Relapse Prevention Plan”

1. Act on the RELAPSE acrostic! Work the Steps and Principles to the best of your ability!!
2. HALT. Inventory yourself. Are you Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired? Or, do a
3. HEART check – are you Hurting, Exhausted, Angry, Resentful, or Tense?
4. Gain support. Go to support/accountability meetings; call your accountability partners & sponsors
5. Be HONEST with yourself, your higher power (if applies) and others!!!!
6. Deal with stressful situations, don't isolate and ignore them. Stress is a trigger.
7. Journal your thoughts, good & bad. Keep records of your successes and refer back to them.
8. Plan your days. Let your sponsors and/or accountability partners know where you are, especially if you are recently sober or in recovery. Make “routine” a part of your life.
9. Make a plan! Identify and plan for high-risk situations. Everyone faces high-risk situations at some time – you will find yourself in situations where you want to “escape”. These situations can be handled more easily if you know ahead of time what they will be. Make a plan and practice what you will do or say, so you do not worry about what to do under pressure. You can avoid relapse!!!

Understanding Relapse

Are these High-Risk Situations for You? High-risk situations are those situations where you are most likely to relapse. Check off the danger areas that apply to you:

- When I pass a convenient store, pub, “book store”, lounge or “place”
- When I’m with others who are involved with _____
- When I feel no one really care or when I indulge in self-pity
- Watching late night TV or internet surfing
- When I have to meet people or am in uncomfortable situations
- When I feel depressed, grief, fear, loneliness or bored
- When I feel I am being punished unjustly or when things don’t go my way
- During holidays, birthdays or vacations
- When I have money or when I don’t have money
- When I remember the good times or pleasures of using
- When I feel resentful, bitter, angry or frustrated
- When I’m at a party
- When I start thinking I am not really an addict, pride is creeping in
- When I feel controlled, minimized, dismissed
- When I feel guilty
- When I feel disappointed that other people are letting me down

Have a plan ready to execute *when* faced with a high-risk situation:

- If you must attend an office party where you know there will be alcohol: when asked, “Would you like a drink?” plan (and rehearse) to say, “Yes, I would love a sprite, thanks” (with a smile).
- Go to the party late and leave early. Have an alternative place to go, like a meeting, coffee house, movie or to a “safe” friend’s house.
- At parties, stay away from the Christmas rum balls, punches or eggnog, they could be triggers
- Surround yourself with positive, supportive and encouraging people who want to see you recover and experience a prosperous life.
- Take a different route to and from work (or other places) to avoid passing “that” place.
- Roll play with your sponsor or accountability partner. He/she will “temp” you to “cross that line”, you respond with the dialogue that will get you out of that situation relapse free.
- Remember how far you have come. Remind yourself of the pain that you have caused yourself and others. When tempted or while facing the cravings; go for a walk, clean the house, relax with a good book, read self-help books or spiritual/religious texts, attend therapy, surround yourself in community, set and maintain boundaries. Picture a STOP sign in your mind, see your Supreme power in your mind’s eye if it applies. Repeat affirmation or readings from spiritual/religious/self-help text. Enjoy a hobby, be kind to yourself, eat fruit.