

RELAPSE PREVENTION PLANNING

GOALS OF THE EXERCISE

1. Practice a program of recovery that includes regular participation in recovery group meetings, working with a sponsor, and helping others in recovery.
2. Develop a relapse prevention plan of action using information gathered in previous exercises.
3. Develop coping skills to use when experiencing high-risk situations and/or cravings.
4. Take greater responsibility for recovery and increase chances of success through planning.

ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS FOR WHICH THIS EXERCISE MAY BE USEFUL

- Gambling
- Opioid Dependence
- Peer Group Negativity
- Substance Abuse/Dependence

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESSING THIS EXERCISE WITH CLIENT

The “Relapse Prevention Planning” activity is for clients beginning in recovery or experiencing stresses that raise the risk of relapse. It provides a structured framework drawing on earlier exercises to anticipate relapse triggers and cues, plan coping or avoidance strategies, spot early warning signs of relapse, and identify resources and strategies to use to maintain recovery. For best results, have the client complete “Identifying Relapse Triggers and Cues” and “Early Warning Signs of Relapse” before this activity. Follow-up may include having the client present the plan to the therapist, treatment group, and sponsor; keep a journal; and report on outcomes.

RELAPSE PREVENTION PLANNING

If you have identified your own personal relapse triggers and relapse warning signs, you have a good understanding of your relapse process and how to spot it early, before it leads you to an actual return to your addiction. Now it's time to take this information and plan specific strategies to put it to use. The more work you do on this plan and the more specific you are, the more prepared you will be to deal with day-to-day living and unexpected stressful events without reliance on alcohol, other drugs, or other addictive behavior patterns.

1. First, consider your thoughts and feelings about sobriety. Are you ready to take any action needed, to go to any lengths, and to live your life without using mind-altering chemicals or addictive behaviors to block painful feelings or seek pleasure? Describe your attitude about this.

2. What consequences are likely if you relapse?

3. Refer to the exercises on relapse triggers and warning signs or draw on whatever information you have about the process of relapse. List what you consider your five most important relapse triggers and warning signs and what you will do to cope with each of them.

Triggers/Warning Signs

Ex.: Feeling hopeless

Ex.: Urge to use

Specific Plan to Avoid Drinking or Using

Review progress, ask others what growth they see

Attend meetings, contact sponsor, meditate

Work with your therapist, your group, or others to rehearse how you'll handle these situations.

- Recovery is not a solo process, which is why people who try to quit without help from others usually relapse. Who will you contact for support and assistance? List four people here.

Name	Phone number
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- Emergency planning.* Your relapse prevention plan should include what you will do if you encounter a crisis—a stressful situation that triggers a strong urge to use or drink. This plan should be simple—it should be something you can start doing right away. If you encounter an unexpected event that puts you at risk, your plan of action will be:

- You should also have some general-purpose strategies ready for use if you encounter relapse triggers or warning signs you hadn't specifically planned for. List three general-purpose strategies to stay clean and sober here.

- Changing your routine is important in staying sober. How will you begin and end each day?

- Your plan should include support groups—Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, and so on. List meetings you will commit yourself to attend regularly.

Name of Group	Day and Time	Location
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

9. Do you foresee any obstacles/barriers to implementing this plan? If so, what are they?

10. What will you do about these roadblocks to your recovery or any others you experience?

11. If your plan isn't enough, and you relapse, what will you do to get back on track in your recovery as quickly as you can?

12. Are there parts of this plan that you are already carrying out? What are they and how well are they working?

13. Now that you have your plan made, it's important to monitor your success with it and correct or add to it as needed. When and with whom will you make regular progress checks?

Person

When You Will Talk about Your Progress

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Be sure to bring this handout back to your next therapy session, and be prepared to talk about your thoughts and feelings about the exercise.