

THE RELAPSE DYNAMIC

Relapse does not begin with the first drink. It begins with the returning to old behavior of denial, isolation, increasing stress and impaired judgment. Terence T. Gorski identified these patterns of behavior in 1973, after the completion of 118 clinical interviews with alcoholic patients who had completed a 21 to 28 day treatment program. These patients who had conscious intention of staying sober but eventually returned to drinking. The most commonly reported symptoms leading to relapse or loss of control are as follows:

1. Apprehension About Well-Being - A sense of fear and uncertainty. Lack of self-confidence. This apprehension was often short-lived.
2. Denial - Denying feelings of stress.
3. Saying-"I'll Never Drink Again" - Taking credit for sobriety rather than thanking Higher Power or the support group.
4. Feeling the need to Impose Sobriety on Others - Focusing on drinking friends and spouses rather than working their own program.
5. Defensiveness - The patient became defensive when talking about his problems or recovery program.
6. Compulsive Behavior - Behavior became rigid and repetitive.
7. Impulsive Behavior - Making major decisions by overreacting to stress.
8. Tendencies Toward Loneliness - Began to isolate from people at increasing lengths of time.
9. Tunnel Vision - Seeing only one area of my life such as just the good or just the bad experiences.
10. Minor Depressions - Become listless and oversleep too much.
11. Loss of Good Planning - Stopped making any life plans and returned to wishful thinking.
12. Plans Begin to Fail - Not following plans or setting objectives that could not be fulfilled.
13. Daydreaming and Wishful Thinking - Using fantasies to escape. Thinking "if only" this was different everything would be O. K.

1) What are some of the strongest trigger for you?

2) What particular triggers might be a problem in the near future?

4. List people you could be with and not use drugs and/or alcohol.

TRIGGER CHART

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: List people, places, objects, or situations below according to their degrees of association with drugs or alcohol use.

0%
Chance of using / _____ / _____ / _____

NEVER USED	ALMOST NEVER USED	ALMOST ALWAYS USE	ALWAYS USE

These are "safe" situations.

These are low risk, but caution is needed.

These situations are high risk. Staying in these are extremely dangerous.

Involvement in this situation is deciding
AVOID TOTAL

2. I TEND TO FEEL:

3. I USUALLY DO:

2. SOLUTION:

A. I CAN THINK:

B. I CAN MANAGE MY EMOTIONS BY:

C. WHEN THIS HAPPENS:

1. I TEND TO THINK: _____

2. I TEND TO FEEL: _____

3. I USUALLY DO: _____

2. SOLUTION:

A. I CAN THINK: _____

B. I CAN MANAGE MY EMOTIONS BY: _____

2. I TEND TO FEEL: _____

3. I USUALLY DO: _____

2. SOLUTION:

A. I CAN THINK: _____

B. I CAN MANAGE MY EMOTIONS BY: _____

C. I CAN CHANGE MY BEHAVIOR BY: _____

D. I CAN CHANGE THE SITUATION BY: _____

If you continue to have a problem, consider moving out for a while.

Boredom/Loneliness

Stopping drug and alcohol use often means that many normal activities and people must be avoided.

Put new activities in your schedule.

Go back to activities you enjoyed before your addiction took over.

Develop new friends at 12-Step, exchange telephone numbers.

Special Occasions

Parties, dinner, business meetings, weddings, holidays, etc. without alcohol and drugs can be difficult.

Have a plan for answering questions about not drinking.

Have your own transportation to and from events.

Leave if you get uncomfortable or start feeling deprived.

Are any of these issues likely to be a problem for you in the next few weeks? Which ones?

How will you deal with them?

4. Alcohol affects the rational, thinking part of the brain. It is difficult 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"?

5. As 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 to socialize, it feels uncomfortable without it.

Do you depend on alcohol for sexual or social reasons?

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?

Arguments

Have you been able to stop using alcohol completely? For people addiction to cocaine, opiates, and prescription drugs, alcohol use is often not seen as a problem. At about 6 weeks into the recovery process, many people return to alcohol use. Has your addicted brain played with the idea? These are some of the most common arguments against stopping the use of alcohol.

"I came here to stop using cocaine, not to stop drinking."

Cocaine treatment includes stopping alcohol and other drug use. It is part of stopping cocaine use.

"I've drunk and not used, so it doesn't make any difference."

Drinking over time greatly increases the risk of relapse and re-addiction. A single drink does not necessarily cause relapse

anymore than a single cigarette causes lung cancer. However, with continued drinking, the risks of relapse are greatly increased.

"Drinking actually helps. When I have cravings (for stimulants, opiates, or benzodiazepines) a drink calms me down and the craving goes away."

Alcohol interferes with the chemical healing in the brain. Continued alcohol use eventually intensifies cravings, even if one drink seems to reduce cravings.

"I'm not an alcoholic so why do I need to stop drinking?"

If you're not an alcoholic, you should have no problem stopping alcohol use. If you can't stop, maybe alcohol is more of a problem than you realize.

"I'm never going to use drugs again but I'm not sure I'll never drink again."

Make a commitment to total abstinence, choose a period of time that feels comfortable to you. Give yourself the chance to make a decision about alcohol with a drug-free brain. If you reject alcohol abstinence because "forever" scares you, then you're justifying drinking now and risking becoming re-addicted to drugs.

1. Has your addicted brain presented you with other justifications? (If yes, what are they?)

Behavior

What you do is called behavior. Work is behavior. Play is behavior. Going to treatment is behavior, and using drugs and/or alcohol is behavior. Behavior can result from an emotion, from a thought or from a combination of both. Addiction to substances floods your thoughts and pushes your emotions toward drug and/or alcohol use. This very powerful, automatic process has to be brought back under control for recovery to occur. Structuring time, attending 12-Step meetings and engaging in new activities are all ways of regaining control. The goal in recovery is to learn to combine your thinking and feeling self and behave in ways that are best for you and your life.

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 clear 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 to list and track the things that are holding your recovery in place. Follow these guidelines when filling out the form:

1. Identify 4 or 5 specific things that are now helping you stay sober. (e.g., working-out for 20 minutes, 3 times per week).
2. Include items such as exercise, therapist and group appointments, scheduling 12-Step meetings, eating patterns, etc.

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

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

SHAME

_____ Do you feel ashamed of being an addict/alcoholic?

_____ Do you feel you are weak because you couldn't or can't stop drinking/using?

_____ Do you feel you are stupid because of what you have done?

_____ Do you feel like you are a bad person because you are involved with alcohol/drugs?

Does being alone now remind you of the experience?

3. Being involved with people and doing things keeps 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 addict 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?

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 off drugs/alcohol today? Explain why or why not.

Truthfulness

During Addiction

Not being truthful is part of addiction. It is very hard to meet the demands of daily living (in relationships, in families, in jobs, etc.) and also use drugs and alcohol regularly. As the addiction increases, so do the activities that are necessary to obtain, use, and recover from the drug/alcohol use. It becomes more and more difficult to keep everything going smoothly and addicts/alcoholics find themselves doing and saying whatever is necessary to avoid problems. Truthfulness is not a consideration.

In what ways were you less truthful during your addiction?

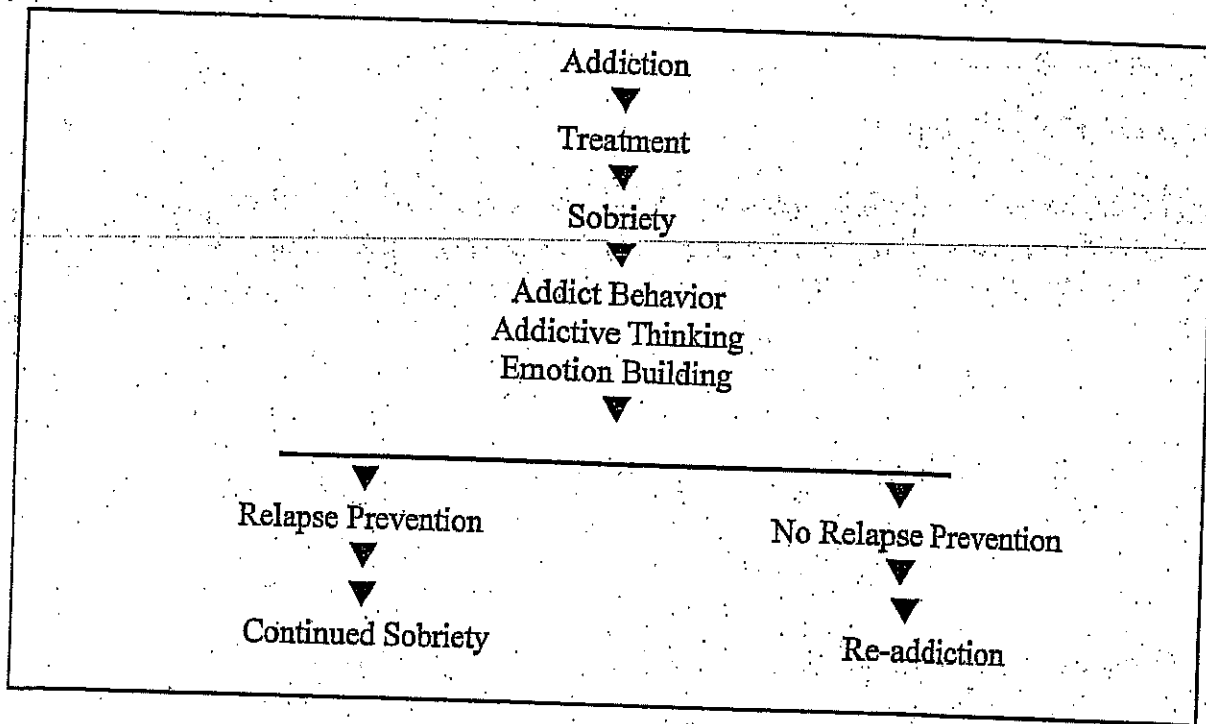
Relapse Prevention

Why is relapse prevention important?

Recovery is more than not using drugs and alcohol. The first step in treatment is stopping drug/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/alcohol use and to all the behaviors and patterns that go with that. Often the behaviors and patterns return before the actual drug/alcohol use. Learning to recognize the beginning of a relapse can help the recovering person stop the process before actual drug/alcohol use begins. The choice looks like this:



What is Addict Behavior?

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

Defining Spirituality

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

Spirituality is:

1. A person's relationship with God.
2. The deepest level from which a human being operates.
3. The philosophical context of a person's life (i.e. values, rules, attitudes and views).
4. The same as religion.

The number 2 and 3 definitions described spirituality in a broad sense. Many people in Twelve-Step programs believe that these broad definitions are the most useful way to think of spirituality. They view being spiritual as having to do with a person's spirit or soul, as distinguished from physical nature. Most people in Twelve-Step programs believe the level and degree of spirituality in a person's life will dictate the quality of life. Ernie Larsen (Finding Inner Peace, 1988) suggests you can assess the quality of your spirituality by answering the following questions:

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

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

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

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; both 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 (i.e. marketing, 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.

The first item of business I need to take care of is: _____

I will start by: _____

The second item of business I need to take care of is: _____

I will start by: _____

Dangerous Emotions

For many people there are certain emotional states that are "red flags" feelings that are often viewed by people in recovery as "the reason I use." It seems to the recovering person 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:

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 non-using friends and family members are not ready to get together with the addict/alcoholic. 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 moving the person back toward 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/alcohol use and can be a long trip back to the rational state of mind.

Deprived-Becoming drug and/or 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 sobriety 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.

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

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

Recognizing Stress

Stress is what a person experiences as the result of difficult or upsetting events, particularly those which 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 off any of the following problems you have experienced in the past 30 days:

- 1. Sleep problems
 - a. Difficulty falling asleep.
 - b. Waking up often and on during the night.
 - c. Nightmares
 - d. Waking up early and being unable to fall back to sleep.
- 2. Headaches
- 3. Stomach problems
- 4. Chronic illness
- 5. Fatigue
- 6. Moodiness
- 7. Irritability
- 8. Difficulty concentrating
- 9. General dissatisfaction with life.
- 10. Feeling overwhelmed

If you have checked 2 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.

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 areas 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 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. Do you know how to use self-relaxation techniques to relax your body and do you allow times in your day to do it? Yes _____ No _____
8. Are you careful to avoid large swings in body energy cause by taking in excess sugar and caffeine? Yes _____ No _____

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 just 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?

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

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

Repairing Relationships

During the course of a substance abuse problem, it is not unusual for people to get hurt. Since the active addict/alcoholic often cannot take care of him/herself, he/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 12-Step programs this process is called "making amends."

What are some of the past behaviors you might want to amend?

Are things you neglected to do or say that need mentioning?

How are you planning to go about making the amends?

Dealing with Feelings - Depression

Can you recognize your feelings?

Sometimes people don't allow themselves to have certain emotions (i.e. feeling angry is not all right or feeling good means trouble is coming). When you mislabel emotions ("I am upset," 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 look at the fact 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 this is to look at how your feelings affect you and others around you. For instance, does your feeling constantly angry or depressed 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.

What are some new coping strategies?

Once you have identified how you feel, you may want to consider expressing it. You can express

Responses to treat Depression

- Increase exercise
- Plan some new activities
- Talk to a therapist
- Talk to a spouse
- Talk to a friend
- Consider evaluation for medication

Do you have any other ways of effectively coping with depression?

Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity

To accept the things I cannot change,

Courage to change the things I can,

And wisdom to know the difference.

What does it mean to you?

What do you know you cannot change?

___ Playing with a pet

___ Exercising

___ Shopping

___ Church

___ Cooking, Eating

___ Lying in the sun

___ Talking with non-using friends

___ Going to 12-Step meetings

___ Playing a musical instrument

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 be?

Discuss one of the following:

1. Which areas have improved the most since you entered treatment?
2. What are your weakest areas and how are you planning to improve them?
3. What would need to change for you to be satisfied with the neutral or less areas?

Recreational Activities

Read these suggested activities and circle ones you might try in the future:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Acting/Dramatics | Talking on the phone | Playing cards |
| Sculpture | Amateur radio | Baseball/Softball |
| Walking | Writing poetry/songs | Darkroom work |
| Flying/Gliding | Go to plays/lectures | Collecting coins, antiques,
etc. |
| Archery | Metalwork | Playing a musical instrument |
| Horseback riding | Designing Clothes | Tennis |
| Watching Sports | Writing Letters | Jogging |
| Basketball | Carpentry | Cooking/Baking |
| Sky-diving | Folk Dancing | Golf |
| Horseshoes | Attending auctions | Model building |
| Political activities | Shuffleboard | Dining out |
| Traveling | Watching TV | Crossword puzzles |
| Judo/Karate | Bicycling | Ceramics/Pottery |
| Hunting | Squash/Handball | Football |
| Green Peace | Sierra Club | Attending Concerts |
| Motor boating | Reading | Dancing Lessons |
| Driving | Video games | Water skiing |
| Sightseeing | Kite flying | Billiards/Pool |
| Checkers | Jewelry making | Sunbathing |
| Fraternal Organizations | Gymnastics | Child related activities |
| Attending swap meet | Motorcycling | Religious activities |
| Electronics | Visiting friends | Weaving |
| Knitting/Crocheting | Bird watching | Chess |
| Surfboarding | Gardening | Leatherwork |
| Mountain Climbing | Hiking/Walking | Swimming |
| Visiting Museum | Roller Skating | Auto Repair |

3. Name: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

NIGHT TIME

1. Name: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

TWELVE STEP MEETING DOCUMENTATION

DATE: _____ TIME: _____ Location: _____

**HOW I CAN APPLY INFORMATION LEARNED AT THIS MEETING TOWARDS MY
RELAPSE PREVENTION PLAN:**

