Relapse Prevention

SupportNet Recovery Learning Series

- Believe that Recovery is Possible

John Craven MD

“It’s like there’s something pulling at me.

I know I need to stay away - that it will kill me if I don’t.

But it’s like there’s an invisible rope - drawing me towards it.”
Relapse Prevention

SupportNet Recovery Learning Series

Believe that Recovery is Possible

Relapse Prevention -

from the Recovery Learning Series at SupportNet.ca - Resources for Your Recovery
Introduction

Recovery . . .

- Is learning to enjoy life - without the use of alcohol or drugs that alter mind or mood.

- Is treatment for the condition of addiction - an approach to the challenges of life - and a path to personal growth.

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Recovery is learning to enjoy life - without the use of alcohol or drugs that alter mind or mood.

It is treatment for the condition of addiction - an approach to the challenges of life - and a path to personal growth.
Recovery ...  

Requires us to learn - about the true nature of addiction.

It may be personalized - but it has its necessary Principles and its Ways.

The Principles of Recovery provide direction - to the choices that we face each day. The Ways of Recovery provide us with tools - that help us to heal - and to enjoy life on life’s terms.
What You Will Learn

- Risk of Relapse
- Relapse Prevention
- Identify Your Greatest Personal Risk

This Learning Seminar introduces the topic of *Relapse Prevention* -

What you need to know to protect your recovery today.
What You Need to Know

Relapse Prevention

Staying stopped . . .

Recovery from addiction is not just about stopping to use drugs.

It is about staying stopped. And to stay stopped requires an understanding of the condition of addiction - and ongoing attention to the risk of relapse.

Even with the greatest determination otherwise - the compulsion to use seems to linger - waiting for moments of crisis, complacency, anger, or despair.

Recovery from addiction is not just about stopping to use drugs.

It is about staying stopped. And to stay stopped requires an understanding of the condition of addiction - and ongoing attention to the risk of relapse.
Relapse does not just happen. There are factors that contribute to relapse. And there is always indication that relapsed use is at hand.

During early recovery - it is people, places, feelings and things that may trigger the compulsion to use.

Entering a pharmacy - going to a bar - spending time with those who use drugs - holding resentment - being near to alcohol or drugs - or going out alone at night.

Any of these and many more - may trigger the compulsion to use.
Anger, shame, self-pity and fear may be a grave risk to early recovery.

These feelings of sickness are common in recovery - and have long been recognized as the most immediate triggers to relapsed use.
Triggers to use . . .

A common recovery phrase is to avoid *HALT* - don't let yourself get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired.

Feeling unwell in these ways is always a risk to recovery.

The symptoms of Post Acute Withdrawal will frustrate our day - particularly during times of conflict, commotion or stress.

Urges to use may occur in response to feelings of nervousness or confusion.
Relapse Risk

Triggers to use . . .

There are countless potential triggers to the relapsed use of alcohol or drugs.

But most of us have one or two situations or people - most dangerous to our recovery.

A difficult boss - a friend who continues to use - trying to please others - care taking - or the trauma of a destructive relationship. Family disagreements will also stir the most intense of feeling within us.

Each of us in recovery has one particular situation, person or habit most likely to stir the feelings that place us at risk of relapse.
Relapse Prevention

Protect your self . . .

A traditional saying is that - *Relapse is a natural - but not a necessary part of recovery* - from addiction.

The key is learning to protect your self - and to recognize the early indications of potential relapse.

Relapse prevention is about creating a buffer - between ourselves and the relapsed use of alcohol or drugs.
A first principle of relapse prevention - is to understand and respect the compulsive drive of addiction.

People, places, feelings and things may trigger a compulsion to use.

Strict boundaries are necessary to avoid these triggers.
Relapse prevention may mean to discard certain phone numbers, to avoid risky people, to change where you spend time and to rid your household of all drugs and apparatus.

If you know that you cannot face a certain person or situation without relapse - it is necessary to avoid these - until you have grown stronger in your recovery.

If you must deal with such a person or situation - do not do so alone - but in the company of a recovery support.
A second principle of relapse prevention is again - to avoid HALT - Don't let yourself get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired.

These feelings will trigger urges to use - they worsen the symptoms of Post Acute Withdrawal - and wear away at our determination for recovery.

Recovery encourages balance in lifestyle - and our connection with others in recovery.
A third principle of relapse prevention - is to identify your greatest personal risk.

It may be a feeling - such as anger, fear, guilt or self-pity. It may be that you allow your ego to take over your recovery - to tell yourself that you've got it beat.

Your greatest risk may be that person most likely to stir intense feelings within yourself - a parent, spouse or difficult boss at work.
Relapse Prevention

Your personal risk . . .

Make specific plans about how to respond to those times when you face your greatest risk to relapse.

Harsh decisions may sometimes be necessary for early recovery to take hold.

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Make specific plans about how to respond to those times when you face your greatest risk to relapse. Walk away from any conflict. Ask for help from your recovery supports.

Harsh decisions may sometimes be necessary for early recovery to take hold.
And finally, a fourth principle of relapse prevention is to practice the Principles and Ways of recovery in your everyday life.

The Principles of Recovery help us to make choices - less likely to result in further conflict, crisis or stress.

The healing Ways of Recovery provide us with tools - to deal with life on life's terms.
Relapse Prevention

The Ways of Recovery . . .

Ask for help in the morning. Give thanks at night. Do what you need to do in between.

Connect with others and recovery - and support each other in your efforts to avoid relapse.

Learn how to care for, calm and express yourself. Apply the strategies of anger and stress management.
Your Personal Program

Write it down . . .

Include strategies for relapse prevention within your Personal Program of Recovery.

Write your program down - and follow it each day.

Include strategies for relapse prevention within your Personal Program of Recovery.

Write your program down - and follow it each day. An early indication of potential relapse may be a relaxation of your usual recovery routine.
Your Personal Program

Learn new ways . . .

Learn to deal with everyday issues as they arise.

Express and let go of feelings - before they build.

Learn to deal with everyday issues as they arise. Talk with others. Journal write. Learn to express and to let go of feelings - before they build to higher levels of tension.

Say the serenity prayer often. Repeat positive affirmations. Recall the phrases of recovery. Attend to recovery support meetings. Connect with others in recovery. Take moments in your day to pause - to question and to reflect on the thoughts you hold in your mind.
Your Personal Program

Relapse Prevention

Learn new ways . . .

Remember that urges to use do not last for long. Remember *This Too Shall Pass*.

Talk with another person and recovery. Let them know that you are having urges.

Remember that urges to use do not last for long. Remember *This Too Shall Pass*. Have a plan to distract yourself. Substitute another behavior - Jog, eat, have a shower or go for a swim.

Buy yourself time. Go for a walk in a safe area. Talk with another person in recovery. Let them know that you are having urges. This is a traditional way to defuse the power of urges to use.
Don’t test . . .

Don't test yourself. This is always a losing game.

If you test yourself and use - then you have lost. If you test yourself and do not use - you will test yourself further.

Testing your resilience in recovery is like playing the video game. You will always lose in the end.
In Summary . . .

Recovery from addiction is not just about stopping to use drugs.

Recovery is learning to stay stopped - by learning about the condition of addiction - about our selves - and the means to stay well.

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In Summary . . .

Relapse Prevention provides a buffer - between our selves and the relapsed use of alcohol or drugs.

It is empowered by our practice of the Principles and Ways of Recovery - and holds a vital role in our Personal Program of Recovery.
You have now reached the end of *Relapse Prevention*.

Look for this and other Learning Series topics at www.SupportNet.ca - Resources for Your Recovery.