

Suggestions For Relapse Prevention

DEFINITION: **re-lapse** (*verb*)

To fall back into a previous condition, especially after a partial recovery from illness.

We believe that our addiction is a disease; a disease from which we can recover one day at a time. As with any other disease, the potential for relapse is very real and deadly. The greatest difference between our disease and say, that of cancer, is we have a choice. It's with this fact in mind that we of Cocaine Anonymous wish to offer our experience as it relates to relapse - both prevention and recovery.

Prevention

The following suggestions have been invaluable to the prevention of relapse by those of us in recovery in Cocaine Anonymous.



1) ABSTINENCE

We suggest that any person desiring recovery abstain from the use of any mind-altering substances. We have found that as addicts, we possess an uncanny ability to switch drugs. Again, addiction is not the drug, it is the disease.

2) TRIGGERS

Many of us weren't aware of those things that prompted our use. We view these as triggers, some of which are as follows:

Places

In recovery, we found it wise to be aware of our motives for being in certain places. Most of us found it necessary to stay away from clubs, parties, rock houses, pool halls and other places where we used

People

It's difficult to understand, but necessary to do, and that is to stay away from our using friends. We had to be mindful that they too are sick and at no time are we stronger in our recovery than they are in their disease. They have the power to trigger our relapse by and through their behaviour

Dealing

Here, many of us face a dilemma. We were addicted to the money and the excitement. We dealt for power and for control. Many of us relapse because we lost sight of our lack of personal power

3) MEETING

We suggest a meeting a day for newcomers. We also suggest a meeting whenever you don't feel like you need one. We have found that **WHEN WE DON'T WANT TO GO** is **WHEN WE DO NEED TO GO**. Again, meetings are where our collective experience, strength and hope are shared

4) KEEPING IN TOUCH

Keeping in touch with a sponsor or friend in recovery is an ideal way of keeping your focus on recovery

5) HUNGRY

Don't get too hungry. While Cocaine Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues, we have found that it's difficult to maintain emotional balance without the aid of eating regularly throughout the day

6) ANGRY

It is said that this emotion is best left up to those better equipped to deal with it. As people in recovery, we have found that lingering anger, whether justified or not, is better left to others. There is no shorter course to getting loaded than a run with anger and resentment

7) LONELY

It's been our experience that an addict alone by himself is the worst possible company. Again, we suggest meetings and fellowship. For those of us who isolated behind closet and bathroom doors or tin-foiled windows, being around others is at first an unnerving experience. After we tried it, and sincerely gave it some time, we found a new freedom and friendships that we never dreamed possible

8) TIRED

It took some time for many of us to reach regular sleep habits. While it's not known of people dying of lack of sleep, we do know of many instances where a tired addict reached for that bump or jump-start and relapsed

9) ACTION/ WORK

Again, we say that it's a rare case where someone actually working the steps has relapsed. We have found that as long as our focus is on the steps and the action required to work them, relapse is a remote, rare thought

10) PHRASE

These simple sayings or prayers have helped many of us through those times:

This too shall pass

- It's difficult to remember, but in daily recovery, whatever the feeling or problem is, it will pass on

The 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."

- *This prayer is not designed to make a problem disappear. Its purpose is to bring peace to the user*

First things first

- *You can only do what's in front of you*

One day at a time

- *Not for the rest of your life. Focus on staying clean and sober for this day (or hour or minute) only*

Let go and let God

- *Do the foot work but leave the results up to your Higher Power*

11) SIGNS OF RELAPSE

The following are some of the signs that have preceded relapses:

- I deny my fear
- I convince myself that "I'll never drink/use again."
- I decide that "not using" is all I need
- I try to force sobriety on others
- I become overconfident about my recovery
- I behave compulsively... I overwork or under work, I over talk or withdraw
- I start isolating
- I make unrealistic or haphazard plans
- I live in the "there and then."
- I start daydreaming of failure
- I view my problems as unsolvable
- I avoid having fun
- I over-analyze myself
- I become irritated by friends or family
- I become irritated by friends or family
- I am easily angered
- I begin blaming people, places, things and conditions for my problems
- I begin doubting my disease
- I eat irregularly (over- or under eating, snacking).
- I have listless periods
- I sleep irregularly (oversleeping, under sleeping).
- I experience periods of deep depression
- I develop an "I don't care" attitude
- I hoard money, sex or power

- I openly reject help
- I rationalize that drinking or using can't make my life worse than it is now
- I feel sorry for myself
- I have fantasies of social drinking or using
- I begin to lie consciously
- I increase my use of aspirin or other non-prescription medications
- I am overwhelmed with loneliness, frustration, anger and tension
- I begin contacting or visiting my drinking or using "friends" and places
- I convince myself I'm cured
- I lose control
- I tell myself it's okay to deal. I can use the money. It will be quick and easy

What if I do relapse?

- Call your sponsor, hotline or other sober member of Cocaine Anonymous. Stay in touch
- Keep going to meetings. The only requirement is a desire to stop using
- Keep affirming your desire by getting newcomer chips
- Remember, no matter what... **KEEP COMING BACK**

Allow us to love you until you can love yourself.

It does work!

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