

UNITED STATES PROBATION OFFICE
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

Relapse Prevention and Emergency Plan

U.S. Probation Office
Middle District of Florida



Client: _____ Date: _____ PACTS #: _____

What is relapse?

A relapse is a return to a prior state. A relapse occurs after a period of sobriety (60-90 days).

When a person relapses, a decision is made that the old way was, at least momentarily, better than the new way.

A relapse can mean:

- A person uses drugs or alcohol after a period of sobriety
- A person experiences a “slip-up” or uses drugs or alcohol once, and then returns to sobriety
- A person returns to drug or alcohol use after treatment and then returns to rehab
- A person experiences a full relapse and slips into old patterns and habits

A relapse does not mean:

- That you are a failure
- That rehabilitation or treatment did not work or can’t work for you
- That all your meaningful forward progress was lost

The 3 Stages of Relapse



1. Emotional Relapse: Involves re-experiencing emotions that you used to feel when actively using alcohol and drugs.

- Denial (I don’t need any help, I don’t have a problem, I can stop whenever I want)
- Irritability (disagreeable, blaming others, bottling emotions)
- Isolation (avoid friends, family, and support members, feelings of helplessness or hopelessness)



2. Mental Relapse: When a person actively thinks, reminisces, or fantasizes about using drugs or alcohol again.

- Remembering the “good old days” or reminiscing about a wild night of partying and substance use



3. Physical Relapse: When a person physically returns to the use of alcohol or drugs.

There are many different behavioral relapse warning signs. Becoming familiar with signs of relapse can help deter you from using again.

Triggers are people, places, or things that have the potential to lead to a relapse.

Common warning signs of relapse

- Cravings
- Sudden mood changes
- Depressed, anxious, or destructive thoughts
- Denial of events or behaviors
- Secretive behavior
- Increased irritability
- Avoiding family members or friends
- Making impulsive decisions
- Returning to previous habits, routines, or social groups

Common relapse triggers (People, Places, Things)

- Bars or clubs
- Friends or family members who use alcohol or drugs.
- Relationship problems
- Places where substance use occurs
- Boredom
- Parties or social events where alcohol or drug use occurs
- Stressful life situations (job, money, health issues)
- Music or movies that remind you of a party lifestyle

The four D’s of relapse prevention

1. **Delay:** Most cravings or urges will rise and fall like waves within 20 minutes if you don’t “feed” them.
2. **Distract:** Craving time passes more quickly when engaged in a distracting activity.
3. **De-stress:** By reducing stress, you allow your body to maintain higher levels of calming chemicals.
4. **De-catastrophize:** Challenge your thoughts and reframe them. “This is really uncomfortable, but I can manage.”

Ask yourself: What are the facts for and against? What parts are in my control? Am I focusing on just one aspect of the situation?

Relapse prevention tools

1. Call a mentor or support person to talk through your feelings
2. Write a list of consequences should you relapse (cost benefit analysis)
3. Attend a support meeting (AA/NA or regular treatment group)
4. Positive self-talk, thought stopping, or cognitive model
5. Mindfulness exercises (anticipate, evaluate, avoid high risk situations)
6. Journaling
7. Deep breathing exercises (hand mountains)
8. Develop mantras or positive affirmation

MY ACTION PLAN

Client:

Date:

PACTS #:



Relapse analysis questions: (Think about your last relapse. Answer the questions below to learn more about the why).

1. What happened before your last relapse?

2. Did specific people factor into your use?

3. Was there a time when you were more prone to substance use?

4. What kind of thoughts did you have that led to your use?

5. What made you think the old way was better than the new way?

6. Did you try any tools (skills or coping mechanisms) that didn't work?



What are my warning signs of relapse?

Identify your early warning signs of relapse. Ask yourself,

- “What happened immediately prior to my substance use?”
- “How did I feel prior to my last relapse?”
- “What can I do to mitigate each sign of relapse?”
- “Are there any patterns of behavior I recognize?”

1. 3.

2. 4.

What are my relapse triggers?

List the people, places, and things that have the potential to lead to relapse. Ask yourself:

- Who could I see that would remind me of drug use?
- What places did I use drugs that could trigger me?
- What addictive thoughts could make me relapse?
- Do anniversaries or times of year trigger relapse?
- What feelings are linked to relapse?

1. 3.

2. 4.



What are my tools? (List two relapse prevention tools you think will work best for you.)

1. 2.



Who Can I Count On? (List the people in your life that you can count on to provide support in your recovery.)

1. 2.



Reflection:

Ask yourself, “What does a rich and meaningful life look like for me?” Or, “What does success look like for me?” Think about your goals to help you regain insight as to why you decided to be sober in the first place. What are the values that will motivate you to fight each day for sobriety?

The values important to me or the lifestyle changes I am ready to make are:

1.

2.

3.