

Preventing Relapse



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What is addiction relapse?

It's when a recovering addict begins to use alcohol or drugs again. Use for a short time is called a slip or a lapse. Use for a longer period is called a full relapse.

How will I know if I'm heading toward a relapse?

Relapse usually happens in three stages:

1. **Relapse Thinking:** Your positive thoughts about recovery are replaced by thoughts of using again. You remember how good it felt to use and think the only way to feel better is to use again, but this time with control. Or, you deny that you have any thoughts about using again.
2. **Lapse or slip:** you have an episode of drinking or using drugs, which could lead to a full relapse if you don't immediately get back into recovery.
3. **Full Relapse:** You return to full use after a slip.

How can I prevent a relapse?

If you're in recovery you've come a long way, but recovery is a continuous process. Here are some things you can do:

- Recognize the causes of relapse thinking. Depression, stress, anger, loneliness, boredom, disappointment, loss of interest, change, use of other substances and everyday problems can bring on relapse thinking.

- Make positive changes. As soon as you experience any of the factors mentioned above you should do the following:
 - Call your therapist, counselor, sponsor or member of your support group for help.
 - Go over the reasons you stopped using.
 - Do something active like gardening or working out.
 - Meditate. Getting in touch with your feelings can calm you down and help you see things more clearly.
 - Do something creative like painting, writing, playing music or building something.
 - Talk yourself through your negative thoughts by reminding yourself of the progress you've made.
 - Attend a meeting of your support group or schedule more sessions with your counselor or therapist.
 - Include family and friends in your recovery. They can provide real support when you're feeling down.
 - Stay in a recovery program. If you slip, don't panic. Tell your therapist, counselor, sponsor or someone in your support group about it right away. Once you figure out what went wrong and your part in it, you can make changes that will prevent it from happening again. Once slip does not mean that you have failed. Learn from the experience and move on.

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