

Relapse Prevention Planning

Recognizing early warning signs and building a response before return to use becomes the only option you can see.

Relapse is often a process

Changes may begin before substance use itself: isolation, romanticizing past use, stopping recovery routines, increased secrecy, resentment, untreated pain, sleep loss, or reconnecting with high-risk situations.

Build a plan

- List personal early warning signs.
- Identify people you will contact before a crisis.
- Know which environments, access points, and routines need to change.
- Plan for celebrations, paydays, conflict, loneliness, pain, and other known triggers.
- Keep emergency and treatment resources accessible.

After a lapse

A return to use can be dangerous because tolerance may have changed. Seek medical help when needed, reconnect with support quickly, and focus on safety and learning rather than shame.

Try this reflection

What is your earliest warning sign - the one that appears before other people usually notice a problem?

Using this resource: For education and skill-building only; not diagnosis, medical advice, or crisis care. If you feel overwhelmed, pause and seek appropriate professional support. In the U.S., call or text 988 for crisis support; call 911 for an immediate emergency.