

# Preventing and Managing Relapses

Objective: Identify your triggers and symptoms; these will act as early warning signs of a relapse. This worksheet will assist you in developing an awareness of when you are at risk for a relapse and how to appropriately respond.

Definition: A relapse is when a person returns to a serious mental health problem that he/she had previously recovered from. Sometimes a relapse may feel even more severe than previous experiences with the symptoms. A relapse includes a shift towards negative thinking, unhealthy behaviors, avoidance/denial of the severity of the problem, and an inability or unwillingness to cope.

Relapses tend to happen during times of high stress, when you allow yourself to loosen up on using your coping skills, or when you start to make choices which cause more stress in your life (e.g. spending too much money, entering into an unhealthy relationship).

Write down the people, places, thoughts, behaviors or situations that trigger your symptoms. In other words, what makes you feel like you aren't coping well?

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\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_  
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Next, write down the main symptoms you felt when you first began therapy. Try to be as specific as possible. This is important because a relapse will likely look very similar to what you will write here; it may even look more severe.

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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. \_\_\_\_\_  
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In the section below, write down the coping skills that you have found most helpful in decreasing your symptoms so far in therapy. Try including details about why these skills have helped you. You will want to revisit these coping skills if you find yourself being stressed more than usual.

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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. \_\_\_\_\_  
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### Quick Tips To Prevent or Manage a Relapse

- Remember that relapses are preventable.
- A relapse is different from a lapse. A relapse is an ongoing state of re-experiencing old symptoms. A lapse is a temporary increase of old symptoms. If a lapse is avoided or denied, over time you will likely find yourself in a relapse. Pay attention to lapses! They are important opportunities for you to make choices that will prevent relapse.
- Keep your coping skills sharp by using them. Avoid situations or behaviors that trigger your symptoms.
- Be patient with yourself. Recovery from a mental health problem is a process that takes commitment.
- Reach out to someone if you need help. You do not have to suffer through your problems alone.
- Do not mask your symptoms. Be careful of behaviors that temporarily give you comfort, but limit your ability to make healthy choices. These could include drinking alcohol or drugs, abusing prescription medication, or engaging in impulsive or hi-risk behavior.
- Live a balanced life. Managing symptoms is not just about using your coping skills. Lifestyle choices like a healthy diet, adequate restful sleep, exercise, and recreation all contribute to a sense of well-being.
- If you have been prescribed medications for your symptoms, keep taking them as prescribed. Talk with your doctor if you are thinking about stopping.