

Alcohol and Drug Relapse Warning Signs

Purpose. There are many ways you can tell that you may relapse—that is, start using drugs or alcohol again. This section will help you examine thoughts, feelings, and behaviours you have before you relapse.

Instructions. Read the following lists of relapse warning signs. Place a check mark next to any that have happened to you. Place a question mark next to any that you do not understand. Underline any words that cause you to have strong thoughts or feelings, or make you want to do something.

Phase 1: Internal Warning Signs

- ___ 1. *Trouble thinking clearly:* Sometimes I cannot understand what is going on. At times, it is hard to think, or I can only think about the same thing over and over. At times I cannot think at all, or when I do, I make mistakes that I usually would not make
- ___ 2. *Trouble managing feelings and emotions:* Sometimes I have mood swings. I go from feeling excited to feeling depressed within a matter of minutes. Sometimes I do not feel anything when I know I should. At times the way I feel does not match up with anything that is happening. At times I feel or act crazy and feel bad later. When these things happen, I try to forget about them.
- ___ 3. *Trouble remembering things:* At times, I forget things I have just learned. Sometimes I can remember things from the past and other times I can't, no matter how hard I try. Sometimes when I can't remember, I make mistakes that I feel bad about later.
- ___ 4. *Trouble managing stress:* Sometimes I do not know when I am tense until I become really uptight. When I try to relax, it gets worse. Sometimes it gets so bad that I am afraid I might collapse or go crazy.
- ___ 5. *Trouble sleeping:* At times, I cannot sleep at night. When I do, I still feel tired the next day. Sometimes I have strange dreams and nightmares, including dreams about using that seem real. Sometimes I get very tired and sleep much longer than usual.
- ___ 6. *Trouble with physical coordination:* Sometimes I stagger, have dizzy spells, stumble, or have accidents. At times reading and writing become more difficult.
- ___ 7. *Feelings of shame, guilt, and hopelessness:* At times I feel guilty and ashamed. I think something is wrong with me and I am afraid I won't get better. When these things happen, I try to take care of them on my own. I do not tell anyone. No matter how hard I try, things seem to get worse and I begin to think it is hopeless to try.

Phase 2: Return of Denial

- ___ 8. *Concern about well-being:* Sometimes I worry about my recovery. This worry comes and goes and doesn't seem to last very long.
- ___ 9. *Denial of the concern:* In order to deal with these worries, I try not to think about them. Soon I forget what I was worried about. Sometimes even when I try to remember, I can't.

Phase 3: Avoidance and Defensive Behaviour

- ___ 10. *Believing "I'll never use again":* Sometimes I believe I will never use alcohol or drugs again. Sometimes I tell others, but most of the time I keep this to myself. When I start believing this, I do not feel I have to work as hard to stay clean and sober.
- ___ 11. *Thinking about others instead of myself:* When I stop working as hard to stay sober and clean, I find myself blaming other people for my problems. Sometimes I think others should be acting differently, and I criticize them to others or to myself.
- ___ 12. *Defensiveness:* When I start thinking this way, I feel as if others do not like what I am doing. I get angry when people try to talk to me and I avoid them. I do not let other people talk, or I do not talk so they won't find out how I feel.
- ___ 13. *Compulsive behaviours:* I overdo things and get wrapped up in things so I do not have time to think. I may get over involved with work, sex, food, exercise, or AA, just so I do not have to think about or feel my problems. This doesn't make my problems go away.
- ___ 14. *Impulsive behaviour:* I become so stressed out that I do things on the spur of the moment that I feel bad about later.
- ___ 15. *Tendencies toward loneliness:* Even though I want to be around people, I make excuses so

that I do not have to. I spend more time alone, and do things to avoid thinking and feeling.

Phase 4: Crisis Building

- ___ 16. *Tunnel vision*: I look only at a small part of my life, and ignore everything else. When little things go wrong, I blow up and feel like life is unfair.
- ___ 17. *Minor depression*: I start to feel down and depressed. I have less and less energy, and I oversleep. I try not to feel these things by getting busy and not talking about it, but the feelings do not go away.
- ___ 18. *Loss of constructive planning*: I stop making plans for my day and react to whatever comes up.
- ___ 19. *Plans begin to fail*: My plans are not well thought out or realistic. I begin to have more and more problems. I feel bad about them, but do not know how to solve them.

Phase 5: Immobilization

- ___ 20. *Daydreaming and wishful thinking*: I daydream about something that might solve all my problems like winning the lottery or running away to another place.
- ___ 21. *Feeling that nothing can be solved*: I begin to feel as if I have failed at recovery. Nothing I do appears to make things better.
- ___ 22. *Unfulfilled wish to be happy*: I want things to work out and I want to be happy, but I don't know how to make them better or I'm afraid to try.

Phase 6: Confusion and Overreaction

- ___ 23. *Periods of confusion*: I can't figure anything out. This makes me angry with myself and I become more confused.
- ___ 24. *Easily angered*: I become angry with people over little things. I feel angry most of the time and am afraid I might hurt someone. Sometimes I want to hurt others.
- ___ 25. *Irritation with friends*: When other people try to talk to me about what is going on, I think they are criticizing me and we have arguments.

Phase 7: Depression

- ___ 26. *Irregular eating habits*: I stop eating regular meals, and eat junk food instead. I either overeat or eat little or nothing.
- ___ 27. *Lack of desire to take action*: I feel scared and trapped. It seems impossible to start, let alone finish anything.
- ___ 28. *Irregular sleeping habits*: I find it impossible to sleep until I am completely exhausted. When I finally get to sleep, I have bad dreams and may sleep for 12 to 20 hours at a time.
- ___ 29. *Loss of daily structure*: I get so stressed and miserable that I cannot make decisions. I miss appointments and meetings. Sometimes I plan on going, but I am running so late that I decide not to go at all.
- ___ 30. *Periods of deep depression*: I feel hungry, angry, lonely, and tired. I feel angry with others. They try to help, but I think that nobody really cares.

Phase 8: Behavioural Loss of Control

- ___ 31. *Irregular attendance at AA/NA and treatment meetings*: I stop going to my regular AA or NA meetings. I miss counselling appointments. I begin to feel that there are more important things to do and that the sessions aren't helping anyway.
- ___ 32. *Development of an "I don't care" attitude*: I feel like everything is hopeless. I don't want other people to know this, so I act as if I don't care.
- ___ 33. *Open rejection of help*: When people try to help me, I blow up and drive them away. I tell others that I do not need their help and avoid anyone who might see how I really feel.
- ___ 34. *Feelings of powerlessness and helplessness*: Things appear to be so bad that it seems useless to try to do anything to make them better.

Phase 9: Recognition of Loss of Control

- ___ 35. *Self-pity*: I feel sorry for myself and try to get sympathy and attention from friends or AA/NA and family members.
- ___ 36. *Thoughts of social drinking*: I start thinking that maybe I could drink or use drugs and stay in control. I think about how good it would feel to drink or use drugs for just a little while.
- ___ 37. *Conscious lying*: I start to lie to others even when I do not need to.

- ___ 38. *Complete loss of self confidence:* I think I am a total failure at recovery and in life. I do not believe that I can change things for the better, no matter what I do.

Phase 10: Option Reduction

- ___ 39. *Deep resentments:* I feel angry with the world and feel as if everyone is against me.
- ___ 40. *Discontinue all treatment and AA/NA:* I do not attend AA/NA meetings, avoid my sponsor, and have stopped going to counselling or aftercare.
- ___ 41. *Overwhelming loneliness, frustration, anger, and tension:* I begin to feel like I am insane and think my only choices are drinking or using drugs, suicide, or insanity.
- ___ 42. *Loss of behavioural control:* I have problems in all areas of my life. I cannot control how I act, think, or feel.

Phase 11: Return to Use, or Physical/Emotional Collapse

- ___ 43. *Return to "controlled" use:* I try to use with control and sometimes I am able to do this for a short period.
- ___ 44. *Shame and guilt:* I feel ashamed and guilty for using and believe that if I had done things the right way, this wouldn't have happened to me. I believe I am a bad person because I've started to use again.
- ___ 45. *Loss of control:* I begin to use just as much or more than I did before.
- ___ 46. *Life problems:* I begin to have severe problems with my spouse/partner, job, friends, health, or the law. I need professional help in order to get better.

Some of the other products on this subject from RecoverOz are

1. [Passages Through Recovery](#). An Action Plan For Preventing Relapse by Terence T. Gorski

2. [The Complete Relapse Prevention Skills Program](#)

Hazelden's Complete Relapse Prevention Skills Program uses pamphlets, workbooks, videos and other visual aids to increase accessibility and retention.

3. [Relapse DVD](#). 30 Mins, Earnie Larsen shows how to work an effective program, how to do the 10th step and stay accountable for behaviours that could result in relapse.

We have many other books and videos. Go to www.recoveroz.com.au