

Relapse Prevention Plan

Old habits die hard. Especially in emotionally difficult times, it is easy to resort to reacting in old ways that are comfortable for us. It would be impossibly ideal to think that after we left New Haven/Sunrise, we would be perfect and never relapse into old behaviors. It is important to remember that even if we do slip into an old behavior or pattern, all is not lost. Relapse is a part of recovery and helps us understand how and why we need to continue progressing. When addressed effectively, relapse can be a great learning experience and open doors to greater understanding.

We've created this Relapse Prevention Plan to help your family remember how far you've come, how you did it, how to keep progressing, and how to get back on track when you slip.

Step 1: How Far We Have Come

In family therapy review the progress each family member has made. The more specific you are, the more concrete your plan will be.

What has changed in the way your family relates to one another?

How are roles and boundaries different? In what ways do family members feel different?

How does each person think he/she has changed? How that has helped the entire family?

Discuss what enabled each person to make the critical changes:

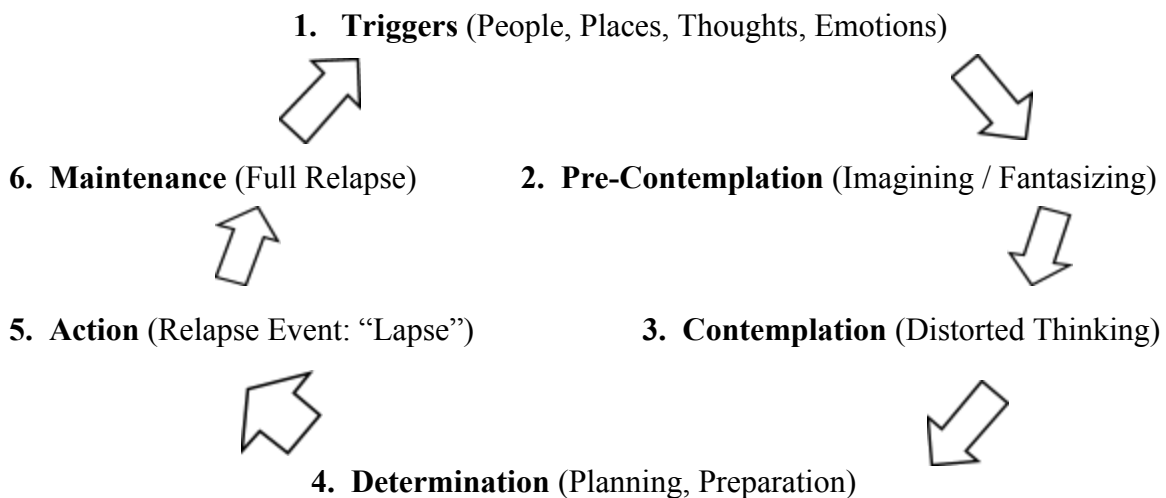
Identify and list your family's strengths:

Working together, choose a symbol that will remind everyone of how far you have come:

Step 2: How Relapse Can Happen

Identify the Stages of Relapse

“Relapse is always a choice.”



Stages

1. **Trigger** – The first step towards a relapse begins with a **Trigger**. When we are triggered this can lead to Pre-Contemplation.
2. **Pre-Contemplation** – In this stage we begin to **Imagine or fantasize** what our old behavior would be like. We typically begin to have urges to return to old behavior that is unhealthy; we then begin to move to the Contemplation stage.
3. **Contemplation** – This is the stage we begin to think about old behavior and its possibilities. This is typically the time we experience cognitive distortions such as all-or-nothing and black-and-white thinking. As we contemplate relapse we begin to move into the Preparation / Determination / Planning stage of relapse.
4. **Preparation / Determination / Planning** – We begin to plan ways to create opportunities to return to old behavior. For example, we plan to go to a party where we know we will have opportunities for relapse. We may make detailed plans, such as how to get to the party. Once at the party, we may easily move to the next stage of relapse known as Action.
5. **Action** – We have gone through the process of change which now allows us to act out old behaviors. Examples of these behaviors could be lying to get to the party, drinking, fighting, etc. It is essential if we have gotten to this point and lapsed, that we do not allow ourselves to begin to maintain old behaviors also known as the Maintenance stage.
6. **Maintenance** – We continue to act on old behaviors, such as hanging out with former friends who aren’t good for us. Typically, at this point, we will not listen to our healthy support network. We are fully engaged in our former negative behavior(s). We still have many choices still at this stage. Two of the obvious choices are: 1) to continue in a downward spiral by perpetuating old thoughts and

behaviors; or 2) we can learn from our relapse and choose to return to healthy behavior.

In each stage of the relapse process there is always a choice to be made. In this next section we will look at each stage and identify how continued movement toward relapse can be prevented.

Step 3: How to Prevent Relapse

Triggers

Triggers come in the form of People, Places, Thoughts, and Emotions.

Being aware of triggers is vital to the prevention of relapse.

A. Each member of the family should identify high risk People that might commonly act as triggers for relapse

In the left column list the People you are most worried about, who may trigger you. In the column to the right, for each Person list three things you can utilize to help you deal with that Person in healthy ways. Use a separate sheet of paper if you need more space.

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | A. _____ |
| | B. _____ |
| | C. _____ |
| 2. _____ | A. _____ |
| | B. _____ |
| | C. _____ |
| 3. _____ | A. _____ |
| | B. _____ |
| | C. _____ |
| 4. _____ | A. _____ |
| | B. _____ |

C. _____

B. Each family member should identify high risk Places that might commonly act as triggers for relapse

In the left column list the Places you are most worried about, which may trigger you. In the column to the right, for each Place list three things you can utilize to help you deal with that Place in healthy ways. Use a separate sheet of paper if you need more space.

1. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

2. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

3. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

4. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

C. Each family member should identify high risk Thoughts that might commonly act as triggers for relapse

In the left column list the Thoughts you are most worried about, which may trigger you. In the column to the right, for each Thought list three things you can utilize to help you deal with that Thought in healthy ways. Use a separate sheet of paper if you need more space.

1. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

2. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

3. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

4. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. Each family member identify high risk Emotions that would commonly act as triggers for relapse

In the left column list the Emotions you are most worried about, which may trigger you. In the column to the right, for each Emotion list three things you can utilize to help you deal with that Emotion in healthy ways. Use a separate sheet of paper if you need more space.

1. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

2. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

3. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

4. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

Pre-Contemplation

In this stage you are starting to **Imagine / Fantasize / Glorify** and this typically occurs after a trigger. This stage is typically known as **pre-contemplation**. List ideas that come into your mind regarding unhealthy behavior. List ways to prevent glorifying or fantasizing about old behavior.

Imagining / Fantasizing / Glorifying	Ways to prevent glorifying

Contemplation

After you begin to entertain ideas you then move to the stage of **Contemplation**. Identify common irrational beliefs, cognitive distortions and rationalizations. Identify healthy ways to deal with cognitive distortion.

Irrational beliefs	Constructive / Preventative thinking

Preparation / Determination

Once you have begun to contemplate old behaviors this can lead you to the next stage known as **Planning/Preparation/Determination**. Each of us have common ways we begin to prepare or plan for relapse. List the ways you Prepare/Plan for relapse and ways to counteract/prevent this planning.

Unhealthy ways you plan for Relapse	Constructive/Preventative planning

Action

Preparation/Planning leads to **Action**. In the Action stage we lapse, beginning to act out our old unhealthy behaviors. Create a list of unhealthy old behaviors and healthy ways to Prevent/Counteract those Behaviors.

Unhealthy old behaviors	Constructive/Preventive actions

Maintenance

Create a Denial Interruption Plan

If we have begun to act out old behaviors we could also begin to maintain those old behaviors. This stage is known as the **Maintenance** stage. Here again we have a choice, we can continue in our old behavior and begin a downward spiral or we can learn from it.

Create a denial interruption plan. This plan includes people, places, words etc. That will help you realize the relapse that has occurred and what you and other can do to learn from your relapse rather than continue the downward spiral.

Warning Signs

Often we have warning signs that indicate we are vulnerable for relapse or that we have relapsed. It is essential that you teach yourself and your family how to identify these warning signs. They will act as beacons that can guide you back to a healthy lifestyle. They can also act as ways to help your family and peers know when you are in danger. Identify your relapse warning signs. Identify which ones you have the most difficulty combating. Below is a list of warning signs to help get your thinking process started. Make sure to individualize your warnings signs as you refer to the list.

1. Lack of confidence / Over Confidence
2. Denial
3. Defensiveness / Overreacting
4. Isolating / Avoiding
5. Daydreaming / Tunnel vision
6. Changes in eating or sleeping
7. Hopelessness / Helplessness
8. Magical thinking
9. Lying
10. Depression
11. Unexpected unplanned events
12. Peers
13. Others

Each family member should identify their Warning Signs of relapse and three ways to counteract those Warning Signs.

In the left column list your Warning Signs. In the column to the right, for each Warning Sign list three things you can utilize to help you deal with that Warning Sign in healthy ways. Use a separate sheet of paper if you need more space.

1. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

2. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

3. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

4. _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

Feedback

Ask one family member and two peers to each identify relapse warning signs they see in you. Ask which behaviors they observe and why they feel these are warning signs.

1. Family Member

2. Peer

3. Peer

It is essential when trying to maintain healthy change that we have a plan. This plan also helps us to prevent relapse.

Create a list of constructive, healthy activities that will allow you to continue to maintain the healthy positive change you have made. Some examples are creating a regular exercise program, regular time with family, etc. This list can be one you draw from on a regular basis that will help you maintain the healthy choices you have already made.

In family therapy role play several potential situations when relapse may occur.

Commitment:

Commitment to your Relapse Prevention Plan is essential for it to be of any value. Have each member of the family state their understanding of this plan, and what their commitment to relapse prevention is. If possible have everyone sign this plan as an additional symbol of commitment.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____