

# **Relapse Analysis: A Practical Worksheet for Recovery**

**By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.**

Relapse is an all-too-common occurrence in addiction recovery. It is crucial to view substance use disorder as a chronic illness, with relapse as a common symptom. This perspective helps devise effective strategies for recovery, plans for relapse prevention, and getting back on track when it does occur. Just as one wouldn't abandon treatment for another chronic disease after a setback, the same principle applies to addiction.

## **Navigating Relapse:**

When individuals with substance use disorder relapse, they can use self-reflection and assessment as a guide for ongoing recovery. Rather than succumbing to self-blame, a proactive response involves revisiting one's recovery efforts. This process requires a recommitment to honesty, open-mindedness, and a willingness to recommit to the necessary steps for recovery.

## **Recognizing the Relapse Process:**

Understanding the relapse process is vital. It often involves reverting to old thought patterns, emotions, and behaviors. People in recovery experience a lapse in motivation that leads to discontinuing beneficial practices like attending meetings, engaging in prayer and meditation, or seeking counseling. The insidious nature of relapse is evident in the gradual abandonment of behaviors that initially fostered sobriety.

## **Strengthening Recovery Through Assessment:**

A relapse assessment guide can be instrumental in evaluating one's efforts leading to relapse. It's crucial to examine celebratory events and positive

shifts in thinking and behavior that might be associated with a relapse. Relapse triggers aren't limited to familiar factors like denial, illusions of control, dishonesty, or exposure to risky environments. In some cases, celebrations, joy, and feelings of contentment can play a role.

## **Relapse Assessment Guide**

**Use this worksheet to identify factors contributing to relapse and take immediate corrective measures to get back on track. Jot down some self-assessment observations about your involvement in these activities.**

### **Positive Recovery Actions:**

Number of meetings attended per week

Active participation in meetings

Acceptance of social invitations within the recovery community

Consistent daily prayer and meditation

Having a sponsor regularly communicating with them

Involvement in meeting setup or cleanup

Daily tenth-step reflection

Routine reading of recovery literature

Structured daily activities supporting recovery

### **Relapse Behaviors:**

Denial of addiction's reality

Fantasizing/thinking about control over substance use

Resistance to acknowledging cross-addiction

Dishonesty about thoughts and feelings

Developing resentments within the recovery community

Associating with risky individuals or places

Contemplating a test of control

Behaving contrary to personal values

Inadequate stress and emotion management

Isolation and withdrawal from support systems

Discontinuation of therapeutic activities

Persistent discontentment in recovery

Absence of a spiritual recovery program

Negative and hostile worldview

Entertaining thoughts of not being a "real" addict

Immature desire for perpetual happiness

Aspiring to a "normal" life

Feeling stuck and avoiding seeking help

Hesitation to discuss triggers and cravings

Defensive response to others pointing out old behaviors

Complacency and feeling like you no longer have a problem

### **Getting Back on Track:**

Hopefully you used this worksheet to identify factors contributing to your relapse and are taking corrective measures. Common "Getting Back on Track" measures involves returning to meetings, resuming counseling, reintegrating daily prayer and meditation, and engaging in therapeutic activities that initially supported sobriety. Seeking support from a sponsor, disclosing the relapse to the 12-step group, and involving significant others in the recovery process are crucial steps.

A relapse provides an opportunity to reassess your recovery regime and your relapse prevention plan. It should provide additional motivation to engage in more recovery activities or more specific relapse prevention activities. It is vital to consciously problem-solve, identify available time slots in your daily routine, and commit to increasing recovery activities. It is just as vital to identify any specific triggers or events that heralded a change in thinking, feeling, or behavior, setting the relapse process in motion. If you have not done so already, look for specific shifts in thinking,

feelings, or behavior. Don't delay in getting back on track. It's imperative not to entertain the notion of prolonging the relapse, as swift action is vital for preventing further setbacks and potential harm.

