

# Drinking/Using Dreams as A Normal Part of Recovery

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When you experience a dream involving drinking or drug use, upon waking, you may find yourself uncertain whether it occurred. For many people in early recovery, the occurrence of a "using" dream can be distressing and unsettling. These dreams typically involve scenarios where the central theme revolves around drinking or using substances. Examples include finding oneself in situations of being tempted to drink or use drugs, then having the feeling that you have used, or even physically engaging in drinking and using or successfully resisting the urge.

Such dreams can feel incredibly vivid, leaving you unsure upon awakening whether you have engaged in substance use. They may also cast a shadow over your day, evoking feelings of unease that contribute to anxiety, tension, or stress. Some individuals may even feel embarrassed to share the experiences of having had drinking/using dreams.

However, it's essential to recognize that these unsettling dreams are a regular aspect of the recovery journey and do not indicate a lack of progress in your recovery efforts. As the duration of abstinence from alcohol and other substances increases, the frequency of these dreams typically decreases.

After experiencing a drinking or using dream, taking precautionary measures is advisable to reduce potential cues and triggers. It is also essential to address the emotional discomfort of the dream itself. In later stages of recovery, particularly after extended periods of abstinence, the occurrence of drinking/using dreams may suggest an increased vulnerability to relapse. They also commonly occur around sobriety anniversaries. Refraining from self-blame or self-criticism is crucial if you have such dreams. While maintaining awareness is important, it's essential

to understand that experiencing drinking/using dreams does not equate to failure in your recovery journey.

In response to heightened triggers or cues, individuals in recovery should engage in effective trigger management activities, including but not limited to:

- Increasing meeting attendance
- Maintaining a structured routine
- Consciously apply appropriate life skills rather than falling back into old behavior patterns.
- Maintaining close connections with supportive individuals in recovery
- Incorporating regular physical exercise
- Prioritizing good nutrition
- Managing stress effectively
- Addressing emotions as they arise
- Making deliberate choices about the people, places, and activities with which you engage.

It's essential to recognize that drinking/using dreams can pose a manageable challenge. Remember, they are not a reflection of personal failure but rather a common aspect of the recovery journey, particularly in its early stages. These dreams can also signal you to remain vigilant about your recovery process. **Note: This article has been revised and edited from its original version, which was previously published in 2009 on this site. The content has been updated for contemporary language, clarity, and accuracy.**

