

Identifying Problem Areas to Guide Skill Development

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One of the most critical tasks for those in early recovery from substance use disorder from alcohol or substance use involves recognizing the various roles these substances played in their lives. Drugs or alcohol typically fill numerous significant roles, and when removed, it can create significant gaps in a person's routine behavior. Individuals can explore healthier alternatives to fulfill those needs by pinpointing these substances' specific functions.

Initially, this might involve simple activities like attending meetings, practicing mindfulness, exercising, or contacting a support network for assistance. Learning complex life skills can be challenging when someone is in the throes of early recovery. As individuals recover, they emphasize finding healthy replacements for old habits while building more sophisticated life skills and improving their ability to prioritize the most urgent issues they face.

Replacing the substance with new living skills is especially important since removing it leaves big, gaping holes in their behavioral repertoire. When you identify the roles previously played by the chemicals, you can identify possible healthy alternatives to replace them.

Early on, it usually involves simple things like meetings, prayer, meditation, exercise, or calling people for help. Learning sophisticated living skills when hanging on by your fingernails is challenging. A little later in recovery, we still focus on replacing the roles with healthy alternatives, but we also aim to develop more in-depth living skills and address the most pressing problems.

Often, in very early recovery, the person with a fledgling recovery doesn't fully grasp the extent of their life disarray. They frequently lack skills like

frustration tolerance, stress management, feelings expression, skills, communication and problem-solving skills. The following checklist can help the recovering person identify and begin to repair the damage in their life.

Using this checklist, first identify your problems, then rank them from most pressing to least pressing, considering short-term and long-term goals.

The Problems Checklist

Check the problems that you currently have on this list. Identify whether you see these items as short-term or long-term goals. Rank the ones you identified in terms of most pressing to least pressing (i.e., #1, #2, #3).

Check/Rank

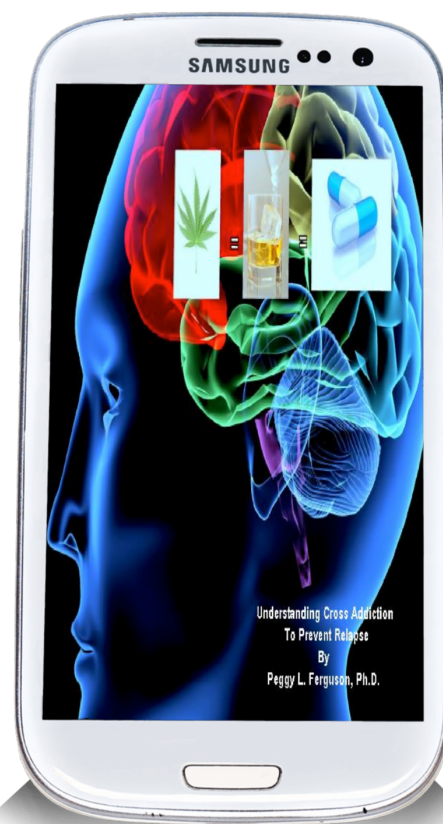
- ___ ___ Housing, or appropriate place to live
- ___ ___ Medical or dental problems or need for checkups
- ___ ___ Regaining custody of children or finding Appropriate childcare
- ___ ___ Legal and court problems
- ___ ___ Relationship issues
- ___ ___ Social network problems (i.e. drug using friends/acquaintances)
- ___ ___ Feeling management skills
- ___ ___ Education issues such as going back to school, GED, additional training, etc.
- ___ ___ Psychological issues like anxiety, depression, mental confusion, mood swings, attention issues, agitation, grief or others _____
- ___ ___ Lack of structure and time management skills
- ___ ___ Lack of stress management skills
- ___ ___ Impatience, lack of frustration tolerance, demand for immediate gratification
- ___ ___ Lack of self-esteem, self-confidence, or positive identity
- ___ ___ Shame and guilt about hurting family or need to make amends
- ___ ___ Poor communication skills and/or poor conflict management skills
- ___ ___ Other obsessive compulsive behaviors
- ___ ___ Alienation, not feeling like you fit in, loneliness, isolation
- ___ ___ Lack of motivation or Procrastination
- ___ ___ Reliable Transportation
- ___ ___ Financial concerns or unpaid bills
- ___ ___ Job training or employment

We must emphasize the importance of recognizing the multifaceted roles that drugs or alcohol play in the lives of individuals recovering from

addiction. Identifying these roles is a first step in paving the way for healthier alternatives. Beginning with simple strategies like attending meetings or practicing mindfulness, individuals can gradually develop more advanced life skills as they progress in recovery. Use the checklist to identify the challenges, practice the executive function skill of prioritizing them, and create individual goals for each new skill you need to learn. Addressing these issues will assist you in working toward building a life free from addiction. **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.**

Identifying problem areas to guide skill development is crucial. There is a gap between knowing that you need a new skill and mastering that skill. With "Understanding Cross Addiction to Prevent Relapse," you will gain new awareness of the importance of replacing substances with new skills and learn to resist the temptation to seek out new substances to fill the gaps left by the elimination of alcohol and other drugs. As individuals strive to fill the void left by substance use with healthier alternatives, the risk of cross addiction looms large. This ebook illuminates the multifaceted nature of addiction, emphasizing the critical need to recognize risk factors and implement robust strategies to safeguard against relapse. By understanding the insidious nature of addictive behaviors and enacting a comprehensive relapse prevention plan, people with substance use disorder can navigate the complexities of recovery with resilience and determination.

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