

# Preventing Relapse Using the “Social and Environmental Triggers For Relapse” Worksheet

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

Use separate paper or a notebook dedicated to your recovery written homework, journaling, self-reflection. In answering the questions below, date your answers and leave adequate space for revisiting the questions in the future as you gain additional insight.

## **People**

Who are the people you used to drink or use drugs with? Make a list. Make a list of other people that could serve as a trigger for relapse. It could be extended family members, spouse, girlfriend, children, boss, coworkers, neighbors, etc.

## **Places**

Where did you used to drink or use drugs? What are the places that could trigger cravings or euphoric recall? Make a list of the areas that might remind you of drinking/using or serve as a trigger. Examples might include bars, clubs, golf courses, football games and tailgating, school, work, certain streets, certain parts of town, concerts, pool halls, country roads, lakes, and backyards.

## **Events**

What kinds of events did you routinely participate in while drinking or using drugs? What are some of the routine events you might join in now that could trigger cravings? Make a list of possible trigger-provoking events.

Examples might include going to the lake and fishing, mowing the lawn, attending fundraising events, gambling, and attending music festivals.

## **Celebrations**

What are some of the celebrations or special events that you might participate in that could serve as a trigger for relapse? Make a list. Examples might include weddings, graduation, birthdays, vacations, and holidays (with or without extended family members).

## **Other stressful events or activities**

Identify other stressful events or activities that could serve as a trigger. Examples might include such things as deaths of family members, divorce, separation, money problems, getting paid, getting a raise, calls from creditors, paying bills, group meetings, long work hours, unemployment, having a baby, retiring, home alone, vacation, going by an ATM machine, home alone, finding paraphernalia, a long "to-do" list.

## **Relationship events**

What kinds of relationship events were associated with your drinking or drug use? Identify relationship events that could serve as a trigger. Examples might include meeting new people, going out on a date, hanging out with friends, after an argument, before sex, after sex, viewing pornography, family visits, having a baby, separation, divorce, marriage.

## **Time**

When did you usually drink or use drugs? Identify specific times of day, week, month, or year that may serve as a trigger for relapse. Examples might be Monday (Monday night football), Sunday (gearing up to go back to work), anniversary date or month of traumatic events, after work, before

work, trying to get to sleep, waking in the night, and any other significant times.

## Making a plan.

Looking over your lists above, identify actions you can take to reduce the threat to your recovery. Which events can you avoid? Which events or situations can you escape from if you feel vulnerable? How can you empower yourself to escape the situation? Example: Practice being assertive when leaving a risky situation. Use cognitive therapy to challenge unrealistic thinking that might keep you from leaving when needed. Make a plan on how you could escape. Example: Drive yourself, walk out, call a cab, have an AA call list, and have someone get you. What can you do to change how you think or feel when you find yourself in an inescapable position triggering a desire to use? For example, Use thought-stopping techniques to manage cravings when they occur. Use the phone. Call your sponsor. Call your counselor or someone in AA/NA. Engage someone supportive of your recovery in a conversation. Remind yourself that cravings are temporary and will go away if you do not use them. Remember that cravings are a normal part of recovery and that they do not doom you to failure. Remind yourself that you have the choice of whether you act on your cravings. Think of a craving as a contest between you and your substance use disorder. **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 and concepts, clarity, and accuracy.**

## Understanding Cross Addiction to Prevent Relapse By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

*Cross-addiction is a common issue among people with substance use disorder. Recovery has a complicated learning curve. Lagging development of knowledge, awareness, unchallenged defense mechanisms, and lack of replacement of the roles the chemicals played in one's life can easily set up the newly recovering person for relapse. "Understanding Cross Addiction to Prevent Relapse" provides essential information for the newly recovering person and their concerned family members. **This is a digital download available immediately.***

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