

## Relapse Prevention- Causes and Triggers

Personal issues may contribute to relapse. These are some problems that may make a person more vulnerable to a relapse. Awareness of these issues and of coping tools to handle them can help avoid relapse. Issues include:

- *Internal issues:*

Cravings and urges to drink or use

Loneliness and fear of abandonment

Experiencing painful emotions without “anesthetic” of alcohol or other drugs

Sexual issues

Medical problems and chronic pain

Distorted thinking

- *External or situational issues:*

Romantic, family, and other relationship conflicts

Financial problems

Legal problems

Employment problems

Addictive environment: being around people, places, sights, sounds, smells, or tastes associated with past drinking/using experiences

### Identifying General Trigger Situations

Being prepared for problems gives people a better chance of avoiding relapse. Many people fail to plan ahead and try to handle things as they come up. Others believe that their desire to remain clean and sober is the only preparation they need. It helps to make individual lists of the following types of situations:

- Times and situations when they often used/drank in the past
- Situations likely to place them in conflict with family or friends
- Life events or losses they feel they couldn't handle clean and sober
- Situations that make them angry
- Situations that make them lonely
- Situations that scare them
- Situations that depress them
- Situations that make them overconfident
- Situations that make them anxious

Many of these signs will show up before use occurs. If people are alert for the warning signs that point to impending relapse, their chances of avoiding relapse are much better. Otherwise, once the process of relapse begins denial may keep the individual from seeing what is happening. General signs of impending relapse include:

Dishonesty	Complacency and procrastination
Exhaustion	Expecting too much from others
Denial returning	Neglecting daily routine and structure
Argumentativeness	“Testing” recovery by exposure to risky situations
Depression	Expecting too much change too quickly
Frustration	Not participating in aftercare and/or meetings
Self-pity	Needless risk-taking—“It can’t happen to me” syndrome
Overconfidence	Irregular eating and sleep patterns

Many newly recovering people are scared when they have cravings and dreams about drinking or using, fearing this means they are close to relapse. In fact, these are common experiences. Many clean and sober people experience these things, sometimes long after they quit drinking and using, but are able to avoid relapse. Even though cravings and dreams are not signs of impending relapse, the best thing to do is to talk about them with friends in recovery, sponsors, and counselors.

## **CONCLUSION**

1. Relapse is part of the disease of addiction and all recovering people are at risk of relapse.
2. There are common conditions, both internal and situational, that increase the risk of relapse.
3. There are also common early warning signs of relapse that can be seen in people’s feelings, thoughts, and behavior before they actually return to using alcohol or other drugs.
4. By knowing their own trigger conditions and early warning signs and being alert and prepared for them, recovering people can greatly reduce their risk of relapse and increase their chances of staying clean and sober.