

Thoughts, Feelings, Attitudes, or Behaviors

You have had a lot of practice holding negative thoughts in your mind. You have rehearsed acts of confrontation, revenge, hate, and violence. And at times, you have acted on those thoughts. Feelings like hate, confusion, anger, fear, and loneliness can lead you back to incarceration or can even lead to death.

As we said, relapse is a process. You must remain aware of the process. Relapse results when you begin to play with thoughts or behaviors that support your old ways of living.

It's not necessary to deny these thoughts and feelings. Instead, pay more attention to them. They are signs that something's wrong—that you are getting closer to a relapse. Since you are responsible for your recovery, when you notice these thoughts, take action. What should you do? The following exercises offer action steps.

The NBA and Your Relapse Prevention Plan

You may think you don't need a relapse prevention plan, but you do. Here's why. Think about a professional basketball team in the National Basketball Association (NBA). Players spend hours practicing set plays to use in critical situations. When there's ten seconds left in a close game, they know it's not the time to try a new play. They want to have the set down cold so they know exactly what to do.

Relapse prevention plans serve the same purpose, except that a lot more is at stake—you! If the Lakers, Knicks, or 76ers lose the game, the team still gets to come back for the next game. If you "lose" and relapse, you're back behind bars, playing ball in the yard. You don't want to suddenly find yourself in a potential relapse situation without a plan. You want to be ready. You want to have a plan down solid so you know exactly what to do. That plan starts now with thinking about situations that you know could trigger a relapse for you.



EXERCISE 13 EXERCISE

Your Triggers Related to Thoughts, Feelings, Attitudes, or Behaviors

Triggers Related to Negative Emotional States

It's easier to enjoy life as a sober person in recovery. But life in recovery does not guarantee happiness forever! In the beginning, there's a lot of hard stuff to get through—including negative emotional states.

► Place an **X** in the box next to the triggers that apply to you.

- anger expression problems (for example, holding anger in or expressing anger inappropriately, such as with violence)
- anxiety or nervousness
- acting out violently or destructively
- boredom or lack of constructive leisure interests
- denial (saying, "I don't have an alcohol or drug problem anymore")
- becoming depressed
- excessive or impulsive behaviors (for example, gambling, overeating, spending too much money, overworking, excessive sex)
- fears about staying sober
- feeling helpless or hopeless
- feeling guilty
- impatience with your recovery plan (for example, thinking that things are happening too slowly)
- lack of meaning in life (nothing seems important)
- loneliness or isolating yourself from others