

1: Relapse Prevention Plan (Depression) | University of Washington AIMS Center

Depression can occur multiple times during a person's lifetime. The purpose of a relapse prevention plan is to help the patient understand his/her own personal warning signs.

Beat the Bipolar Beast: The author recommends reading the first article and second article before reading this one. Bipolar disorder is a big, hairy beast of an illness. It can be intimidating, scary, and unpredictable. But by using management strategies, we can fight the beast and win. Management strategies are the third side of what I call the relapse prevention triangle. Combined with spotting early warning signs and understanding triggers and vulnerabilities, you have a lot of power to prevent relapses. What is a management strategy? A management strategy is a method you use to maintain or regain stability. Whereas triggers push you in the direction of a mood episode, management strategies push you in the direction of stability. In the fight against the bipolar beast, triggers score points for the beast while management strategies score points for you. Management strategies can be divided into two categories: These are regular practices that help keep you stable and the beast at bay, for example: Following a regular medication regimen Getting adequate sleep Sticking with a regular exercise routine Having frequent opportunities for social contact. Timely intervention strategies empower you to fend off the beast when you need to. What types of management strategies are there? What I describe here are broad types of management strategies – there are individual differences in the specific methods people find most helpful. As I mentioned in my last post, deficits in skills such as communication, decision making, and problem solving can be vulnerabilities that make you more susceptible to being triggered. Learning these and other skills can help you overcome vulnerabilities and stand strong. It also offers skills that help you change cognitive distortions and perceive yourself, other people, and the world in more balanced ways. Mind over Mood is a tried-and-true workbook for learning CBT skills. I mentioned in my last post that substances such as alcohol, nicotine, marijuana, and caffeine can be strong triggers, and that substance use disorders can be vulnerabilities. Cutting out or minimizing harmful substances can help tremendously. If you have an addiction, you will likely need help. Bipolar disorder has its roots in brain chemistry, so prescription medication is a primary defense for most people. A crisis, simply put, is when internal or external difficulties outweigh your current capacity to cope. There may be times when symptoms escalate quickly and you find yourself on the verge of a crisis. Some examples of timely interventions that can be used to prevent a crisis include: As champion fighters know, attitude is everything. You have to believe you can succeed. That means having confidence that you can manage bipolar disorder and live a full life. Seek inspiration from those who have been successful at fighting bipolar disorder or other challenges. Spiritual practices can help you manage bipolar disorder and build overall resilience. These can include anything that gives you a sense of meaning and helps you see the bigger picture beyond your identification as someone with bipolar disorder, for example: Prayer or meditation Art or other creative activities Charitable service Spending time in nature. Getting support from other people and maintaining social connections provides protection against relapse. Formal and informal Intimate and superficial Planned and unplanned. Remember that social support and connection is a two-way street – finding opportunities to contribute to others can increase your well-being by taking your mind off your own problems and making you feel valuable. Research shows that the practice of forgiveness is connected with mental health. A good self-help book for learning to forgive is Forgiveness is a Choice. Undoing the effects of trauma: Many people with bipolar disorder have a history of trauma, and many have a co-occurring diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder PTSD. Unresolved trauma is another vulnerability that can thwart your recovery. Symptoms of trauma can include: Nightmares or flashbacks Avoidance of things that remind you of a traumatic experience Negative emotions related to the traumatic experience, such as fear, horror, or guilt Hypervigilance being in a very high state of arousal and frequently scanning the environment for threats. If you have these or other trauma symptoms, treatment by a therapist who specializes in trauma can help you recover and move on. Based on the list of common triggers I gave in my last post, there might be lifestyle changes you can make as prevention strategies. Here are some examples of things you can do to develop a lifestyle that supports recovery: Have regular times for waking,

sleeping, eating, work, and leisure activities. Follow a regular exercise routine and include movement throughout your day. Learn about nutrition and eat a healthier diet. Have a work schedule that supports stability. Avoid or minimize activities and environments that cause sensory overload. Make changes little by little. Fight battles you can win, even if they seem small, and in the long run you will win the war. How do I become aware of which management strategies work for me and use them effectively? Using management strategies to tackle bipolar disorder has three parts: Identifying which management strategies work for you Using prevention strategies on an ongoing basis Applying timely intervention strategies when needed. Learning to use management strategies is similar to the process I described in my last two posts. In the fight against bipolar disorder, knowledge is power. Take advantage of the large amount of reliable information available these days in print, online, and in-person formats. Reflect on previous mood episodes. Reflecting on previous mood episodes can help you recognize what management strategies might have helped prevent them. Also think about times you have been well. Keep a mood chart. A mood chart can help you make connections between management strategies and mood, anxiety, or other symptoms. As an example, this mood chart from Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance has places to track eating, exercise, and social support behaviors. You might notice, for instance, that you have less depression on days you participate in a particular social activity, or less anxiety on days you exercise. You can customize your mood chart to include whatever management strategies you want to track. Mindfulness keeps you aware of your thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and environment so you can stay one step ahead of the beast. Mindfulness has many benefits. It is itself a management strategy that “among other things” empowers you to stay calm and centered enough to cope with unexpected difficulties. In addition, it helps you: Mindfulness can also include what I call remindfulness “finding ways to remember your management strategies. Remindfulness can include using sticky notes, posters, lists, smartphone apps, or whatever works for you. As with triggers and vulnerabilities, insight helps you gain awareness of cause and effect. While insight into triggers and vulnerabilities allows you to recognize what decreases your stability, insight into management strategies allows you to recognize what increases it. Insight is also helpful in choosing timely intervention strategies. It enables you to assess a symptom or behavior and address it effectively. Learn which timely intervention strategy to use when. With time and practice, you can learn to tailor your maneuvers against the beast. The best timely intervention strategy to use in any given situation depends on a number of factors: In other words, when in doubt take the situation seriously and use a strategy like contacting your mental health provider, calling a suicide hotline, or going to the emergency room. Get help from others. Other people can be allies in beating the beast. For example, they can: Going to a therapist on a regular basis can itself be a management strategy “plus the right therapist can help you identify and implement effective management strategies. Be on a constant lookout. Bipolar disorder is an illness that needs to be managed continuously “so you have to keep on your toes. Fighting the beast requires you to cope with, prepare for, or recover from early warning signs and triggers on an ongoing basis “which I call practicing CPR. You can keep it where you will see it and update it regularly. Just learn what you can and move on. The most important thing is to never, ever throw in the towel.

2: What Causes Depression? | The Relapse Prevention Plan

Relapse prevention is a critical part of recovery from depression. Surviving an episode of depression is not like having the measles—“one does not develop an immunity to the disease. Although the symptoms of depression can be controlled, the underlying predisposition does not go away.

As such, it is vital to have a plan for how to avoid relapse and what to do if it does happen to you. What is a relapse prevention plan? A relapse prevention plan is a vital tool for anyone in recovery. Having a plan helps you to recognize your own personal behaviors that may point to a relapse in the future. It also outlines ways to combat those behaviors and get back on track. Typically it is a three-part process, including an emotional relapse, a mental relapse, and a physical relapse. With a relapse prevention plan, it is possible to acknowledge and act upon certain feelings and events, in turn avoiding a physical relapse which is the stage when an addict uses or drinks. What to consider when creating an RPP While you can create an RPP on your own, it may be helpful to walk through the process with someone who has knowledge of the topic, like a substance abuse counselor. Relapse plans can be verbalized, but may also be written in order to have a more clear outline of what steps to take should a relapse seem to be a possibility. Regardless, it is important to assess certain factors before creating a concrete plan. The following are factors to consider to take when it comes time to create an RPP: Once you are sober and feel stable, assess your history with drugs and alcohol. Detoxification and a few good days of sobriety are needed in order to make relapse prevention planning work. After you feel you are in a good place, begin by trying to determine the factors surrounding your use. Was there a certain time you were more prone to use? Did specific people factor into the times you used? Determining what caused a prior relapse is vital in avoiding future ones. Determine any signs that could lead to relapse and have an action plan for each one. If not, this part may be a little bit more difficult for you. Regardless, try to brainstorm a list of scenarios that could lead to potential relapse and have a plan for what you will do instead of drink or use. For example, if going through a breakup could lead to a relapse for you, think of other outlets for your pain and frustration. Instead of drinking or using, you could plan to attend a support meeting or call a family member or close friend right away. The more specific your action plan is, the better, as this means you will be less likely to come within close reach of a relapse. Have a step-by-step plan of what will happen if you do relapse or come close. Know who you will call first, what you will ask of them, and if you will attend a meeting or return to rehab. The more detailed this plan is, the more likely you will be to get yourself back on track quickly. Talk to the people included in your plan and make sure they have the necessary knowledge should you need their assistance. What to include in your RPP Though relapse prevention plans are unique to each individual, there are specific components that are helpful to include in a final RPP. The following is a potential outline for such a plan: Triggers First, list the people, places, and things that have the potential to lead to a relapse. Triggers are anything that could lead to using or drinking again. No matter how long and hard you think, it may not be possible to list every potential trigger. Who could I see that would remind me of drug use? What places did I use drugs that could trigger me? What addictive thoughts could make me relapse? What can I do if I cannot avoid things that trigger me? Cravings can sometimes lead to a relapse. When it comes to cravings, compile a list of who you can call if you have a craving, what you can do to distract yourself from a craving and how you could stop a craving altogether. Healthy tools Compile a list of tools that have been helpful in your recovery. Think about what you could do instead of use, and how such activities would point you back on the right track. Some examples of such tools include writing a list of consequences should you relapse, attending a support meeting, exercising, journaling, or writing a gratitude list. Recovery program tools This may only apply to those who partake in step programs. When facing a relapse, it can be helpful to revisit the 12 steps and assess where in the steps you find yourself. This is also where a sponsor comes into play. If you have a sponsor, they should be one of the first people you turn to if you feel like a relapse is a possibility. Damage control RPPs can include ways in which you hope to amend the damages addiction has brought upon your life. Separating these damages into areas like relationships, legal issues, financial issues, or education can help you regain insight as to why you decided to get sober in the first place, and may make you decide not to put

positive life changes in jeopardy by using again. As time passes, it may be important to revisit your relapse prevention plan. The components you acknowledged in your RPP at the beginning of your recovery have the potential to change and develop over time, as do the people in your support system, so your RPP may need to be revised. This can be done on your own or by sitting down with a professional such as a substance abuse counselor.

3: Relapse Prevention - Healing From Depression

Visit www.enganchecubano.com for info sheets on depression, self-care and recovery, such as *Coping With Mental Health Crises and Emergencies*, *Finding Help for Mental Illnesses*, and *Relapse Prevention*. You can also find personal stories from people who are working through recovery, our *Wellness Modules*, and *self-tests*.

Outlook After experiencing depression once, it can be worrying to feel the symptoms creeping in again. But how common is depression relapse and what are the warning signs? Noticing the red flags early is often the key to preventing a full-blown episode from developing. Depression is a mental health disorder with a high rate of relapse. About half of the people who experience an episode of depression for the first time will remain well. For the other half, depression can return one or more times throughout their lives. For those people who do experience repeat episodes of depression, the warning signs may be different each time. In this article, we list key signals of a depression relapse, its possible triggers, and ways people can prevent, treat, and cope with this condition.

Fast facts on depression relapse: Depression can come back weeks, months, or even years after a first episode. Depressive episodes may return in over 50 percent of people diagnosed with depression. Depression is most likely to return within 3 years after a first episode. Researchers are still figuring out why some people relapse, but others do not. What is a depression relapse? Depression relapse can occur days, months, or years after recovering from an earlier bout of depression. Sadness or a loss of interest in everyday activities can be a perfectly normal part of life. But if these feelings continue almost daily for more than 2 weeks, and if they begin to affect work or social life, then this may be depression. Relapse is most likely to occur within 2 months of stopping treatment for a previous episode. This is most common within the first 6 months. Around 20 percent of people will experience a recurrence, but this can rise when depression is very severe. After two or three earlier episodes, the chances of depression returning are much higher. Some depression-like disorders will frequently return and are usually identifiable by their name. These conditions include seasonal affective disorder SAD , which comes back during winter months, and premenstrual dysphoric syndrome PDS , which is a severe form of premenstrual syndrome. A person can often recognize the same warning signs of depression from their previous episodes. The symptoms of a new episode can also be different, however, so it pays to look out for all possible warning signs each time. Here are some key warning signs of depression: Feeling sad, empty, or hopeless. Loss of interest in things usually enjoyed: Taking less pleasure from hobbies, reduced interest in sex. Avoiding social situations, losing touch with friends. Daily tasks may feel more difficult and take longer, such as washing up and dressing in the morning. Changes in sleep patterns: Insomnia or excessive sleeping. Loss of appetite or an increased appetite. Getting annoyed more easily than usual. Feelings of worthlessness and guilt: Thinking over past events. Concentration and memory problems: Thoughts and speech may feel slower. Physical aches and pains: Unexplained headaches , stomach aches, or muscle pain. Suicidal thoughts or suicide attempts: This may signal a severe depressive episode.

4: Wellness Recovery Action Plan: Opening the Door to Relapse Prevention and Recovery

"Depression is often a chronic illness, but with a good prevention plan in place, it is often possible to prevent recurrences entirely or limit the severity and duration if depression does."

Where do I go from here? Fortunately, you can take a lot of steps to help prevent a relapse or worsening symptoms. But you can look for early warning signs, create a plan to help with difficult situations, and take steps to care for yourself. These steps may help you take action before symptoms become a major problem and help lessen the effect of symptoms on your day-to-day life. It may sound daunting, but self-management is really about building small, practical steps into your day. When it comes to preventing relapse, there are three big parts to self-management:

Top Before Part 1: You may need to continue the medication for several months or longer, depending on your risk factors. Stopping medication too early is a major reason for relapse. You likely started to feel better after a few days, but you still had to take the antibiotics for one or two weeks to help stop the infection from returning. See our Module 2 on working with your doctor on a treatment plan.

Top Why should I care about self-management? Unfortunately, experiencing one episode of depression raises the risk of experiencing another episode. But the good news is that you can take action to lower the risk of future episodes. The goal is to take action before symptoms seriously affect your life. Identifying early warning signs

An early warning sign is a sign that shows your health may be starting to get worse. These warning signs are the first signs to appear, before major symptoms begin to affect your life in a big way. The purpose of identifying your unique warning signs is to help you take action early. The act of identifying early warning signs can make some people nervous. After all, no one wants to remember difficult or unpleasant situations. It may be helpful to think of this exercise as an opportunity to take control of your health. When you identify your early warning signs, you give yourself the power to challenge depression. How did it start? How did it progress? What did you experience? What kind of thoughts did you have? Did your behaviour change? Did anything happen in a particular order? It may also be helpful to ask loved ones for their feedback—people close to us often notice changes before we see changes in ourselves. This will help you see when and where your warning signs start to happen. For example, do warning signs seem to come up after working a lot of overtime or after a fight with loved ones? Here are some examples: Think back to your last episode of depression. Can you tie your warning signs to a particular trigger? If you can, try to map out a timeline that shows your triggers and warning signs in order. This part is made up of smaller parts, but they all work together.

Building healthy coping skills

Managing stressful situations Building healthy coping skills A big part of coping skills is a healthy lifestyle. Healthy activities like eating well, exercising regularly, getting enough sleep and practicing relaxation exercises can have a significant impact on your mood and your ability to tackle challenges. Likewise, unhealthy activities can make mood problems worse. The goal is to make healthy changes you can maintain for a long time—and commit to keeping up even during times of stress.

Eating well—Food gives you energy. Exercising regularly—Exercise has many positive benefits for mental health. Find an activity you enjoy. The goal is to exercise for at least short period of time on a regular basis. Remember, start with manageable, realistic goals and gradually increase your goals as you gain confidence.

Getting enough sleep—Sleep plays a big part in mental health. Mental health problems may cause sleep problems, and sleep problems may cause or add to mental health problems. Certain medications for depression may also affect sleep for some people. Relaxation skills—Relaxation skills help calm you down. You can learn specific skills like meditation, mindfulness, deep breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, yoga or cognitive-behavioural therapy skills. Other activities like music, art or writing may also be helpful.

Healthy thinking skills—Depression can really affect the way you think about yourself, others and the world around you. Part of healthy coping is identifying and challenging thinking problems. Here are a few different thinking traps: Thinking that everything is bad because you had one negative experience. Only hearing the negatives and ignoring the positives. Something is only all good or all bad; there is no middle ground. Seeing a small negative event or mistake as a massive disaster, and reacting to the small mistake like it was a massive disaster. When you challenge a thinking trap, you are looking for the realistic thought. Thinking skills are a

big part of cognitive-behavioural therapy. You can learn these skills from a practitioner. Identifying stressful situations Managing stress is a big part of wellness. You can control some things that cause stress—for example, you can try to get enough sleep and use substances like alcohol wisely. This is why stress management skills are important. These skills help you identify stress and take action by solving problems proactively. These skills can help you handle stressful situations before the stress affects your well-being. You may notice stress in four general areas: Next, you can plan ahead if you know a particular event or situation is coming up. Identifying situations that cause you stress and taking action before you feel overwhelmed is a big part of maintaining wellness. Think about situations that you find stressful. Problems with your job, money or relationships may come to mind easily. Stressful situations or events people sometimes forget about include: Healthy coping skills, including your toolbox of supports, are a good place to start. But you may need some extra help. There are practical steps you can take as you approach upcoming situations or events. Here are some tips to consider: If possible, add in new stress gradually, rather than all at once. For example, if you want to go back to school, it may be possible to start taking courses part-time. Give yourself time for self-care. Cut back on ongoing responsibilities. Make sure your own expectations are realistic. This is a structured approach to help you think through problems and solutions in a logical way. There are six basic steps: Decide what you want your solution to address. You can also ask friends or loved ones for ideas. Look at the pros and cons. Pick a few possible solutions that you think might work best, and consider the positives and negatives of your choices. Remember, it should describe who does what and what you want to achieve. After you put your plan into action, see if it worked as expected.

5: Preventing Relapse of Depression

Depression has chemical, psychological or biological causes. Chemicals that are in our brain control how we feel emotionally. Depression can be a result or the cause of an imbalance in these chemicals.

I began this work out of my own frustration with not finding simple, safe, effective ways to relieve the extreme swings of mood that were destroying my life. In my ongoing research on this topic, I have interviewed thousands of people. I have used my findings to develop numerous mental health-related resources, in leading workshops all over the country, and for my own healing. Several state departments of mental health and various regional mental health organizations have used the wellness model I have developed throughout their mental health systems. They felt the need for a more structured way of addressing and relieving their symptoms. The enthusiasm for this program has been overwhelming! People who experience psychiatric symptoms are desperate to find effective, safe things that they can do for themselves that will improve their level of wellness and quality of life. I later developed two books that describe the system and facilitate its use. These are listed at the end of this column. You must develop your own WRAP. No one can write your WRAP for you. This article is a summary of the process. It contains enough information so that you can develop your own Wellness Recovery Action Plan. You can refer to the books for more information if you need help. You can also check out my Web site at www. It is not meant to replace, but to complement, professional health support and medications, though in more and more cases people are able to shift the balance of care to this self-management approach over time. Include this list in the front of your notebook. Add new ideas to the list as you think of them. Now, set up your notebook using the tabs. Insert each tab followed by several sheets of lined paper. Things like getting a half-hour of exercise, drinking eight glasses of water, doing relaxation exercises and spending time doing things you like to do. Then, using the previously learned strategies in your Wellness Toolbox, develop and write a plan to get through this difficult time. Strategies may include calling a supporter, taking extra time to do something fun and doing a deep breathing exercise. Then develop a plan, more intensive than the last one, which will help you to avoid further difficulties. This plan might include getting extra exercise, seeing your counselor, avoiding caffeine and doing some peer counseling with a friend. In Section 4, list those symptoms that indicate that the situation is worsening, also known as when things are breaking down. These may include crying all the time, sleeping all day, being very irritable and shouting at family members and co-workers. Then write a very intensive plan that would help relieve these symptoms, like taking three days off from work, asking a family member to take over your household responsibilities and spending two to three hours doing something you enjoy, like woodworking. Section 5 is an intensive crisis plan. This part of the plan may be hard for you to write and may take much more time than the other parts of the plan. You may want to set it aside and leave it for another time when you feel more ready to do this work. In this plan, write: Give copies of this part of the plan to the people you want to take over for you so they will know what to do if you are having a crisis. After you have written your WRAP, review it daily. Do the things on your daily maintenance plan every day. If you are triggered, have early warning signs, or know that things are getting much worse, do the things you have listed in your response. Revise the plan as needed. After a while, using the plan will become second nature to you and you will not have to refer to it as often. The WRAP approach empowers you to take control of your own health and wellness, while reducing symptoms and improving your quality of life. A workbook of action plans for recurring health and emotional problems.

6: Relapse Prevention Plan and Early Warning Signs

Relapse prevention is about monitoring and identifying your early warning signs and their triggers, as well as developing an effective and proactive plan of action to prevent relapse or minimise its effects.

Your Guide to Recovery. For a person with two episodes, the risk is about 70 percent. For someone with three episodes or more, the risk rises to around 90 percent. D, a clinical psychologist and author of the book *Living with Depression*. This includes anything from skipping therapy sessions to missing doses of your medication to ending therapy too soon, she said. They may reduce your dose, prescribe a different medication or recommend another strategy to minimize side effects and respond to your concerns. Focus on celebrating your strengths. For example, individuals with depression tend to dwell on their supposed flaws and failures. They also may view neutral events with a negative lens. Look at your calendar for potentially difficult periods. For instance, this might be an anniversary of a divorce or death or anxiety about a mammogram, Serani said. At home, do certain actions of those around you tend to upset you? Are you feeling supported or overwhelmed? But by knowing the early signs and getting treatment right away, you can prevent a full-blown episode or lessen its severity and length. Tracking your mood states every day helps you spot these early, not-so-obvious signs. Her mantra is the Japanese proverb: Depression is a difficult illness. But, with treatment and healthy strategies, you can manage and possibly eliminate your symptoms and get better. She blogs regularly about body and self-image issues on her own blog, *Weightless* , and about creativity on her second blog *Make a Mess*. Retrieved on November 14, , from <https://>

7: Relapse Prevention | www.enganchecubano.com

Depression Self-Management Toolkit - Angela Gervais and Sheila Olver Szakács Depression Self-Management Toolkit
Disclaimer: The Depression Self-Management Toolkit is designed for use in conjunction with your health care provider, not to replace professional help. The Suicide Risk Assessment is for clinician use only.

Tucson, Arizona High-Risk Situations As we discussed before, identifying high-risk situations and mapping out a plan to deal with them is an essential component to your relapse-prevention plan. This is a great task to work on with your therapist as you work through all the potential landmines on your road to long-term recovery. Begin by asking yourself several key questions to identify your personal high-risk situations: Are there specific days you used drugs, such as holidays or weekends, or were you a daily user? Are there specific times of day when you experience cravings most often? What specific locations are associated with your drug use? Who have you used drugs with in the past? Have you ever used because of your emotions? What positive effects have you experienced from using drugs? What negative consequences have you experienced from using drugs? The best relapse-prevention strategy is to identify these situations in your life, then make sure to have a specific plan in place to deal with each one. Ask a supportive friend or family member to role-play ways to refuse or avoid drugs, so that it feels comfortable and natural. Many recovering individuals find that bringing a member of their sober support group to what they know will be a challenging situation can make it easier to stay abstinent. Offering to be a designated driver can also help you stay sober and maintain control of the situation. For many, successful long-term recovery requires work that extends beyond the initial treatment period. Read More People in early recovery are often taught that they are more likely to relapse when they are hungry, angry, lonely, or tired—otherwise known as the acronym, HALT. Stress and other negative emotions can also increase your cravings to use. A few ways to help you regulate your emotions is speaking to a support group, exercising, or practicing other distraction techniques, such as reading, watching television, or listening to music while the feelings pass. Following a healthy daily routine can also help you reduce stress, so focus on managing your small daily stressors, eating a healthy diet, and getting adequate amounts of rest. Speaking to others in recovery can help you gain insight into how others successfully manage cravings. Reaching out to a member of your support group. They can help change your perspective and talk you through the craving, or just keep you company until it passes. Healthy distractions may include cleaning, exercising, meditation, or anything else that will take your mind off the craving. While it feels interminable, cravings will eventually pass. Switching your focus from the craving and thinking about all the positive experiences or growth you have made. List all the things you are grateful for. Writing down a list of all of the negative consequences you have experienced due to your drug use, and if you have an urge, referring to this list to help remind you why you no longer use. Specific Thoughts to Cope with Cravings Training your mind to think positive thoughts is an important step in managing cravings and drug relapse prevention. A few ways to do this include: Thinking about the reasons you stopped using drugs and referring to the list of negative consequences that your drug use has caused. Reminding yourself that your cravings are a normal part of recovery and that you do not have to give into them. Visualizing the cravings as waves that you have to ride out. Urge-surfing is a technique that focuses your mind on the physical and mental experience of the craving, rather than giving in to the urge to use. Encourage yourself by remembering your successes each time your cravings become intense. Celebrate your small milestones too. Self-help meetings are great at helping you do this and providing incentives to stay clean, such as coins or key tags earned for increments of sobriety. Surround yourself with people who celebrate with you. Coping with Relapse While having a relapse prevention plan in place is important, it does not guarantee sobriety. In fact, relapse is often considered a natural part of recovery. Even though you may know this, when you do relapse, you may be overwhelmed by feelings of guilt, shame, frustration, anger, or fear. If these emotions are not dealt with properly, the relapse can become a full-blown reversal into regular drug use. Instead, try to view a relapse as a signal that you could use additional treatment to support your recovery efforts. You may also discover that an underlying mental health issue is affecting your sobriety and can work toward treating it. Reach out and ask for the help you need. With your therapist, sponsor, and

support group, recommit to your sobriety, talk through your struggles, and if needed, seek a treatment program. Managing the aftermath of a relapse is difficult, but support is available to help you normalize your experience and encourage you to get and stay sober. It helps to remind yourself that no matter how stressful things get, or how bad your life may seem, the benefits of abstaining from using drugs outweigh the short-term relief you might gain from using again. Relapse-prevention planning means finding new ways to deal with life and all that it brings. For more information on drug addiction treatment, please call our confidential helpline at Who Answers? Treatment placement specialists can help you understand your options.

8: Relapse Prevention Plan (Version 2) (Worksheet) | Therapist Aid

A relapse prevention plan is simply a plan for how you can prevent a relapse or a return to drug use after a period of abstinence. A relapse prevention plan can be a simple plan that is a couple of pages long or a detailed plan for making changes to all the areas of your life that have been damaged by drug use.

Poor eating habits Poor sleep habits The signs of emotional relapse are also the symptoms of post-acute withdrawal. In the later stages the pull of relapse gets stronger and the sequence of events moves faster. Recognize that your sleep and eating habits are slipping and practice self-care. The most important thing you can do to prevent relapse at this stage is take better care of yourself. Think about why you use. You use drugs or alcohol to escape, relax, or reward yourself. If any of those situations continues for too long, you will begin to think about using. But if you practice self-care, you can avoid those feelings from growing and avoid relapse. The signs of mental relapse are: Techniques for Dealing with Mental Urges Play the tape through. But play the tape through. One drink usually leads to more drinks. A common mental urge is that you can get away with using, because no one will know if you relapse. Play the tape through. If you could control your use, you would have done it by now. Call a friend, a support, or someone in recovery. When you think about using, do something to occupy yourself. Go to a meeting. Get up and go for a walk. Wait for 30 minutes. Most urges usually last for less than 15 to 30 minutes. Do your recovery one day at a time. One day at a time, means you should match your goals to your emotional strength. Make relaxation part of your recovery. But it is not recovery. For More Detailed Information Learn how to overcome anxiety, depression, and addiction. Learn recovery skills such as stress management, meditation, and cognitive behavioral therapy. References 1 The stages of relapse were first described by Terence Gorski. A Guide for Relapse Prevention:

9: Establish a Mental Illness Relapse Prevention Plan | HealthyPlace

A relapse is a complete return to all of your old ways of thinking and behaving when you are anxious. People who have a relapse are usually doing the same things that.

Trouble with concentration or attention Changes in thinking e. Some signs are highly individual or quirky – like maybe you visit a particular website over and over, or spend lots of money on art supplies. How do I become aware of my early warning signs? Using warning signs for relapse prevention has 2 parts: Educate yourself on bipolar disorder. The types of bipolar disorder and which type you have The symptoms of each type of mood episode that affects you including the definition of each symptom The nature of bipolar disorder as a chronic brain condition that requires ongoing management. Reflect on previous mood episodes. Think about prior mood episodes and try to recall what happened step by step. Try to remember what symptoms you had at these times: Keep a mood chart: They also allow you to record the medications you take and how much sleep you get. There are all kinds of tools available these days phone apps, online tracking systems, etc. Mindfulness has a variety of components and is an important skill to learn for all aspects of relapse prevention. In the context of warning signs, mindfulness helps you maintain awareness of your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors – which is critical for spotting warning signs. It also teaches you to stay in the present moment and not automatically react. That allows you to notice when something might be amiss, remain calm, and decide on the best course of action. I mentioned some mindfulness resources in a previous post. In addition to maintaining awareness, you also need to evaluate your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. This allows you to gain insight, which is where much of the power over bipolar disorder lies. One of the likely factors in the Titanic wreck was a lack of insight – everybody was so convinced that the ship was unsinkable that they failed to grasp the reality of the situation. It helps to write things down – you can write entries in a journal, use a question-and-answer format, or just jot down some notes. This is one of the trickiest parts of navigating bipolar disorder. You have to be very honest with yourself – not downplaying thoughts, feelings or behaviors that could be problematic, and not overreacting to those that may just be a normal part of life. After all, everybody wakes up on the wrong side of the bed, gets down in the dumps, or loses their temper from time to time. While it can be helpful to err on the side of caution at first, over time you can learn to make these distinctions. There are 3 main things to reflect on: Is the thought, feeling, or behavior in context?: Is it characteristic of you?: Warning signs are generally out of character and differ from typical behavior. Throughout the course of a day, we have thousands of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors – including some that are negative, irrational, or strange. Take note of anything that seems unusual, and monitor it to see if a pattern starts to emerge. Get help from others. Therapists can also be particularly useful for helping you develop insight – since friends and family may not have the knowledge or objectivity to help you see things clearly. Be on a constant lookout. Just as ships in icy seas need to be on the lookout for icebergs at all times, you need to make an ongoing commitment to watch for warning signs. It just means you need to be alert and cautious. With patience and persistence, those of us with bipolar disorder can learn to spot icebergs from miles away, stay safely afloat, and arrive at a destination of productive and fulfilling lives.

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