

12 Step-Friendly Relapse Prevention Plan and Worksheet

This worksheet gives you a place to put your warning signs, triggers, support system and next steps in writing before you need them. It is designed to work alongside AA, NA or another 12-step fellowship, while still leaving room for you to adapt it to your own recovery. The printable PDF can be completed by hand. An editable Word version is also available if you want to change the wording, add questions, remove sections or make the plan better fit the way you work your recovery.

If You Need Help Right Now

In the United States, call or text **988** for 24/7 support during a mental health, suicide or substance use crisis. For free, confidential treatment referral and information, call the **SAMHSA National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357)**. Call **911** for an immediate medical emergency.

How to Use This Worksheet

Work through the plan when you have enough time to think clearly about your answers. Try to be specific. A plan that says “call someone” is not as useful as one that says who you will call first, who you will call if that person does not answer and which meeting you can get to that day.

Think about your own history rather than trying to give the answer you believe someone in recovery is supposed to give. Which warning signs have actually shown up for you? Which situations have caught you off guard before? What do you tend to stop doing when your recovery is not going well?

If you have a sponsor, counselor, treatment provider or another person you trust in recovery, consider going through the finished plan with them. They may recognize patterns you missed or help you make a vague answer more useful. The completed example later in this worksheet is there to show how specific a plan can become. It is not an answer key. Your answers should reflect your own experience.

Important disclaimer

This worksheet is provided for general educational and self-reflection purposes only. It is not medical, mental health, diagnostic or treatment advice and is not a substitute for care from a qualified healthcare or behavioral health professional.

This resource was independently created by 12Steppers.org. It is not official or fellowship-approved literature and is not affiliated with, endorsed by or approved by Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous or any other 12-step fellowship. References to the Steps and common fellowship practices are included for educational purposes.

The editable Word version may be changed to better fit your own recovery approach. If you enter personal or sensitive information such as phone numbers, medical information or details about your recovery into an electronic copy, consider how and where you store or share that file.

Relapse Prevention Plan

There is no single relapse prevention plan that works for everyone. The value of this one depends on how honestly and specifically you complete it. Take your time with the questions and return to the plan later if something new occurs to you.

1. Recognizing My Relapse Warning Signs

Relapse can involve changes in behavior and thinking before a person returns to alcohol or drug use. Think back to periods when your recovery began to weaken. What changed first?

Do not limit yourself to warning signs you have read about somewhere else. Write down what has actually happened to you.

Emotional warning signs I have noticed

Examples might include isolating, neglecting sleep or meals, becoming unusually irritable, holding on to anger or withdrawing from people in recovery.

Mental warning signs I have noticed

Examples might include romanticizing past use, bargaining with yourself, thinking about old people or places or beginning to imagine situations where using would somehow be different this time.

High-risk behaviors or situations that may come before a return to use

Physical relapse means returning to alcohol or drug use. For this part, think about behaviors or situations that, for you, may come before that point.

The warning sign I tend to notice too late

2. Checking HALT

HALT stands for Hungry, Angry, Lonely and Tired. The useful part is not simply noticing one of these conditions. It is knowing what you usually need to do once you recognize it.

HALT Check	What This Looks Like for Me	What I Will Do
Hungry		
Angry		
Lonely		
Tired		

Which part of HALT causes me the most trouble?

3. Resentments and Fears I Need to Address

Resentment and fear are familiar subjects in Step 4 and Step 10 work. The purpose here is not to decide that you should never be angry or afraid. It is to notice when you have been carrying something by yourself for too long.

A resentment that keeps returning

A fear I have been avoiding

What happens to my thinking or behavior when I hold on to this?

What I need to inventory, discuss with my sponsor or address another way

4. My Triggers and Reservations

A trigger can be a person, place, situation, feeling or routine associated with past use or a strong urge to use. Some triggers are obvious. Others only become clear after you have encountered them a few times.

People

Places

Situations or routines

Feelings or emotional states

A reservation is an exception you may still be keeping open for yourself. It might sound like, "If my relationship ended, all bets are off," or, "That particular drug was never really my problem."

Reservations or exceptions I still find myself making

Which trigger has surprised me before?

5. The People I Will Contact Before I Use

Do not leave this section as “call someone.” Write down real names and numbers.

Your sponsor may be first on the list, but your plan does not have to depend on one person being available every time you need help.

Person	Relationship or Role	Phone Number

Who will I call first?

If that person does not answer, what will I do next?

Who can I call late at night or during an especially difficult moment?

6. My Meeting and Fellowship Plan

Think about what normally happens to your meeting attendance when you are not doing well. Do you stop going completely? Do you still attend but leave before talking to anyone? Do you tell yourself you are too busy?

The change may happen gradually. Write down enough of a plan that you do not have to start looking for meetings from scratch when you are already struggling.

My home group

My regular meetings

Backup or online meetings I can use

My plan if I need more support

This might include extra meetings, more frequent contact with people in recovery or, if it fits your fellowship practice, a 90-in-90 commitment.

What usually happens to my meeting attendance when I am not doing well?

7. My Daily Recovery Routine

Which recovery habits do you want to keep even when you are busy, irritated, discouraged or simply do not feel like doing them?

The goal is not to create a perfect schedule. It is to identify the things that help keep you connected and to notice which ones you usually abandon first.

- ☐ Step 11 prayer, meditation or quiet reflection
- ☐ Step 10 personal inventory
- ☐ Contact with my sponsor
- ☐ Reading fellowship literature
- ☐ Attending meetings

- ☐ Step 12 service or helping another person in recovery
- ☐ Another practice that matters to me:

The recovery habit I usually drop first

What usually happens after I stop doing it?

8. What I Will Do When I Have a Craving

Decide what you will do before the craving happens. Be specific enough that you can follow the plan without having to invent one in the middle of the urge.

My first action

If that does not help, my second action

The person I will contact

The meeting or safe place I can go

Something physical I can do to change the situation

This might include leaving, walking, eating, resting or going somewhere I will not be alone.

What I need to remember about where using has led me before

9. Maintaining My Spiritual Life

Spiritual practice means different things to different people in 12-step recovery. Your understanding of a Higher Power does not have to look like anyone else's.

This section is about whatever helps you maintain the conscious contact described in Step 11 and what tends to happen when you stop doing it.

Practices that help me stay spiritually connected

What I notice when I stop doing them

Someone I can talk with when I am struggling spiritually

10. What I Will Do If I Drink or Use Again

A relapse prevention plan should include what you intend to do after a return to use, not just what you hope will prevent one.

The first impulse may be to hide what happened. Writing this section in advance gives you another option.

Who I will tell and how soon I intend to tell them

The meeting, person or recovery support I can access right away

When I will seek professional or medical help

What I do not want shame, embarrassment or fear to talk me into doing

If there is any risk of overdose, severe withdrawal or another medical emergency, seek medical care immediately.

Completed Example

The example below uses a fictional person named Alex. All names, phone numbers, meetings and situations are fictional.

This is not an answer key. It simply shows what a more specific relapse prevention plan might look like. Your answers may be completely different.

1. Recognizing My Relapse Warning Signs

Emotional warning signs: I stop returning messages, skip my Tuesday home group, stay up too late and start telling myself that I am too busy to talk to anyone. I also get irritated by small things and stop eating regular meals.

Mental warning signs: I start remembering parties more fondly than they really happened. I think about whether one drink at dinner would actually matter and start wondering what some of my old friends are doing.

High-risk behaviors or situations: I agree to meet an old using friend alone, keep wine in the house “for guests” or deliberately drive past places where I used to drink.

The sign I usually notice too late: Isolation. By the time I admit I have stopped talking to people, I have usually been doing it for several days.

2. Checking HALT

- **Hungry:** I get impatient and scattered. I will eat a real meal and keep something simple with me on long workdays.
- **Angry:** I replay conversations in my head and start composing messages I will regret. I will wait, walk around the block and call Maria before responding.
- **Lonely:** I start telling myself nobody wants to hear from me. I will text James, call my sister or go to a meeting.
- **Tired:** I become negative about everything and stop doing my morning routine. I will turn down an extra shift if I can and get to bed earlier.

The part of HALT that causes me the most trouble: Tired. I keep pushing until everything feels worse than it really is.

3. Resentments and Fears I Need to Address

A resentment that keeps returning: My manager taking credit for my work.

A fear I have been avoiding: That I will never repair things with my brother.

What happens when I hold on to it: I get self-righteous about work, come home angry and stop listening to anyone else.

What I need to do: Bring the resentment to my next sponsor call and look honestly at my part. Talk about the fear concerning my brother instead of pretending I do not care.

4. My Triggers and Reservations

People: My old roommate Danny and coworkers who go drinking after work.

Places: The bar on 5th Street and my parents' house during large holiday gatherings.

Situations and routines: Payday, arguments with my partner, Sunday afternoon boredom and work celebrations.

Feelings: Rejection, anger, boredom and feeling unusually confident that everything is under control.

My reservations: "If my relationship ended, all bets are off." I also sometimes think alcohol was the problem and pills were different. I need to keep talking about both of these instead of pretending the thoughts are not there.

A trigger that surprised me: Good news. I expected bad days to be dangerous, but celebrations have brought up the urge to drink too.

5. The People I Will Contact Before I Use

- **Maria, sponsor:** 555-123-4567
- **James, home group:** 555-123-4567
- **Lena, recovery friend:** 555-123-4567
- **Chris, brother:** 555-123-4567

Who I call first: Maria.

If Maria does not answer: Call James. If James does not answer, call Lena and get to a meeting instead of sitting alone waiting for someone to call back.

Late-night contact: Lena has told me I can call late if I am seriously struggling.

6. My Meeting and Fellowship Plan

Home group: Tuesday at 7:00 p.m., Sample Avenue Group.

Regular meetings: Tuesday home group, Saturday morning meeting and Sunday online meeting.

Backup: Daily noon online meeting. Link saved in my phone.

If I need more support: Add several meetings during the week, call Maria every day for a while and talk with her about whether doing 90 meetings in 90 days would be useful.

What happens to my attendance when I am not doing well: I usually keep going at first, but arrive late, sit in the back and leave without talking to anyone. That is a warning sign for me too.

7. My Daily Recovery Routine

- Ten minutes of prayer or meditation in the morning.

- A brief Step 10 inventory at night.
- Regular contact with Maria.
- Read fellowship literature several times a week.
- Keep my regular meetings.
- Help set up my Tuesday home group.

The habit I abandon first: Morning meditation.

What happens after I stop: I start rushing into the day, become more reactive and usually stop doing the nighttime inventory next.

8. What I Will Do When I Have a Craving

First: Call Maria.

Second: If she does not answer, call James instead of using that as an excuse to stop reaching out.

Then: Leave the situation if possible and get to the noon online meeting or another meeting that day.

Physical action: Walk for 20 minutes and eat something if I have not eaten recently.

What I need to remember: The first drink was never where the problem ended. When I start imagining “just one,” I am leaving out what happened afterward.

9. Maintaining My Spiritual Life

Practices that help me stay connected: Ten quiet minutes in the morning, prayer when I am overwhelmed, a gratitude list at night and a long walk in the park on Sundays.

What happens when I stop: I get impatient and self-centered within a few days. I start feeling as though everything depends entirely on me.

Someone I can talk with: Maria or James.

10. What I Will Do If I Drink or Use Again

Who I will tell: Tell Maria the same day. Do not wait until I can make the story sound better.

Support I will access: Go to a meeting that day if possible and contact James or Lena.

Professional or medical help: Contact my doctor or treatment provider if there is a medical concern or withdrawal risk. Call 911 for an emergency.

What I do not want shame to talk me into: Disappearing from meetings, avoiding Maria or deciding that one episode means there is no point in coming back.

Optional Companion Worksheets

The main plan gives you an overview. These shorter exercises let you spend more time on three parts that often deserve a closer look.

Companion Worksheet 1 – My Relapse Warning Signs

Think back to a period when your recovery was not going well. Try to remember the earliest changes rather than only what happened immediately before drinking or using.

What changed in my behavior?

What changed in the way I thought?

What changed in my sleep, eating or basic self-care?

What did other people notice before I noticed it myself?

What recovery activities did I begin avoiding?

What excuses did I give myself at the time?

The three warning signs I most want to remember

1.

2.

3.

What I want to do when I notice one of them

Companion Worksheet 2 – Trigger and Reservation Inventory

A trigger does not mean you are going to relapse. It is something worth understanding and planning around.

For each trigger below, think about what usually happens next. What thought shows up? What do you tell yourself? What would you rather do instead?

[illegible]

A situation I keep telling myself I could safely use in

What am I leaving out when I tell myself that?

Is there a substance, behavior or situation I still think “doesn’t count”?

Who can I discuss these reservations with honestly?

Companion Worksheet 3 – My Craving Action Card

This page is meant to be simple. Once you complete it, consider keeping a copy somewhere easy to reach.

When I notice a strong urge to drink or use, I will first

The first person I will call

If that person does not answer, I will call

The meeting or safe place I can go

A place or situation I need to leave

A simple physical need I should check

- ☐ Hungry
- ☐ Angry
- ☐ Lonely
- ☐ Tired

What I need to remember about using

What I am protecting by staying in recovery today

If I am in immediate danger or facing a medical emergency

Call 911. In the United States, call or text 988 for crisis support. The SAMHSA National Helpline is 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

References Used and Additional Resources

- Steven M. Melemis. [Relapse Prevention and the Five Rules of Recovery](#). *Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine*.
- National Institute on Drug Abuse. [Treatment and Recovery](#).
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. [Mental Health and Substance Use Helplines](#).

About This Worksheet

This worksheet is part of the [Relapse Prevention Plan guide from 12Steppers.org](#).

For more free printable resources, visit the [12 Step Worksheets](#) section or browse [12 Step Meeting Topics and Discussion Questions](#).

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