Understanding Mental Health Relapse

Use this worksheet to take control of your recovery journey. By preparing when you are feeling well, you may be able reduce the possibility of a relapse. Share this with your treatment team and support network and create a relapse plan together.

Monitoring Symptoms
Sometimes, your regular symptoms may become more severe, increase in frequency, or last longer. This can be the beginning of a relapse.

Ask yourself these questions:
What symptoms do I have more often than usual when experiencing a relapse?

Which symptoms get stronger and more difficult to ignore when I am experiencing a relapse?

What symptoms last longer than usual when I am experiencing a relapse?

Recognizing Early Signs of Relapse
Many relapses occur gradually, with changes in behavior called warning signs. By learning to recognize your warning signs, you can get help early and avoid a more serious setback.

Check off signs that you have experienced before a relapse:
- Too much or too little sleep
- Feeling tense, nervous, hostile
- Increase in paranoia, hallucinations, hearing voices, or risk-taking behaviors (spending money, using alcohol/drugs)
- Confusing or nonsensical speech
- Other ____________________________
- Stopping medication or not taking it regularly
- Social withdrawal or isolation
- False beliefs or delusions (people are against you, overconfident in your abilities)
- Change in personal hygiene
- Other ____________________________

If you notice any warning signs of relapse or any changes in your symptoms, talk to your doctor and treatment team right away.

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Identifying Triggers
Triggers are situations or behaviors that can lead to a relapse and are different for everyone. A common cause of relapse is stopping medication; however, relapses can happen even when a person is taking his or her medication as prescribed.

Difficult life events, like losing a family member, can be stressful. But it is important to know that even positive life events—like getting a new job or starting a new relationship—can also be stressful.

Check the situations that may be triggers for you:

- Moving to a new apartment/house
- Starting a new job or relationship
- Being fired from a job
- Being invited to a party
- Stopping medication altogether
- Having difficulty taking medication, as prescribed
- Other ___________________________
- Having money problems
- Using drugs and alcohol
- Having an illness or death in the family
- Fighting with a friend or family member
- Being bored during the day
- Other ___________________________
- Other ___________________________

Strategies to Reduce Relapse
During periods of stress or change, you may stop doing things that help you stay healthy. Make a list of activities that help you stay well.

Check the activities that can help you stay healthy.

- Find activities that reduce stress (listening to music, breathing exercises, meditation)
- Go to my appointments regularly
- Be involved in making decisions about my medications and supportive treatments
- Take medication regularly, as prescribed
- Other ___________________________
- Use supportive treatments and services (psychotherapy or peer counseling)
- Get support from my family, friends, or treatment team
- Eat healthy and nutritious food
- Exercise (walking, gym, yoga)
- Other ___________________________