

Substance Use: Plan to cope with triggers

Quitting might seem simple: You just stop using, drinking, or smoking, right? But it's rarely easy.

Substance use has been part of your daily life. As you try to make changes, you might be surprised at all the situations that trigger an urge or craving. How will you avoid a slip-up?

This handout helps you create a plan to prevent relapse (beginning the substance use again). Fill it out and refer to it often. **Follow it to cope with your triggers and stay on track.** Finally, update it as needed. You'll learn a lot about yourself as you work to change your life. You can use this new insight to improve your plan and help you get where you want to go.



FOCUS on your GOAL

My reasons to stay drug- or alcohol-free

Check the ones that are important to you — and then write your own reasons.

- to improve my health
- to improve my relationships
- to avoid hangovers
- to avoid being or feeling dependent
- to do better at work or school
- to save money
- to avoid more serious problems
- to meet my own personal standards
- other reasons: _____

LINE UP your SUPPORT

My support people

List friends, family, and other people who can help you shape your life without substance use

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

My support organizations and professionals

Recovery program, support group, counselor, or doctor — list any group or professional who you can call for help

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

Local urgent care services:

PHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

KNOW your TRIGGERS

What people put me at risk for using?

Some people can't support your effort to quit. Maybe they use drugs or alcohol. Maybe they don't want you to change or don't see how important quitting is for you. Or, maybe you just have a relationship that stresses you out and puts you at risk for slip-ups.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

What PLACES and SITUATIONS are potential triggers for me?

Where did you use? Where did you buy? What sorts of places and situations do you associate with using? Bars and parties, paydays and first dates, parks or people's houses — these may be triggers for you.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

What EMOTIONS and ATTITUDES may give me the urge to use?

Common triggers include anger, boredom, anxiety, stress, loneliness — as well as overconfidence and the desire to amplify good feelings by partying. When you get the urge to use, how are you feeling?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

PLAN to COPE

My coping strategies

Below are coping strategies that have worked well for others in your situation. Check the ones that you think will work for you. Then, identify a few more coping strategies — and use them to respond to your triggers.

- Try to avoid the people, places, and situations that trigger the urge to use.** If I can't avoid these things, I will have coping strategies ready to use.
- Remember my reasons for quitting.** I'll review my reasons to help myself refocus.
- Talk it through.** I'll call one of my support people or organizations to help me through the rough patches.
- Be aware of my feelings.** I'll try not to get taken off guard by my trigger emotions.
- Surf the urge.** I'll remember that temptation is normal at this stage, but I don't have to act on it. I'll watch my urges come and go like waves.
- Challenge my thoughts.** If I find myself thinking, "a little bit can't hurt...", I'll remember that, for me, it will hurt.
- Change my environment.** If I'm uncomfortable in a situation, I'll leave. If the substance is in my house or car, I'll get rid of it.
- Get busy with one of these activities,** even if I'm not in the mood (write several options: play guitar, write in my journal, work on a scrapbook, dance to the radio, go for a run, or play a video game):

- Other Ideas** _____

REMEMBER the 4 D's

- **Distract:** Think about something else
- **Deep breathe:** Focus on breathing in and out
- **Drink water:** Take a moment to stop what you are doing and have a glass of water
- **Do something else:** Write your own examples here:

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