
Relapse Prevention (Virtual Region/Workshop Handout)

Relapse is a process, not an event. Over time, we may change how we work our program in subtle ways, doing less of the things that help us stay abstinent. This works for a while, but eventually, we may find ourselves in relapse. **When a compulsive overeater has a relapse, food is typically the last thing to go. The purpose of this worksheet is to help OA members prevent possible relapses.**

Principles:

- There are ***predictable warning signs*** that precede relapse.

Relapse can be prevented, if we learn to recognize and manage our personal warning signs and work the OA program of recovery.

Steps we can take to prevent relapse:

- **Identify** your personal relapse warning signs, especially any *current* warning signs. What parts of the OA 12 step program are we letting slip and slide?
- Learn how to recognize the warning signs as they occur.
- Make an **Action Plan** to manage our warning signs.
- Ask for OA Support to implement our Action Plan. Incorporate accountability and support. Be specific on what you need: who, what, when, where, how often.

We can take these steps with an OA sponsor, buddy, fellow or group. On the back of this page are *examples* of relapse warning signs in five categories (program, food-physical, emotional-spiritual, life events-triggers), and *examples* of OA Support. Neither the categories nor the examples are exhaustive, just ideas for consideration (food for thought).

For more ideas, see OA's relapse prevention page[\[1\]](#) and the OA Recovery Checklist.[\[2\]](#)

- **Column worksheet** – use this format or the attachment, if helpful:

Warning Sign	Action Plan Include Tools & Step Work Required	Support that would help me
Example: Red/yellow light foods turning green	Re-commit red and yellow foods	Honest conversation; Food sponsor

- **Relapse Warning Signs — Some Examples**

OA Program	Physical/Food	Emotional)	Spiritual	Life Events/Triggers
Less / no meetings	Eating between meals	Old Beliefs	Lost HP connection	Major work loss or co-worker Challenges
Less/ no sponsor Contact	Portion creep	Ongoing resentments	Alienated from religion of choice	Financial issues/insecurity
Stalled on steps, no daily practice of maintenance Steps	Red/yellow light foods turning Green	Untreated depression	Spiritual crisis	Health issues, both yours or loved ones
Not making or returning phone calls/texts	Rationalizing food choices	Fear of Financial Insecurity	Losing Hope	Travel, particularly to new places
Leaving meeting early or coming late	Eating out more than normal	dishonesty with ourselves	Losing Faith	Holiday with challenging family and food choices
Not sponsoring	Night eating/grazing	Insomnia	Not practicing the principles in all our affairs	New college or job
Little / no OA service	No exercise	Anxiety issues	Making someone or something our higher power	Move, local or long distance
Not reading literature or Writing	Over exercising	Mental health issues	Anger or resentment at our Higher Power	Pregnancy and infant care
Not following traditions	obsessive food thoughts	Thinking of ourselves as less then or more then	Losing willingness to go to any lengths	Relationship difficulties, including break-ups and

				divorces
No action plans	Obsessed with free foods (sugar-free gum, Sweeteners, soda, etc.)	Not getting correct medication or treatment for emotional health	No daily prayer or meditation	Eldercare issues
Reducing self-care routines	Not measuring foods you used to measure	Health issues that affect emotions (e.g., no exercise, given injuries)		Family members having problems, particularly your children
Less prayer and meditation	Excessively weighing yourself	Now weight & measuring our emotions	Anything else that effects your serenity	Death of a loved one

• **Getting OA Support — Some Examples of using the tools of the program**

- Make phone-calls in the moment when you need help
- Call someone to commit to a planned action. For a daily action, make a daily call
- Call someone after you have taken an action. This can also be a daily call
- Get a sponsor or program buddy and talk to them regularly
- Bookend a difficult action (call someone before and after)
- Talk to people who have experience with the action you are doing or might do
- Do any of the above by text or email
- Go to more meetings
- Do more service that involves talking to other people
- Ask someone to organize a study in your home - ask people to attend it
- Read OA literature and learn from the experience strength and hope of others
- Write daily 10th steps, 12 Stepping a problem that causing you emotions
- Anonymity does not mean isolation! - Fellowship: Spend social time with other OA members – e.g., coffee, a movie, a walk, dinner

- Recommit to your plan of eating review it with your sponsor or a medical professional, bookend your daily commitment to abstinence plan by texting, emailing or calling your sponsor or an OA buddy

- **Relapse Prevention Worksheet**

Relapse Warning Sign	Now?	Action Plan Include Tools & Step Work Required	Program Support
Program			
Food and Physical			
Emotional			

Spiritual			
Life Events and Triggers			
Other Warning Signs			

EXAMPLES & IDEAS			
<i>Program:</i> Not calling my sponsor regularly	√	Call my sponsor regularly.	Talk with my sponsor. Acknowledge what's happening. Discuss any problems. Agree on a schedule for regular calls.
<i>Food.</i> Taking back foods you gave up	√	Recommit red/yellow foods. Affirm abundance from healthy foods.	Honest conversation with an OA member about what's going on. Food sponsor.
<i>Emotional.</i> On-going resentments, for example, towards my spouse or employer.	√	Do the 4 th – or 10 th ste	Call my sponsor and commit to 4 th step or the work
Anger Easily don't make time for prayer and meditation	√		
<i>Life events and triggers:</i> Going to a family Thanksgiving, or a vacation. (Time with family is a trigger for so many people.)	√	Call while at the event or call daily while on vacation. Take my scale to measure food.	Talk with an OA member about what is challenging and how I can take care of myself. Commit to phone call(s). For Thanksgiving, commit to call before and after the main meal.

- **Relapse Prevention Feedback Guidelines**

If you are doing this as a group, please divide the time evenly between members and keep track of time. Otherwise use the time as you see fit.

Ask each person if they want to allow time for feedback from others. If so, ask how much.

Each person shares:

1. Relapse Warning Signs they are Now having
2. Action Plan to manage it/them
3. Support they need for the Action Plan (i.e. accountability, phone calls. etc.)
4. Optional: Group feedback (Read group feedback guidelines aloud)

- **Group Feedback Guidelines (Please read to group)**

Our goal is to support the person while pointing out problems that may cause future relapse.

This is done in a structured manner. First, group members are encouraged to ask questions about anything they did not understand about the warning sign or how the person is attempting to manage it.

After that, members who want feedback are each allowed to ask for it and then each member is given the opportunity to give feedback to the person who presents a warning sign. Members do not have to ask for feedback, but we strongly encourage this be share openly with your OA sponsor, OA buddy,

It is important that people giving feedback do so in a way that is rigorously honest, yet loving and supportive at the same time. This is not advice-giving share your strength, hope and experience what has and has not worked for you. What you have seen work for others in the fellowship or have learned from OA approved literature.

Good feedback covers four concerns:

1. How I relate to your warning sign and how I see that you are managing it.

2. Confirm what the member has shared - the strengths I see that you have that will help you to manage these warning signs.
3. The weaknesses I have seen in myself and that I see that may prevent you from managing these warning signs.
4. Suggestions on step work or tools that may be helpful to you that have work