

Managing High-Risk Situations

My Progress

- What steps have you taken toward your goal(s) this week?
- How were you able to achieve the steps?
- If not, what got in your way? How will you overcome that barrier?

Let's Discuss

- What situation triggered a symptom or stress for you in the last week?
- How did you manage it and how did it turn out?
- Is this situation one that comes up often?



Reggie's Story

"After years of struggling with drinking too much, I finally began building a healthy relationship with alcohol. But it seemed like every time I went back home to visit my family, I would get drunk. Learning about what situations were triggering my drinking when I was with my family helped me to develop some strategies to deal with these situations so that I didn't end up drunk again."

— Reggie, a long-distance runner, teacher, and person in recovery from alcohol use disorder

Good to Know

- A **high-risk situation** is a situation that is likely to bring on symptoms we're trying to reduce. Steering clear of certain situations can help to reduce the likelihood of symptoms occurring.
- The **learning system in our brain** connects situations, emotions, and physical responses, especially when they have occurred together frequently over time. Exposure to the situation can bring on symptoms.
- A **trigger** is an element of a situation that can lead to an increase in symptoms. Here we are focusing on external triggers, which are situations that occur outside of you like a person, place, or thing.
- **Symptoms** people commonly try to reduce by managing high-risk situations may include anxiety, hallucinations, mania, or substance use.
- Figuring out **what your high-risk situations are** and **practicing strategies** to deal with them can **reduce symptoms and relapses**.

My Experiences

Just like Reggie realized that it was important to understand what was triggering his excessive drinking and develop strategies to manage triggers, it is helpful to think about what situations are triggering for you. On the next page is a list of common high-risk situations people face and some strategies they have used to manage them. Check the boxes next to the situations you have experienced, and strategies you would like to try to manage them. If you like you can fill in your own.

Example of High-Risk Situation	This has happened to me	Strategy to manage it	This is something I would like to try
Not having anything to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a list of fun activities you can enjoy with a supportive person in your life. • Build a daily routine or schedule of things to do so that your days are busy. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Getting a paycheck, disability check, or having extra money to spend	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put any extra money you get in an account you can't access easily or allow a person you trust to hold it for you. • Keep only one credit or debit card and set it to a low daily or total limit. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Being in or near places where people are using substances	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid high-risk places such as bars, parties, or routes home that are connected to substance use. • Make a plan to leave situations if you unexpectedly encounter substance use. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Having contact with someone who is not supportive of your recovery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a list or schedule of self-help or support groups in your area or online to attend when you are feeling at risk. • Copy the phone numbers of at least 5 supportive people to the favorite contacts list on your phone. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Seeing something on TV or the Internet that reminds you of your own situation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use positive self-talk when you see something on TV or the Internet about your situation. • Change the channel or watch something that makes you feel safe or happy. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Seeing an object or item that reminds you of your situation or increases symptoms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throw the item away or give it away to a charitable organization. • Ask the person who owns the object to put it somewhere where you can't see it. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Let's Practice Leaving a Situation

Sometimes we can't avoid triggering situations. But we can plan to deal with it when we are triggered. Reggie developed some strategies to use when around his family, but sometimes he had to excuse himself and leave the house. Practicing what to say in these situations can make you feel more confident and help you be more effective in staying on track with your recovery. Use the steps below to develop your own skills for leaving a high-risk situation:

1. Develop the steps of the skill:

- Leaving a situation with people **you don't know well**:
 - > Say "I am leaving now" in a firm voice.
 - > Avoid making excuses for leaving.
 - > Repeat the statement if needed.
 - > Leave the situation as soon as possible.
- Leaving a situation **with friends or family**:
 - > Say "I have to leave now" or "I have to take a break from here".
 - > Tell them that leaving is important for your recovery.
 - > If they try to get you to stay, explain that you are feeling high levels of stress and ask them to respect your decision and recovery.
 - > Leave after you have firmly described why you need to go.

2. Watch your worker demonstrate the steps of the skill.

3. Discuss how it went with your worker. Did they follow the steps? How effective do you think they were?

4. Now try the skill out for yourself with your worker.

5. Discuss with your worker:

- How the practice felt to you.
- What you did well.
- How you might do it differently in the future.

6. Continue to practice and discuss with your worker.

Next Steps

- What did you find helpful about our meeting today?
- What would you like to do for your next step toward your goal(s)?
- Practice Leaving a Situation with someone to prepare for a high-risk situation.
- I'd like to do something else _____.