



Warning Signs for Relapse

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

- Have you experienced a relapse in mental ill health or substance use? If so, what happened?
- How have you worked to prevent relapse in the past?
- What would you like to do differently in the future to prevent relapse?
- How has relapse affected your life and your goals?



Carmen's Story

"Whenever my thoughts start racing, I know a relapse is coming on. I usually start drinking heavily when I am having manic symptoms. I think it's because my cravings come back when I am keyed up. If I can get ahead of the symptoms, I can keep a relapse from happening."

— Carmen V., mother, business owner, person in recovery from alcohol use disorder and bipolar disorder

Good to Know

- A **relapse** is a return of unwanted symptoms of mental ill health or when a person starts using alcohol or other drugs after a period of sobriety.
- Relapses are a challenging part of the **recovery process**.
- There are usually **warning signs** that a relapse is about to occur.
- Warning signs fall into **three broad categories**. These are subtle changes in a person's behavior, emotions, or thinking.
- There are many **positive steps** a person can take to become aware of and respond to warning signs to **help prevent relapse**.



Short Meeting
Guide Video
Tutorial

My Experiences

We may not be able to prevent every relapse, but by being aware of warning signs we can prevent most of them. Learning about our own warning signs, we can take necessary actions to prevent the relapse from happening or minimize the harm done. For Carmen, recognizing when a relapse was coming on helped her stay out ahead of the symptoms which, in the end, helped her to take good care of her children and manage her business. On the back of this page are some common warning signs of a potential relapse. Put a checkmark next to the ones you have experienced.

BEHAVIOR	EMOTIONS	THINKING
Withdrawing from others	Becoming irritable	Problems concentrating
Acting impulsively	Feeling sad or depressed	Being overly suspicious
Using drugs and alcohol	Getting tense or nervous	Sensing things not there

Once Carmen became aware of and identified her warning signs, she was able to take positive steps to help prevent relapse. Some examples of positive ways to respond to warning signs include:

- Getting in touch with people who support you
- Using strategies that help you cope with stress or problematic symptoms
- Contacting a professional who knows your history and needs

WARNING SIGN	ACTION STEP TO RESPOND TO WARNING SIGN
Racing thoughts	Practice breathing
Thinking about the liquor store	Call my sponsor

Now it's your turn. In the space below, write down your warning signs and add a possible action step you might take to prevent relapse.

WARNING SIGN	ACTION STEP TO RESPOND TO WARNING SIGN

Let's Practice Talking to a Supportive Person

Practicing talking to a supportive person about your warning signs ahead of time can make you feel more confident. Use the steps below to develop your skills:

1. Develop the steps of talking to a supportive person:

- Identify a person who was involved in your life during your last relapse.
- Share with them your list of warning signs.
- Ask them, "Have you ever noticed any warning signs before I had a relapse?"
- Add these to the list of your warning signs.

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, and 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 talking to a supportive person about warning signs.
- I'd like to do something else _____.