

Part II

Learn About the Disease

Seminar # 9

“Relapse is part of the Brain Disease journey”



SEMINAR GOALS:

1. The attendee will be able to name the three (3) stages of relapse.
2. The attendee will be able to identify parts of a family plan that can help to prevent relapse.
3. Using the information, identify within these exercises;
 - a. What the family will do, to complete their family plan of action.
 - b. What steps can the family member take in the life of their loved one after a relapse.

Each member of the family contributes to the family system. Their contribution to these exercises can help to create a more successful environment for their loved one to maintain recovery.

Introduction

Current research suggests that relapse is a gradual process wherein a person in recovery returns to his or her drug abuse. This means relapse can begin weeks or even months before an individual first takes a drug again ⁷. A good relapse prevention program helps individuals identify those early signs of relapse and develop tools and techniques for coping, so they can stop relapse early in the process. Researchers believe this significantly reduces a person's risk of returning to drug addiction ⁷.

Drug relapse warning signs can be broken down into three categories: emotional, mental, and physical signs. During **emotional relapse**, individuals are not consciously thinking about using, but they are setting themselves up for it. They remember what relapse feels like and are in denial about the possibility of it happening again.

During **mental relapse**, individuals are thinking about using drugs again, but they are at war with themselves. Part of them wants to use, and part of them doesn't. Eventually, this internal struggle wears them down. **Physical relapse** is when an individual finally returns to drug use. Some clinicians divide this phase into **lapse** (initial drug use) and **relapse** (returning to uncontrolled using). Either way, this final stage is the hardest to come back from ⁷.

Recent drug relapse statistics show that more than **85% of individuals relapse** and return to drug use within the year following treatment. Researchers estimate that more than 2/3 of individuals in recovery relapse within weeks to months of beginning addiction treatment ⁶.

Why are these drug relapse statistics so discouraging? Without a long-term drug relapse prevention plan, most people will be unsuccessful in their attempts to remain sober, so having a solid plan in place is essential.

The goal of **drug relapse prevention programs** is to address the problem of relapse by teaching techniques for preventing or managing its reoccurrence. Drug addiction relapse prevention models are based on the idea that high-risk situations can make a person more vulnerable to relapse. A high-risk situation can include people, places, or feelings that lead to drug-seeking behavior ⁴.

Lesson One: Stages of Relapse

Drug and alcohol addiction relapse prevention requires identifying the following warning signs:

Emotional

- Isolating oneself
- Not going to treatment or meetings
- Going to meetings but not sharing
- Bottling up emotions
- Poor eating and sleeping habits
- Not taking care of self mentally or physically
- Denial
- Relaxing of self-imposed rules

Mental

- Drug cravings
- Thinking about people and places associated with past drug use
- Romanticizing past drug use
- Minimizing consequences
- Bargaining with self
- Lying to others
- Thinking about how to better control drug use next time
- Planning a relapse or looking for opportunities

Physical

- I. Using drugs “just once”
- II. Returning to uncontrolled use

VIDEO ONE



ASSIGNMENT VIDEO: On www.youtube.com/

Search Title: Relapse Prevention: Early warning signs and important coping skills

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmjxdDwOlc>

Duration: 5.35 min

Dr. Steven Melemis

Practical Exercise # 1. What can the family do to prevent relapse?

The Three stages of Relapse?

What can be done to prevent emotional relapse?

How can you help them Practice?

Mindfulness: _____

Help them Keep in Gratitude.

Journal: _____

What can be done to prevent mental relapse?

How can you help them Practice?

Mindfulness: _____

Journal: _____

What can be done to prevent Physical relapse?

In what ways can you use K.I.S.S. to simplify their life: _____

How can each member of the family contribute towards creating Good Orderly Direction for their loved one:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What has worked in the past?

Lesson Two: The Three Stages of Drug and Alcohol Relapse

For many, *relapse is part of recovery from addiction*. In fact, according to DrugAbuse.gov, it is believed that 40 to 60 percent of addict's relapse at least once during their recovery.

However, just because someone relapses, it does not mean they failed at recovery. Many view relapses as a learning experience and take into account what not to do the next time around for their recovery. *Though relapse is often unplanned and impulsive, there are certain warning signs that can point to the danger of a potential drug or alcohol relapse.*

In fact, often relapse is thought to have three separate stages – emotional, mental and physical. The following are a more in-depth explanation about the stages of relapse and include what to watch for in yourself or in others.

1. Emotional relapse

During this stage, a person is not actively thinking about using a drug or drinking alcohol. However, their behavior and actions may be setting them up to head down that road.

Emotional relapse can be detected through symptoms such as anxiety, intolerance, anger, defensiveness, mood swings, isolation, failing to attend meetings and poor sleeping and eating

habits. It is believed that this stage of relapse aligns with Post-Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (PAWS), during which an addict experiences emotional and psychological withdrawal rather than physical ones. Physical withdrawals only last a few weeks whereas PAWS can last up to two years after an addict stops using. PAWS episodes tend to last a few days at a time and include the symptoms listed above.

2. Mental relapse

During this stage, the mind is battling between using and not using. Part of the addict wants to use, while the other part of them wants to continue with their recovery.

Signs of mental relapse may include reminiscing about the people and places associated with your past life, glamorizing your past use, lying, spending time with people you used with, thinking about relapse and even planning relapse.

Often, recovering addicts are the only ones who can really pinpoint these symptoms of mental relapse as internal battles are harder for others to pick up on.

3. Physical relapse

Unfortunately, the techniques in stage two do not work for everyone and some people do resort to acting on their urges to use. This stage of relapse includes the actual physical decision to use.

When an addict hits this stage of relapse, some will continue to use for months, but others realize what they've done and the focus becomes recovery.

Lesson Three: 4 Techniques That Prevent Mental Relapse

When the process of mental relapse begins, there are some techniques an addict can use in order to regain control of their thinking and make the choice to not drink or use.

1. Call someone. Whether this be a sponsor, friend, or family member, talking your urges through with another person can help in determining why you want to use and why you shouldn't.

Talking your thoughts through with another person makes them seem less intimidating and even less logical when it comes to reasons for wanting to use.

Being able to talk to someone about your urges may bring you some clarity as to why using will not solve any problems but only create more.

2. Make yourself wait 30 minutes. Before impulsively acting on an urge to use, wait half an hour and reevaluate your urges and your reasoning behind them. Sometimes the passing of time can help clear things up in the mind.

3. Think about what would happen if you had one drink or used once. Likely it wouldn't stop there, and you'd eventually find yourself at the same bottom you previously hit, if not a deeper one. Thinking about actions and their consequences can curb the desire to use.

4. Don't think about every day. Think about today. Even people who have been sober for decades take their sobriety one day at a time. Thinking about it in terms of years or forever is too intimidating for anyone and will likely result in feeling overwhelmed and wanting to use.

Instead of thinking about forever, focus on making it through one day without using. Then focus on that again the next day and repeat. Before you know it, the days will add up.

Take time to go on-line and search the word: *Drug addiction relapse*. Also, do the same on www.youtube.com

Practical Exercise # 2. What can family member do to help prevent triggers for physical relapse?

List next to each trigger, what the family will do to help your loved deal with this in their lives.

People:

- Former drug dealers: _____
- Unhealthy Friends: _____
- Past/Present Co-workers: _____
- Employers: _____
- Family members: _____
- Spouses or partners: _____
- Neighbors: _____

Places:

- Neighborhoods:

- A friend's home:

- Bars and clubs:

- Hotels:

- Worksites:

- Concerts:

- A freeway exit:

- Bathrooms:

- Former drug-stash locations:

- Schools:

- Downtown:

Items:

- Paraphernalia:

- Furniture:

- Magazines:

- Movies:

- Television:

- Cash:

-
- Credit cards:

-
- ATMs:

-
- Empty pill bottles:
-

Happenings:

- Meeting new people:

-
- Listening to a particular music genre

-
- Recovery group meetings:

-
- Going out to dance or eat:

-
- Parties Hanging out with friends:

-
- Being around substance-using peers:

-
- Payday:

-
- Driving:

-
- Calls from creditors:

-
- After paying bills:

-
- Before, during and after work:

-
- Before or during a date:

-
- Going out:

-
- Alone in the house:

-
- Before, during and after sex:

-
- After an argument:

-
- Anniversaries:

-
- Talking on the phone:

-
- Holidays:

-
- While eating lunch or dinner:

-
- Family gatherings:
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References:

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