



Starting Over

Everyone knows that when it comes to substance use, setbacks can happen even after a period of good progress. Also it is known that it can be difficult to come back from a bad relapse, but it's worth it.

Part 1 - Review the Following and Discuss:

Stopping using after a serious setback is difficult in itself, but discuss some other psychological reasons why it can be challenging to make a comeback. If you ever relapsed think about some of your personal thoughts and feelings and then check all that may have applied in your situation:

- Guilt/Shame** – For example: “I let everyone down, plus I let myself down”
 - Hurt Pride**- “I’m embarrassed because I was doing so good now I have to face everyone”
 - Overwhelmed** – “I can’t believe I have to go through this all over again – it was so much work in the first place, now what am I going to do”
 - Frustrated** – “I thought I was doing what I needed to do and then this happened. I am so irritated”
 - Depression** – “I lost everything I had worked so hard for now I can’t stop feeling really down about everything”
 - Anxiety** – “I am stressed out about this and all the problems my relapse has caused and cant hack it – my thoughts are racing and I am on edge”
 - Obsessive** – “I can’t stop thinking that if only I had done this or that...none of this would have happened”
 - Discouragement** – “I just can’t believe I did this again, what’s the point of trying?”
 - Confusion** – “I’m not even really sure what happened and how am I supposed to stop it from happening again?”
 - Anger** – “I am so upset with myself for messing up. I am angry with others for letting me down”
 - Apathy** – “I just don’t feel like I can care anymore”
 - Jealousy** – “Why do other people have it so easy when I have to keep struggling?”
 - Resentful** – “This just isn’t fair, I got ripped off that I have to deal with this problem”
 - Other** – *Are there other feelings/thoughts that come to mind for you?* - List below:
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Discuss Your Above Answers

Part 2 - Looking at Things Rationally: Consider some of the following myths about setbacks and relapse. Discuss whether or not you may agree or disagree

Myth: After a serious setback or relapse, you have to start over from the beginning – You are “back to square one”

- In reality, just because some relapsed that does not completely erase all of the progress that was made. All of the things that you learned the first time and all of the experience gained still matters. Progress is cumulative so each experience you have, even the “failures” still bring you closer to your eventual goal. Successful people build on their mistakes. For example, it has been said that Thomas Edison failed 1000 times before making a light bulb that worked

Myth: When you relapse, you lose everything

- If nothing else, you gained experience provided you let yourself learn from it. The way someone responds to adversity and setbacks can be a defining part of their eventual long-term success.



Myth: A person can relapse so many times that they are beyond hope.

- After enough setbacks, bridges may be burned, trust may be damaged, and opportunities may be lost but no one is beyond redemption. As long as you are alive it is your human right to keep on trying to get your life back on track. There is always hope provided you do not give up.

Myth: Your current amount of “clean time” is the defining factor of how well you are doing

- The “hierarchy of clean time” is a falsehood that many people in recovery still hold. Just because someone can count more clean time since their last use, does not mean that person is doing better than someone with less clean time. In reality, quality means more than quantity when it comes to clean time and progress.

Myth: It is important to make sure not to let go of what happened after a relapse

- It is true that someone can learn a lot by going back and looking at where they went wrong after a relapse or setback. It can be extremely helpful to take some time to review the circumstances of a relapse to learn from your mistakes then hold on to these valuable life lessons for the future. However, there eventually comes a point when it is even more important to just let go and move on. It is not productive for family members or other concerned individuals to keep bringing up a relapse over and over with no end in sight. As the saying goes: “How can you drive forward if you can’t stop staring in the rear view mirror”



When you think you have failed, remember that each time that you have tried is just another brick in your WALL of SUCCESS...
... So keep on trying and you will keep on building upward
,,, regardless of what happens today