

Alcohol/drug use relapse warning signs
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From those with ten days sober to those with ten years, the potential for relapse is always present. Statistically, 65-70% of people in recovery will relapse one or more times before they are able to quit drinking/using drugs for good. And the highest incidence of relapse among people in recovery of all ages actually happens in January after the holidays have ended.

The triggers for desiring alcohol and drugs are many and vary from person to person. However, the common denominator for ALL relapse triggers is that they are insidious and can sneak up on the person in recovery easily, especially during times when there is a deviation from one's daily schedule, such as during the holidays and afterward. This process is similar to exercising at the gym. It feels good when you attend and participate regularly but when you stop for a while you can't remember what exactly it was doing for you. And often people don't return as a result. Therefore, the best way to avoid a relapse is for the person in recovery to stick to their recovery routine regardless of the other changes to their normal schedule.

It is also important to know that a "relapse" actually happens long before the drink is sipped or the drug of choice is used. Signs to look for that indicate the relapse cycle has begun are as follows:

- *The person may be attending less 12-step meetings than usual or else none at all
- *The person might start getting phone calls from "new" friends and/or from "old" drinking/using buddies
- *The person may be easily excitable, irritable, or depressed
- *The person may be lying or giving elaborative excuses about insignificant (i.e. there is no gain derived from the lie) events, times, etc.
- *The person may be less open to communication than usual and/or exhibit a desire to be less social
- *The person may plan to go on a trip alone
- *The person may be spending more money and have no reasonable explanation for why/where the money was spent

If one or more of these signs is present, the person in recovery should strengthen their support system immediately by attending 12-step meetings, working with a 12-step sponsor and/or getting counseling and support from a professional alcohol/substance abuse therapist, and avoiding all situations where drinking/drugging activities are present.

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