

Maintaining Behavior Change

Maintaining the progress you have been making is one of the greatest challenges you will face as you complete this program. There are two keys to maintaining the gains you have made and continuing to make progress.

1. **Prevent "Slips" from Occurring**
2. **Control how You Respond to Slips**

A slip is a:

- mistake
- lapse
- deviation from the plan
- error

It is usually the first instance of backsliding. It is a brief experience and does not signal an inevitable downward spiral.

Example: You miss your workout for one or two days; you consume more calories than you planned during a special meal, etc.; you had a cigarette; you used an illegal substance

Preventing Slips

- **Identify high-risk situations:**
These are situations in which you *expect* to have difficulty continuing with your newly developed skills.
- **Learn from the past.**
You can identify many of these from past experience. Think back and identify situations in which you remember having a particularly difficult time coping.
- **Plan in advance.**
When you know similar situations are coming, start planning for how to deal with them in advance. If you wait until you are in the midst of the situation, you are not likely to come up with effective solutions. Use the information from past struggles to guide your planning and identify past hurdles that will need to be overcome. The attached form will help you develop your own relapse prevention plan.

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Controlling Response to Slips

Even though many slips are preventable, you cannot prevent them all (e.g., some high-risk situations are not predictable or were not known to be high risk). You will always have some periods when you are not doing as well as you would like.

In other words, you will have slips.

The most important thing is to respond to these slips in a manner that gets you back on track as quickly as possible.

How you think about the slip is the most important factor. If you view the slip as a total return to old habits you are more likely to give up. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between a slip (a.k.a., a lapse), a relapse and a collapse.

A SLIP (as discussed above) is a mistake, a first instance of backsliding. A RELAPSE occurs when slips string together and you return to your former behaviors. Since a relapse is made up of multiple slips, there are many opportunities to stop it and turn it back around before it reaches the relapse stage. However, even once it reaches this stage, you can still turn it around again (that's what you did originally).

At any point along this relapse line, you need to:

- **Identify** that you have slipped,
- **Recall** what you were doing that had been helping, and
- **Resume** it.

These actions will get you moving back in the right direction. The measure of success is not whether there are dips in your line of progress, but whether over all you are progressing upwards in spite of occasional dips. If you find you have relapsed, get out the education materials you used to help you learn more effective coping skills and remind yourself what you can do to get back on track and/or return to the clinic to see your primary care provider for support.

When a relapse is complete and there is little hope of reversing the negative trend, COLLAPSE has occurred. If you find yourself in a collapse, the best solution is to seek help from your healthcare provider.

REMEMBER

A LAPSE ≠ A RELAPSE

Personalized Relapse Prevention Plan

I. What situations are you likely to relapse in?

II. What do you plan to do in these situations to avoid relapse?

What specifically will you do in these situations? What will you tell people to help you? How will you alter the situation so you won't fall back into your hold maladaptive habits?

1.	_____	5.	_____
2.	_____	6.	_____
3.	_____	7.	_____
4.	_____	8.	_____

III. What are some of the negative thoughts or “mental gremlins” that you are likely to experience in these relapse situations?

IV. What truthful and realistic things will you say to yourself to counteract negative thoughts and help you connect with values in these high-risk situations?
