

## **RELAPSE PREVENTION**

### **Skills and Interventions**

#### **Healthy Coping Skills:**

- **Eating well**—Food gives you energy. When you're dealing with a mental illness, though, eating habits often suffer. Visit Health Canada's website at [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca) for Canada's Food Guide.
- **Exercising regularly**—Exercise has many positive benefits for mental health. Find an activity you enjoy. The goal is to exercise for at least short period of time on a regular basis. Remember, start with manageable, realistic goals and gradually increase your goals as you gain confidence.
- **Getting enough sleep**—Sleep plays a big part in mental health. Mental health problems may cause sleep problems, and sleep problems may cause or add to mental health problems. Certain medications for mental illnesses may also affect sleep for some people. It's important to practice good sleep habits into your daily routine.
- **Relaxation skills**—Relaxation skills help calm you down. You can learn specific skills like meditation, mindfulness, deep breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, yoga or cognitive-behavioural therapy skills. Other activities like music, art or writing may also be helpful.
- **Healthy thinking skills**—Mental illnesses can really affect the way you think about yourself, others and the world around you. Part of healthy coping is identifying and challenging thinking problems.

### **Change the way you think:**

**Avoid thinking patterns and automatic thoughts that may lead to unhealthy behaviors:**

- **Overgeneralization:** Thinking that everything is bad because you had one negative experience.
- **Filtering:** Only hearing the negatives and ignoring the positives.
- **All-or-nothing:** Something is only all good or all bad; there is no middle ground. Thinking that you "aren't good enough" because you made a small error is an example of all-or-nothing thinking.
- **Catastrophizing:** Seeing a small negative event or mistake as a massive disaster, and reacting to the small mistake like it was a massive disaster.

### **Utilize an Action Plan:**

**An action plan will help you to slow down your thinking and identify your current stressors. An action plan will also ensure that you act in the healthiest manner possible. Follow the steps below to create an action plan:**

1. **Define the problem.** Figure out what is causing the problem and how it's causing problems.
2. **Set goals.** Decide what you want your solution to address. It's important that your goals are realistic and concrete.
3. **Think of solutions.** Brainstorm possible solutions. You can also ask friends or loved ones for ideas.
4. **Look at the pros and cons.** Pick a few possible solutions that you think might work best, and consider the positives and negatives of your choices.
5. **Pick a solution.** Remember, it should describe who does what and what you want to achieve.
6. **Evaluate the results.** After you put your plan into action, see if it worked as expected. If it didn't work, see if your solution needs to be modified or if you need to try a different approach.

## INDIVIDUAL WELLNESS and RECOVERY PLAN

The Individual Wellness and Recovery Plan is completed throughout your stay with clinical staff assistance.

The goal is to develop your recovery plan using a problem-solving approach to help you gain control over your emotions and behaviors (emotional regulation). This plan is individualized to you and your needs.

**TRIGGERS:** It is important to know your triggers. Triggers are people, places, events, and thoughts that make you return to old behaviors or ways of dealing with things that puts you at risk for relapse. There are different types of triggers: internal, external and sensory triggers. Examples of triggers are: loss of a loved one, separation or divorce, conflicts with family and friends, abusing substances, emotional events, and unhealthy thoughts. **WHAT ARE YOUR TRIGGERS?**

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**WARNING SIGNS:** Warning signs are emotional and physical responses to triggers. Examples of warning signs include anxiety, sadness, muscle tension, anger, and thoughts of self-harm and social isolation. **WHAT ARE YOUR WARNING SIGNS?**

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**PAYING ATTENTION/SKILLS AND TOOLS:** Knowing what to do when experiencing triggers and warning signs are the key to avoiding a crisis and staying safe. Examples of ways to manage those signs include: relaxation and deep breathing exercises, physical activity, distraction tools (i.e. coffee shops, healthy social environments, church activities), changing your thinking, and contacting support. **WHAT WILL YOU DO TO CALM YOUR EMOTIONS AND MANAGE YOUR FEELINGS?**

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**SUPPORT SYSTEM:** It is important to know the names and phone numbers of people and places you can call for help. These people and places can provide comfort and assistance when you recognize your warning signs. **THE PEOPLE AND PLACES I WILL CALL FOR HELP ARE:**

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**CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN:** Identify things you can do by yourself and things involving your support system.

1. **RECOGNIZE TRIGGERS AND WARNING SIGNS**
2. **BEGIN USING YOUR CALMING EMOTIONAL REGULATION TECHNIQUES TO REDUCE CRISIS**
3. **CONTACT SUPPORT SYSTEM TO ASSIST IN DISTRACTING YOU FROM SELF HARM THOUGHTS AND/OR DISCUSS THOUGHTS TO HELP RESOLVE YOUR CRISIS**
4. **CONTACT HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, AGENCIES OR IMMEDIATELY SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION THROUGH THE HOSPITAL**
5. **REDUCING OR REMOVING OBJECTS THAT CAN BE USED TO HARM YOURSELF (WEAPONS, UNNECESSARY MEDICATIONS, ETC).**
6. **TAKE MEDICATIONS DAILY AS ORDERED BY THE DOCTOR AND IF YOU EXPERIENCE SIDE EFFECTS NOTIFY YOUR DOCTOR.**
7. **ATTEND ALL APPOINTMENTS AND COMMITMENTS**

## ***Recognizing Common Warning Signs***

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The following list includes warning signs that your past symptoms are in need of care and attention. Use this list to help identify moments when you are in need of self-care in order to avoid a relapse in symptoms. Many of these symptoms relate to suicidal behavior, but these symptoms are also greatly related to mental health concerns in general:

### **Thoughts/Perceptions**

- Difficulty concentrating and/or making decisions
- Becoming forgetful
- Racing thoughts
- Irrational thoughts or beliefs
- Fear of their support person dying and being left alone

### **Feelings**

- More tense/anxious
- Depressed/low
- Restless
- Elated/“high”
- Irritable
- Fearful
- Feeling threatened
- Disgusted with oneself
- Suicidal
- Mood swings

### **Behaviours**

- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Loss of interest/motivation
- Difficulty sleeping or change in sleeping habits
- Neglecting one’s appearance
- Alcohol/drug use
- Extreme anger outbursts
- Preoccupation with calories, dieting or weight loss
- Extreme anxiety over separation from parents
- Changes in school grades or performance

## MODULE 7: Worksheet



# Developing a Relapse Prevention Plan

Plans for preventing relapses are most effective if they have the following:  
(Create your own Relapse Prevention Plan by writing down your answers below)

### Reminders of past triggers:



1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Reminders of past early warning signs:



1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Things to do to help when you are experiencing an early warning sign:



1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### People to help you:



1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### People to contact in case of an emergency:



1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

