

Managing Relapse Triggers

Triggers are external or internal cues that induce cravings and may lead to relapse. In early recovery, it's important to recognize what triggers you. Everyone's triggers are different. One person may be triggered by driving through a certain part of town while another is triggered by hearing pills rattling around in a bottle. Someone else may be triggered by the smell of beer.

Review the following list and check off your triggers, adding as needed:

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bars | <input type="checkbox"/> Problems sleeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Concerts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Old using buddies | <input type="checkbox"/> Holidays | <input type="checkbox"/> A setback at work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parties | <input type="checkbox"/> Cash | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watching people use/drink on TV | <input type="checkbox"/> Loneliness | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stressful events | <input type="checkbox"/> Boredom | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arguments | <input type="checkbox"/> Finding forgotten paraphernalia | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling unloved or unwanted | <input type="checkbox"/> The smell of beer | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grief and loss | <input type="checkbox"/> Casinos | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Celebrations | <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacies | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sex | <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety | |

SOME TRIGGERS CAN BE AVOIDED; OTHERS CANNOT FEASIBLY BE IGNORED (AND SOME ARE ALTOGETHER IMPOSSIBLE TO AVOID).

What are some strategies for *avoiding* triggers? (Examples: Avoid restaurants that serve alcohol, have a loved one pick up your medications from the pharmacy, etc.) Write one strategy for each avoidable trigger from above.

For the triggers you can't avoid or predict (i.e. running into an old using friend, arguing with your spouse, being reprimanded by your boss, etc.), what are some strategies for successful coping? (Examples: Plan out what you'll say ahead of time in case you run into a using buddy, practice self-care, call your sponsor when feeling anxious, etc.)

Who can you rely on when you're feeling triggered or experiencing cravings? Write down names and numbers of people you can call (who you can trust and won't judge you).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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Lastly, commit to daily self-care. By attending to your most basic needs on a regular basis, you are better equipped to manage triggers and cope with cravings.

DAILY SELF-CARE

- ▶ Nutritious meals and sufficient water intake
- ▶ Exercise
- ▶ Adequate rest
- ▶ Attending to illness

SELF-CARE TIPS

- Commit to avoiding (or at least limiting) fast food, sugary and/or highly caffeinated drinks, overly processed foods, sweets/candy/chocolate, foods high in sodium, foods with added sugar, refined carbohydrates (i.e. white bread, pastries, donuts, etc.), red meat, high-calorie sauces/dressings/condiments, and large portions
- Commit to increasing your intake of fruits/vegetables (especially raw veggies), unsweetened tea (especially green tea), beans/legumes, lean proteins, and whole grains
- The following should be enjoyed in moderation only: Nuts/seeds, black coffee, heart-healthy oils, and fruit/vegetable juices

How many glasses of water will you drink per day? _____ (The average person requires a half ounce of water per pound of body weight per day; this may increase or decrease based on exercise and activity level.)

How many hours of sleep do you need per night? _____ (The average person requires 6-9 hours of sleep.)

Commit to caring for illness. When you're sick, your body needs rest above all else to heal. Take time off work or stay home from school. Visit your doctor or an urgent care center if needed and take medications as prescribed/directed.



Share this list with a loved one (someone who supports your recovery goals); give them permission to ask you about your triggers/cravings and daily self-care plan. Tell them how they can be supportive when you're struggling to cope.