

Relapse Warning Signs for Families Worksheet

Family Member Name: _____

Date: _____

Introduction to Recognizing Relapse Warning Signs

Relapse is a common part of the recovery process. It doesn't mean failure, but it does require careful attention and support. Family members can play a key role in identifying early warning signs of relapse, which can help your loved one get back on track before they slip too far. This worksheet will help you understand the emotional, behavioral, and physical signs of relapse and provide strategies for responding in a supportive but non-enabling way.

1. Understanding Relapse in Recovery

Relapse doesn't always happen overnight. It often starts with subtle signs that things aren't going as well as they seem. Recognizing these early warning signs can give you and your loved one the opportunity to address them before a full relapse occurs.

What does relapse mean to you and your family?

(Think about what you understand about relapse and why it's important to recognize the signs early.)

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Why is it important to respond to relapse warning signs early?

(Reflect on how early intervention can help prevent a full relapse and get your loved one back on track.)

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2. Emotional Signs of Relapse

Emotional signs of relapse are often the first indicators that something may be wrong. These changes may involve shifts in mood, anxiety, or internal conflict about recovery.

Common Emotional Warning Signs of Relapse:

- Increased irritability or frustration

- Feelings of hopelessness or despair
- Sudden withdrawal or isolation from family and friends
- Anxiety or nervousness about staying sober
- Low self-esteem or negative self-talk
- Feeling overwhelmed or helpless

Prompt: Have you noticed any of these emotional signs in your loved one? If so, which ones?

(Write them down and reflect on their significance.)

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How might these emotions impact their recovery?

(Consider how emotional changes can influence their decision-making and behavior.)

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3. Behavioral Signs of Relapse

Behavioral signs often follow emotional changes. These may include risky behaviors, poor decision-making, or a shift in how your loved one acts around others.

Common Behavioral Warning Signs of Relapse:

- Skipping therapy or support group meetings
- Returning to old, risky habits or environments (e.g., socializing with people who encourage drinking or using drugs)
- Uncharacteristic mood swings or anger
- Lying or being dishonest
- Neglecting personal hygiene or responsibilities
- Talking about or romanticizing past addictive behaviors
- Becoming complacent or overconfident in recovery

Prompt: What behaviors have you noticed that may suggest a shift toward relapse?

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How can these behaviors affect their long-term recovery goals?

(Think about how these behaviors may indicate a lack of commitment to recovery or a potential return to old patterns.)

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4. Physical Signs of Relapse

Physical signs can often be a clear indication that something is wrong. These may be linked to changes in health, sleep patterns, or physical appearance.

Common Physical Warning Signs of Relapse:

- Disrupted sleep patterns (e.g., insomnia or excessive sleeping)
- Sudden weight loss or gain
- Unexplained fatigue or lethargy
- Lack of energy or motivation
- Appearance of physical illness or neglect (e.g., appearing sick, unkempt, or tired)
- Neglecting exercise or healthy habits

Prompt: Have you observed any physical changes in your loved one that could indicate a potential relapse?

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How might these physical signs be related to their emotional or behavioral changes?

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5. Responding to Warning Signs Without Enabling

It's important to support your loved one without enabling their addictive behaviors. Enabling may look like covering up their mistakes, making excuses for them, or taking on responsibilities they should be managing themselves.

What does enabling look like in your situation?

(Think about past moments where you may have unknowingly enabled addictive behaviors.)

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How can you respond to your loved one's warning signs in a healthy, non-enabling way?

(Consider setting clear boundaries, offering help, but not solving their problems for them.)

Suggestions for Healthy Responses:

- **Acknowledge the behavior:** "I noticed that you've been skipping therapy sessions. Can we talk about what's going on?"

- **Express your feelings:** “I’m concerned because I’ve seen a shift in your behavior, and I want to make sure you’re okay.”
- **Encourage responsibility:** “I believe in your ability to get through this, but I can’t solve this for you. How can we address this together?”
- **Set boundaries:** “I can’t provide financial support if you’re not attending therapy or doing the work necessary for your recovery.”

Prompt: What specific responses can you have when you notice warning signs in your loved one?

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6. Seeking Outside Support

It’s also important to know when to seek help from professionals or support groups. Encouraging your loved one to reach out to their counselor or a support group can provide them with the tools they need to overcome challenges.

Who can you contact for help if you notice the warning signs of relapse?

- Recovery counselor or therapist
- Support groups (e.g., AA, NA, family support groups)
- Trusted family members or friends
- Family therapist or counselor

Prompt: Have you identified specific people or resources you can turn to for help?

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How can you encourage your loved one to seek outside support when needed?

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7. Final Reflection and Next Steps

Relapse prevention is an ongoing process for both the person in recovery and their family members. Reflecting on the warning signs and developing a response plan can help you be proactive in supporting your loved one.

What are the top 3 warning signs that you need to watch for in your loved one’s recovery?

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What action steps will you take to respond to these warning signs without enabling addictive behaviors?

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How can you care for yourself while supporting your loved one through challenging times?

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