

Relapse Prevention Workshop Handout¹

Relapse is a process, not an event. Over time, we may change how we work our program in subtle ways, doing less of the things that help us stay abstinent. This works for a while, but eventually, we may find ourselves in relapse. **When a compulsive overeater has a relapse, food is typically the last thing to go. The purpose of this worksheet is to help OA members prevent possible relapses.**

Principles:

- There are *predictable warning signs* that precede relapse.
- Relapse can be prevented, if we learn to recognize and manage our personal warning signs.

Steps we can take to prevent relapse:

- Identify our personal relapse warning signs, especially any *current* warning signs.
- Learn how to recognize the warning signs as they occur.
- Make an Action Plan to manage our warning signs.
- Ask for OA Support to implement our Action Plan. Incorporate accountability and support. Be specific on what you need: who, what, when, where, how often.

We can take these steps with an OA sponsor, buddy, fellow or group. On the back of this page are *examples* of relapse warning signs in four categories (program, food-physical, emotional-spiritual, life events-triggers), and *examples* of OA Support. Neither the categories nor the examples are exhaustive, just ideas for consideration (food for thought).

For more ideas, see OA's relapse prevention page² and the OA Recovery Checklist.³

Column worksheet – use this format or the attachment, if helpful:

Warning Sign	Action that would help me	Support that would help me
<i>Example:</i> Red/yellow light foods turning green	Re-commit red and yellow foods	Honest conversation Food sponsor

¹ This handout has been developed by the NoVA IG Locally Produced Literature Committee. The LPL Committee welcomes feedback on this handout. Comments may be sent to literature@oanova.org.

² <https://oa.org/members/relapse-prevention/>

³ https://bookstore.oa.org/pc_product_detail.asp?key=996B9029C1164DF2B176C74193BBDFC9

Relapse Warning Signs -- Some Examples

OA Program	Physical/Food	Emotions/Spiritual	Life Events/Triggers
Less / no meetings	Eating between meals	Lost HP connection	Major work loss or co-worker Challenges
Less/ no sponsor Contact	Portion creep	Ongoing resentments	Financial issues
Stalled on steps, no maintenance Steps	Red/ yellow light foods turning Green	Untreated depression	Health issues, both yours or loved ones
Not making or returning phone calls/texts	Rationalizing food choices	Alienated from religion of choice	Travel, particularly to new places
Leaving meeting early or coming late	Eating out more than normal	Spiritual crisis	Holiday with challenging family and food choices
Not sponsoring	Night eating/ grazing	Insomnia	Holiday food traditions
Little / no OA service	Use of alcohol	Anxiety issues	Move, local or long distance
Not reading literature	Use of recreational drugs	Mental health issues	Pregnancy and infant care
Not following traditions	Other addictive substances and behaviors (cigarettes, sex, etc..)	Medication side effects	Relationship difficulties, including break-ups and divorces
No action plans	Obsessed with free foods (sugar-free gum, Sweeteners, soda, etc.)	Not getting correct medication or treatment for emotional health	Eldercare issues
Reducing self-care routines	Not measuring foods you used to measure	Health issues that affect emotions (e.g., no exercise, given injuries)	Family members having problems, particularly your children
Less prayer and meditation	Excessively weighing yourself	Anything else that effects your serenity	Death of a loved one

Getting OA Support -- Some Examples

- Make phone-calls in the moment, when you need help.
- Call someone to commit to a planned action. For a daily action, make a daily call.
- Call someone after you have taken an action. This can also be a daily call.
- Get a sponsor or program buddy and talk to them regularly.
- Bookend a difficult action. (Call someone before and after.)
- Talk to people who have experience with the action you are doing or might do.
- Do any of the above by text or email.
- Go to more meetings. Do more service that involves talking to other people.
- Ask someone to organize a meeting in your home. Ask people to attend it.
- Spend social time with other OA members – e.g., coffee, a movie, a walk, dinner.

RELAPSE PREVENTION WORKSHEET

Relapse Warning Sign	Now?	Action Plan	Program Support
Program			
Food and Physical			
Emotional and Spiritual			
Life Events and Triggers			
Other Warning Signs			
<i>EXAMPLES & IDEAS</i>			
<i>Program:</i> Not calling my sponsor regularly	√	Call my sponsor regularly.	Talk with my sponsor. Acknowledge what's happening. Discuss any problems. Agree on a schedule for regular calls.
<i>Food:</i> Red/yellow foods turning green.	√	Recommit red/yellow foods. Affirm abundance from healthy foods.	Honest conversation with an OA member about what's going on. Food sponsor.
<i>Emotional/spiritual.</i> On-going resentments, for example, towards my spouse or employer.	√	Do the 4 th and 5 th steps.	Call my sponsor and commit to do a 4 th step. Schedule a 5 th step and do it.
<i>Life events and triggers:</i> Going to a family Thanksgiving, or a vacation. (Time with family is a trigger for so many people.)	√	Call while at the event or call daily while on vacation. Take my scale to measure food.	Talk with an OA member about what is challenging and how I can take care of myself. Commit to phone call(s). For Thanksgiving, commit to call before and after the main meal.

Relapse Prevention Sharing and Group Feedback Guidelines

If you are doing this as a group, please divide the time evenly between members and choose a timekeeper(s) to keep track of time or agree that this will be done jointly.

Also, read aloud the “Group Feedback Guidelines” below, so that people know what this option is.

Ask each person if they want to allow time for feedback from others (“group feedback”). If so, ask how much.

Each person shares:

1. Relapse warning sign(s) they are having now, or that they have written about.
2. Action Plan to manage the relapse warning sign(s).
3. Support they need for the Action Plan (accountability, phone calls. etc.)
4. *Optional:* Group feedback (if desired)

Group Feedback Guidelines

Our goal is to support the person. If requested, each member is given an opportunity to give feedback to the person who has discussed a warning sign(s). The feedback could cover some or all of the following:

- Ask questions about anything I did not understand.
- Validate what I heard: what I think your warning sign is and how I see that you are managing it.
- The weaknesses I see that may prevent you from managing these warning signs.
- The strengths I see that you have that will help you to manage these warning signs.
- My experience, strength and hope: a similar challenge and the action and support I have found helpful