Coping with setbacks

If you have decided that there is no room in your life for addiction, perhaps because of the problems it created or your own feelings, it's important to recognize that you will still be subject to temptations to return



to the addictive act or behaviour. You may experience setbacks and a one-time return to the addictive act or behaviour is not unusual. If you do slip, it does not mean that all is lost. Don't throw the baby out with the bath water—continue your recovery steps.

The situation you find yourself in is by no means unique. What began as a recreational activity can easily slip into a compulsion, damaging your family relationships, finances and your job. The good news is that if recovery begins early enough, family and work relationships have an excellent chance of being restored.

Tips and Tools You Can Use

Recognizing the signs of a potential relapse and planning ahead how to fight it are key to an addiction-free lifestyle. Here are some of the emotions you may experience, along with coping strategies for high-risk situations:

Warning Signs

- Anger or resentment
- Listening to and submitting to negative thoughts
- Depression or anxiety
- Boredom
- Available money
- Indifference
- Thinking that "just one small dabble will not hurt"

High-risk factors can include:

- A job that involves contact with the substance or activity, e.g., delivery to bars or casinos or dealing with places that sell lottery tickets.
- Coming into money unexpectedly.
- Socializing with people who will expose you to the substance or activity.
- Excessive use of alcohol, which loosens convictions and clouds judgement.
- A positive event that calls for celebration, such as a promotion at work.
- Interpersonal conflict or other events that create a negative emotional state.

Coping Strategies

- Avoidance is a 'lead us not into temptation' strategy that involves avoiding problematic situations, places and people.
- Although avoidance can be effective, recognize that most situations in life cannot be avoided.
- "Active coping" involves facing a situation head on. By deliberately placing yourself in a potentially tempting situation, you learn to cope. For example, if you want to visit a nightclub for the entertainment and social interaction, you could arrange for a supportive friend to accompany you.
- Successful management of the situation then increases self-worth.
- Plan ahead for high-risk situations and prepare a "script" to deal with it. If you face social pressure to return to your addictive behaviour, a stock answer might be, "I'm not doing this any more".
- Broken Record is an effective assertiveness technique. It involves saying the same thing over and over again. For example, "Thank you, but I'm not interested". This helps wear down the other person before you are worn down.

Daily Coping Tactics

- Delay impulsiveness. Think before you act.
- Think about something other than your addictive behaviour—pursue a new hobby or meet new friends.
- Keep a diary.
- Ensure you allow quiet time for yourself every day. Practice relaxation and meditation.
- Join a support group and continue counselling sessions.
- Exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep and eat healthy meals.

Don’t be afraid to consult a professional or your physician for more information on how you can overcome your addiction. They can provide you with the guidance you need and information on treatment options to ensure you make a full and healthy recovery.