

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 workshop is to help OA members prevent possible relapses.**

There are *predictable warning signs* that precede relapse. Relapse can be prevented, if we learn to recognize and manage our personal warning signs and work the OA program of recovery.

Steps we can take to prevent relapse:

- **Identify** your personal **Relapse Warning Signs**, especially any warning signs that are happening **right now**. What parts of the OA 12 Step program are we letting slip and slide?
- Learn how to recognize the warning signs as they occur.
- Make an **Action Plan** to manage our warning signs.
- Ask for **OA Program 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 next pages are *examples* of relapse warning signs in five 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).

After discussing these steps, we will each be developing a personal worksheet with our own individual warning signs, action plans, and OA support options.

*When working on our personal worksheet, it's important to remember that the program does not expect us to be perfect – including our use of the steps and the tools. Think of these steps as a reminder of those things we *can do*, not must do, to aid our recovery.*

For more ideas, see OA's relapse prevention page¹, OA Recovery Checklist², Been Slipping and Sliding³, Strong Abstinence Checklist⁴, Abstinence Literature Guide⁵.

¹ <https://oa.org/members/relapse-prevention/>

² https://bookstore.oa.org/pc_product_detail.asp?key=996B9029C1164DF2B176C74193BBDFC9

³ <https://oa.org/app/uploads/2019/12/Been-Slipping-and-Sliding.pdf>

⁴ <https://oa.org/app/uploads/2019/12/strongabstinencechecklist.pdf>

⁵ [https://oa.org/app/uploads/2019/12/abstinence lit guide.pdf](https://oa.org/app/uploads/2019/12/abstinence_lit_guide.pdf)

Relapse Warning Signs -- Some Examples

OA Program

- Fewer/ no meetings
- Less/ no sponsor contact
- Stalled on Steps, no daily practice of maintenance Steps
- Not making or returning phone calls/texts
- Leaving meeting early or coming late
- Not sponsoring
- Little / no OA service
- Not reading literature or writing
- Not following traditions
- No action plans
- Reducing self-care routines
- Less prayer and meditation

Physical/Food

- Eating between meals
- Portion creep
- Red/Yellow light foods turning Green
- Rationalizing food choices
- Eating out more than normal
- Night eating/grazing
- No exercise
- Over exercising
- Obsessive food thoughts
- Obsessed with free foods (sugar-free gum, sweeteners, soda, etc.)
- Not measuring foods you used to measure
- Excessively weighing yourself

Emotional

- Old Beliefs
- Ongoing resentments
- Untreated depression
- Fear of Financial Insecurity
- Dishonesty with ourselves
- Insomnia
- Anxiety issues
- Mental health issues
- Thinking of ourselves as less than or more than
- Not getting correct medication or treatment for emotional health
- Health issues that affect emotions (e.g. no exercise, given injuries)
- Now weight & measuring our emotions

Spiritual

- Lost Higher Power connection
- Alienated from religion of choice
- Spiritual crisis
- Losing Hope
- Losing Faith
- Not practicing the principles in all our affairs
- Making someone or something our Higher Power
- Anger or resentment at our Higher Power
- Losing willingness to go to any lengths
- No daily prayer or meditation
- Anything else that affects your serenity

Life Events/Triggers

- Major work loss or co-worker challenges
- Financial issues/insecurity
- Health issues, both yours or loved ones
- Travel, particularly to new places
- Holiday with challenging family and food choices
- New college or job
- Move, local or long distance
- Pregnancy and infant care
- Relationship difficulties, including break-ups and divorces
- Eldercare issues
- Family members having problems, particularly your children
- Death of a loved one

Getting OA Support -- Some examples of using the tools of the program

- 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 study in your home. Ask people to attend it.
- Read OA literature and learn from the experience strength and hope of others.
- Write daily 10th steps, 12 Stepping a problem that causing you emotions.
- Anonymity does not mean isolation. Fellowship. Spend social time with other OA members – e.g., coffee, a movie, a walk, dinner.
- Recommit to your plan of eating review it with your sponsor or a medical professional, bookend your daily commitment to abstinence plan by texting, emailing, or calling your sponsor or an OA buddy.

Relapse Prevention Worksheet

Relapse Warning Sign	Now?	Action Plan Include Tools & Step Work Required	OA Program Support
<i>Program:</i>			
<i>Food and Physical:</i>			
<i>Emotional:</i>			
<i>Spiritual</i>			
<i>Life Events and Triggers:</i>			
<i>Other Warning Signs:</i>			
EXAMPLES & IDEAS			
<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> Taking back foods you gave up	√	-Recommit red/yellow foods. -- Affirm abundance from healthy foods.	-Honest conversation with an OA member about what's going on. - Food sponsor.
<i>Emotional.</i> On-going resentments, for example, towards my spouse or employer.	√	-Do the 4th or 10th step	-Call my sponsor and commit to 4th step or the work
<i>Spiritual.</i> No daily prayer and meditation.		-Add daily prayer and meditation to my daily action plan with a specific time of day.	-Check in with my support group and sponsor to reinforce my commitment.
<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 Feedback Guidelines

If you are doing this as a group, please divide the time evenly between members and keep track of time. Otherwise use the time as you see fit.

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

Each person shares:

1. Relapse Warning Signs they are now having.
2. Action Plan to manage it/them
3. Support they need for the Action Plan (i.e. accountability, phone calls. etc.)
4. Optional: Group feedback (Read group feedback guidelines aloud).

Group Feedback Guidelines (Please read to group)

Our goal is to support the person while pointing out problems that may cause future relapse. This is done in a structured manner.

- First, group members are encouraged to ask questions about anything they did not understand about the warning sign or how the person is attempting to manage it.
- After that, members who want feedback are each allowed to ask for it and then each member is given the opportunity to give feedback to the person who presents a warning sign. Members do not have to ask for feedback, but we strongly encourage this be shared openly with your OA sponsor, OA buddy, or group.
- It is important that people giving feedback do so in a way that is rigorously honest, yet loving and supportive at the same time. This is not advice-giving. Share your strength, hope, and experience of what has and has not worked for you. What you have seen work for others in the fellowship or have learned from OA approved literature.

Good feedback covers five concerns:

1. Confirm what the member has shared.
2. How I relate to your warning sign and how I see that you are managing it.
3. The strengths I see that you have that will help you to manage these warning signs.
4. The weaknesses I have seen in myself and that I see that may prevent you from managing these warning signs.
5. Suggestions on step work or tools that may be helpful to you that have work.