

Relapse prevention

Use this thought map to give you ideas on how to prevent the return of bad drinking habits.

1. Self - Reflection

Reflect on your vulnerability when using alcohol and the change in the power dynamic of “having to drink” and “choosing not to drink”.

2. Self - Responsibility

Plan for “no accidental intoxication” and to be in control of decisions and take responsibility for any alcohol that is used. Planning goals and value setting with small and achievable goals leading to a larger goal can help you to stay on track. What is your larger goal??

3. Psychological support

Do you think that this may be helpful? This can be formal psychology through a mental health care plan from your GP or informal support through friends, family or group therapy.

4. Health

Be aware of the short and longer term health impacts of alcohol use including liver cirrhosis and mental health issues. Who will monitor your physical health? Regular check-ups with your GP are essential.

5. Self-organisation

For some of us a lack of organisation or feeling overwhelmed may be a predictor or stress that indicates a risk of using alcohol. Is there something you can do to keep order in the home and life environment with structured days or work, family, activity, self-development and relaxation?

6. Managing Medication

Forgetting to take prescribed medication can be a factor in returning to alcohol use. Keep your script current, leave them at your regular pharmacy who will remind you when running low on a script, putting your GP appointment into your phone as a reminder or organise medication in a tablet dispenser box kept as a spare at work, the car, your gym bag are all ideas.

7. Managing Stress

If alcohol helped to reduce stress and distress how will you manage these challenges now and in the future? Exercise, meditation, spending time in the park or at the beach and speaking to loved ones are proven ways to alleviate stress.

8. Managing Sleep

Exercise, eating well and having a good routine encourage healthy tiredness and will help you to get back to a natural sleep cycle – work on your Sleep Hygiene. Consider using the Headspace or Calm sleep apps. If sleep is a big issue speak to your GP or psychologist or use www.sleepio.com.

9. Family Activities

Spending time with family and friends is essential for our happiness and for lowering stress. Social connection is a proven way to help us recover from trauma.

10. Work - Life Balance

It is important to recognise when we are working too hard. Are we skipping lunch or regularly working late? If so speak to your line manager and take a break.

11. On-line or self-directed supports:

- The on-line services from SMART Recovery and the Tool Kit worksheets
- The motivational website “Hello Sunday Morning”
- The Headspace App: “Mindfulness Tool” to aid mindfulness exercises in quiet times or when out and about
- “Sober Grid” to link up with other sober friends who are going to meetings at AA or other SMART activities.

12. Relapse Management Community Support Groups

- AA meetings
- SMART Recovery meetings

13. Crisis Strategy

If you feel you are at risk of a relapse there is always assistance available. What may you do? Think about a plan; AA or SMART sponsor, GP, Shared Care support. Talk to someone see the contact list on the Clean Slate Clinic website. Review relapse prevention activities; are they still working, have they been attended to? Is there another problem? Stop – Think – Make a Choice – Act