

INTERVENTION WEBINAR

Why Do Addicts and Alcoholics Relapse?

 Starting Soon



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Mike has an extensive history of helping families treat addiction. He is an authority in addiction treatment and remains dedicated to providing hands-on expertise at our clinic.

Why Do Addicts and Alcoholics Relapse?

Why Relapse Happens



- Why addicts think they relapse and why they actually relapse are often very different
 - Many say:
 - “I don’t know what happened”
 - “I just made a choice”
 - “It won’t happen again”
 - But once recovery efforts stop, the power of choice weakens fast
 - Without ongoing recovery, old behaviors return long before substance use does
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Relapse Is Not Random



- Relapse does not come out of nowhere
 - It is usually the result of:
 - Stopping recovery work
 - Returning to old thinking
 - Slipping back into old behavior patterns
 - Losing accountability
 - By the time substance use happens, the relapse has often already been building for weeks or months
 - **Relapse is a process, not a single event.**
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Why Recovery Efforts Matter



- When addicts and alcoholics are not actively engaged in recovery:
 - They drift toward the path of least resistance
 - Old coping patterns return
 - Substances begin to feel like the easiest solution again
 - Manipulation, avoidance, and victim thinking reappear
 - **Without a strong recovery foundation, comfort becomes dangerous.**
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One Major Cause of Relapse: No Family Change

- Many substance users go to treatment alone
 - They try to change, but the family system stays the same
 - When they return to the same dysfunction, relapse risk rises
 - Enabling, codependency, and lack of accountability recreate the old environment
 - **Addiction affects the whole family. Recovery has to involve the whole family too.**
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What Reduces Relapse Risk



- The strongest outcomes tend to include:
 - Long-term treatment – 3 months or more improves outcomes
 - Family involvement and family recovery
 - 12-step facilitation and ongoing support
 - Sober living after treatment
 - Treatment away from the home environment
 - Restricted access to cell phones and finances
 - Abstinence-based recovery with ongoing accountability
 - **Recovery works better when the environment changes with the person.**
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Why Addicts Relapse When Things Are Going Well



- Improvement in life circumstances is not the same as recovery
 - Many people mistake the following for true recovery:
 - Getting a job
 - Repairing relationships
 - Feeling better
 - Regaining stability
 - Once life improves, some believe:
 - “I’m fixed now”
 - “I can handle it this time”
 - “I know what went wrong last time”
 - **Fixing the damage caused by addiction is not the same as treating the addiction itself.**
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Fear of Success and Fear of Failure

- Many addicts and alcoholics relapse when things are going well because of:
 - Fear of success
 - Fear of failure
 - Low self-worth
 - Fear of intimacy, rejection, or being truly known
 - Self-sabotage when life starts getting better
 - Sometimes relapse is not about wanting to lose everything.
 - It is about not knowing how to live with success, closeness, or peace.
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Common Behavioral Relapse Triggers



- Common warning behaviors include:
 - Resentment
 - Arguing and conflict
 - Selfishness
 - Dishonesty
 - Victim mentality
 - Restlessness, irritability, and discontentment
 - Isolation
 - Stopping treatment, meetings, or recovery routines
 - Reconnecting with old people, places, and habits
 - Seeking validation, becoming entitled, or hiding behavior
 - **Most relapse triggers are behavioral before they are external.**
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The Biggest Warning Signs



- Two of the strongest precursors to relapse are:
 - Resentment
 - Victim mentality
 - Why these matter:
 - They distort reality
 - They justify unhealthy behavior
 - They reopen the door to blame, anger, and self-pity
 - They make substance use feel reasonable again
 - **When old thinking returns, old behavior usually follows.**
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Signs Someone May Be Slipping Toward Relapse



- Avoiding family and friends
 - Asking for money
 - Being dishonest or inconsistent
 - Stopping meetings or disconnecting from sponsors
 - Avoiding authority or accountability
 - Getting angry when questioned
 - Deflecting when asked about recovery
 - Becoming secretive with phone, whereabouts, or money
 - Visible physical signs like smell of alcohol, glassy eyes, nodding off, or agitation
 - **You may not always know when they are using, but you usually know when they are not well.**
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How to Respond to a Relapse



- For the substance user:
 - Tell someone immediately
 - Contact the treatment team, sponsor, or recovery support network
 - Re-enter treatment if needed
 - Review where the relapse started behaviorally
 - For the family:
 - Do not go back to enabling
 - Do not absorb the consequences
 - Hold boundaries respectfully
 - Offer help getting back into treatment, not help staying sick
 - **Strong boundaries often shorten relapse. Weak boundaries often extend it.**
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Myths That Keep Families Stuck



- “They have to want help first”
 - “They just need a job or relationship”
 - “The treatment center didn’t work”
 - “If life gets better, they won’t use again”
 - “Relapse just happens”
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- **These beliefs keep families passive while the problem grows.**
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The Truth About Relapse



- People do recover
 - Treatment does work when people engage honestly
 - Families can learn from relapses
 - Relapse can reveal where the recovery process broke down
 - Recovery is not about control – it is about accountability, honesty, and ongoing action
 - **Relapse is not proof that recovery is impossible. It is often proof that the underlying work was incomplete.**
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How Families Can Help Prevent Relapse



- Stop enabling and stop rescuing
 - Learn the warning behaviors
 - Redirect loved ones back to treatment, meetings, and sponsors
 - Stay calm and do not feed chaos or drama
 - Maintain firm boundaries
 - Enter your own recovery program
 - **You cannot control their recovery. You can stop helping the relapse grow.**
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Stop Accepting Excuses and Start Getting Help

Questions? The Floor Is Yours!

Prefer to talk in private? Get in touch below:

Call Us: 1 (888) 291-8514

Chat with us: family-intervention.com
