

Levels of Relapse Warning Signs

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Recovery from chemical dependency occurs at five levels – abstinence, situation-change, behavior change, emotional change, and personal belief change.

Abstinence

The first level is **abstinence**. Chemical addicts must stop using alcohol and drugs and abstain from withdrawal before they can begin to recover. At this level, one has to make a decision to stop drinking and drugging and reach out for help.

Situation-Change

One element, the above, is the second level of recovery that focuses upon **situation-change**. This level involves replacing an addiction-centered lifestyle with one that is recovery-centered. To stop drinking and drugging we have to get away from people, places, and things that make us want to use alcohol and other drugs. Circumstances causing "spurts" are adequately controlled environments." If you keep partying out with people who are drinking and drugging your chances of staying abstinent are nearly zero. To break the cycle of destruction alcohol and drug use into need feels like need to put yourself around people, places, and things that will encourage and support your abstinence and help you to form a list of specific steps to head yourself from drinking and drugging even if you feel like it at that moment.

Behavior Change

The third level of recovery is **behavior change**. Chemical addicts must learn to identify and interrupt additive behaviors that give short term pleasure, create long term pain, and reinforce the urge to self-destruct. At this level, addictive behaviors must be replaced with recovery-centered behaviors that produce short term pleasure by resolving the problems that create the pain.

Change in Thinking

This leads to a fourth level of recovery, or **changes in thinking**. Addictive thinking is based upon the irrational belief that addictive use can mitigate the risk, solve our problems, and make us something we are not. We are thinking addicts when we believe that we can never feel whole, complete, or have the good life unless we are using addictions. The antidote for addictive thinking is sober thinking that helps us minimize the destructive effects of addictive use and see the positive benefits and opportunities presented by sobriety.

Thinking about using alcohol and other drugs increases the risk of relapse. Thinking is a cognitive process controlled by the conscious cortex or thinking part of the brain. There are three ways of thinking about alcohol and drug use that are particularly dangerous.

The first is called **negative** and is: You remember and exaggerating the good times that you had when using alcohol and other drugs while blocking out or minimizing the bad times.

A recovering person who called himself "Jake the Snake" used to tell the story of the great time he had when he got robbed in cocaine and stole \$175,000 worth of coke from his supplier and went off for a淫荡性性妓女性交易性交易 in Las Vegas. He forgot to mention that he caught a serious infection there, a prostitute, and was nearly killed when the supplier showed up to get his coke back. After being shot and taken to the emergency room, the police found a small bag of cocaine and some marijuana in Jake's room and he ended up in jail and was serving a seven year sentence when I talked with him. He still argues that he had a good time.

The second negative form of thinking is called **idealizing abstinence**. You think about all of the bad times associated with being alcohol and drug free while blocking out and minimizing all of the good times.

A recovering named Dennis told me that nothing was exciting until the last time she got sober and that felt she would be better off to start drinking and drugging again. When Dennis was drinking and drugging she was unemployed, earning money by drug-dealing and prostitution, and was in a bad new-to-city home. Now she was physically healthy, working a