

Preventing Relapse
Using the “Social and Environmental Triggers For Relapse” Worksheet
By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

Associations between particular feelings, people, places, and events becomes intertwined with the alcoholic or addicts drinking and drugging behavior. When alcoholics and addicts find their way to recovery, the old associations between the drinking and drugging and the old feeling, people, places, and events persist, often triggering cravings to drink or use. When these cues trigger drinking or using memories and perhaps euphoric recall, unless you take action to prevent cravings and possible relapse, you remain extremely vulnerable to losing your recovery. These cues are ever present, but relapse can be averted.

It is important to avoid the external triggers that are your most dangerous and that are within your power to avoid. Many of these would be the obvious ones such as hanging out with old drinking/using friends, or going to bars or liquor stores. Triggers that can't be avoided can be neutralized. To be ready and able to neutralize triggers that arise, you need to be able to anticipate and identify them, then have a plan of action on how you will deal with them without drinking/using. Below are areas that serve as triggers that can set up cravings to return to drinking or using. Use this work sheet to help identify your probable risks.

Social and Environmental Triggers for Relapse Worksheet
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People

Who are the people you used to drink or use drugs with? Make a list. Make a list of other people that could serve as a trigger for relapse. It could be extended family members, spouse, girlfriend, your children, boss, coworkers, neighbors and any others.

Places

Where did you used to drink or use drugs?
What are the places that could trigger cravings or euphoric recall? Make a list of the places that might remind you of drinking/using or serve as trigger. Examples might include: bars, clubs, golf courses, football games and tailgating, school, work, certain streets, certain parts of town, concerts, pool halls, certain country roads, lakes, backyards.

Events

What kinds of events did you routinely participate in while drinking or using drugs?
What are some of the routine events that you might participate in now that could trigger cravings? Make a list of possible trigger-provoking events. Examples might include