

Beat The Street

Relapse Prevention Counselor Guide Excerpts

PART 1

STREET SMARTS

Learning to Avoid Relapse

This 38-minute introductory program teaches the viewer to turn former street skills into "street smarts" for staying clean and sober. Seven recovering addicts from urban neighborhoods who are now doing well describe the real situations they face every day--and how they deal with them so that they don't pick up. They stress 8 essential skills:

- Accepting disappointments without resorting to drug use
- Coping with chronic stress
- Resisting the lure of "easy money"
- Avoiding going back to the old spot
- Resisting the pull of the street life
- Planning to handle offers
- Maintaining complete abstinence
- Using a support system

OBJECTIVES OF PART 1

After viewing this videotape and participating in group discussion and activities, clients will be better able to:

- Identify at least five potential relapse traps that they will face when returning home
- Realize that everything may not work out exactly as planned in early recovery
- Find ways to cope with setbacks and disappointment--without picking up

- Recognize high stress situations as relapse traps, and be prepared with some stress management strategies
- Understand the importance of having a support system, and be prepared to create such a network
- Anticipate and cope with financial stress without returning to illegal hustles, recognizing that "easy money" is just an illusion--and a major relapse trap
- Understand how street life itself can be an addiction, and be prepared to counter its pull with a realistic assessment of where it took them
- Recognize that the common desire to go back to the old spots, corners and hangouts is a relapse trap to be avoided
- Understand that total abstinence means not using drugs or alcohol, and why this is necessary for success
- Anticipate offers of drugs and alcohol, and be prepared with some realistic responses
- Remain hopeful about recovery and apply relapse prevention strategies

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS : PART 1

After showing Part 1, use these questions as a guide for leading group discussion. When appropriate, answers to questions are in bold type face, as are any notes to the counselor.

What did you think about this tape? Were the situations shown here relevant to your own lives? If so, how?

Miles, the narrator, opened up the program by saying "it's easy to stay clean and sober inside the institution, in a drug program or a prison. But it's what you do when you come out that determines your future." What do you think he meant by that? In your experience, is it true that it's a lot harder to stay clean after you're home? Have you ever relapsed during the first 90 days home? If so, what were the circumstances that led up to relapse? What would you do differently this time around, if anything?

Ernesto described six different relapse traps that he fell into, which all but guaranteed that he was going to pick up again. Can you remember what they were?

- 1) He thought he could still smoke pot and drink, as long as he didn't do heroin;
- 2) He hung out with his old friends again;
- 3) He went back to the old hangouts;
- 4) He glorified the high, remembering only the good parts;
- 5) He thought he could do heroin "just once" and control it;
- 6) He allowed himself lots of free time to get bored.

Can you identify with any of Ernesto's story? Which parts?

David relapsed behind three major traps. Can you name them?

- 1) He moved back to the same area where he used to get high;
- 2) He let an active user live with him;
- 3) He didn't have any tools for handling anger.

Did anything like this ever happen to you? If so, describe it. What would you do differently today?

Michelle felt under a lot of pressure at the birthday party to take part in the champagne toast. Do you think the pressure she felt was realistic, or was some of it in her own head? Even though Michelle gave in and took the glass of champagne, she didn't actually relapse. Why not? What did she do that saved her from relapse?

She put down the drink, left, and got in touch with her support system.

Since you've been in recovery, have you ever been at a party where alcohol was served? How did you handle it? How did you feel at the time?

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES: PART 1

The following pages contain activities that clients may participate in to help them apply what they've learned to their own recoveries.

On the back of each activity (or on the following page in some cases) is a corresponding client worksheet. Feel free to make photocopies of the worksheets and distribute them as needed.

As stated earlier, you may want to adapt some of the writing activities to oral, group sharing activities. When you distribute the work sheets be sure to point out that they are not tests that will be graded or judged in any way. They are just tools to help clients better prepare for long-term recovery. If relevant, state that no one is required to share anything that they do not wish to.

If you have any feedback for Reelizations about how these various activities worked out with your clients, or any other related activities that you found effective, please call Donna Boundy of Reelizations at 914-679-4021 or write her at P.O.Box 555, Woodstock, NY 12498. We will take your feedback into account for future editions of this guide.

ACTIVITY 1: Relapse Stories

Most clients have relapsed at least once in the past. Have clients use Worksheet #1 (next page) to write down one of their own relapse stories from the past, in as much detail as they can remember. What was going on in their lives when they relapsed? Where were they living? Who were they hanging out with? What kinds of stress did they have? What kind of support did they have? Did someone offer drugs or alcohol to them? Did they find an old stash? Exactly what led up to it?

After giving them time to write the story, ask them to list all the relapse traps they can now identify in it.

If a client has never relapsed in the past, ask him/her to imagine a relapse scenario, and write about that.

If the literacy level of the group or of some participants is low, you can ask them to just make brief notes and share their stories aloud with the group.

Ask the group if they see any relapse traps that a group member did not notice.

WORKSHEET #1 (for use with Activity 1)

RELAPSE STORIES

If you have ever relapsed in the past, write the story of that relapse below. (Use extra paper as needed.) Put in as many details as you can.

What led up to your using again?

What were you going through at the time?

What stress did you have in your life?

Did you have much support?

Did you go back to the corner, or to old friends? Did

you try to drink or smoke pot?

Did someone offer you drugs?

Who were you with?

Where were you living?

RELAPSE TRAPS:

Going back over your story, try to identify the relapse traps that led up to your relapse. For example, were you stressed-out and not dealing with it? Were you lacking support? Were you glorifying the high, and forgetting where it took you? Did you try to smoke "a little" or drink alcohol? List every relapse trap you can think of that might apply (whether or not it was mentioned in the tape)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.