



## Stability and Setback Prevention Self-Awareness Checklist

Being self-aware is key when it comes to staying on the right track in order to prevent relapse and setbacks when coping with substance use and coexisting mental health issues. To be truly self-aware, we need to be able to honestly ask and answer questions of ourselves and to objectively assess our true progress, insight and motivation. When we are honest and open our minds, we can learn where we need to make the improvements and adjustments needed to stay on a positive course and avoid going down the wrong path.

### ***Setbacks, Relapse and The COVID Factor***

Preventing relapse and setbacks any time is a challenge. The COVID pandemic has changed things a great deal. For this exercise we will call these changes ‘the COVID Factor’ There are many challenges due to COVID factor when it comes to staying on the right path with substance use and mental health. However, there are some things that some individuals may find to be easier as well. This exercise is focused on making an honest self-assessment of strengths and areas needing improvement when it comes to preventing relapse and setbacks in progress while taking the COVID factor into consideration.

#### **Directions:**

***If this activity is done in person***, everyone in the group should receive a copy of the list on the following page. Give everyone a few minutes to review the list on their own. As group members review the list, they should circle areas of strength and underline areas needing improvement. In the COVID factor column, briefly write down if the pandemic has made this area easier or harder to deal with.

***When doing this activity virtually***, via telehealth (not in person), review the list one by one as a group and complete the process questions for each item on the list as a group as group members are invited to share whether each area discussed is an area of strength for them personally or an area needing improvement. Also include discussion of the COVID factor for each item. Do this one by one through the list encouraging open discussion and sharing as you move through the list as a group in an open telehealth discussion.

**Process:** As the group is reviewing the chart on the next page, as a group, discuss the strengths and areas needing improvement. Some suggested questions for discussion for each relapse/setback factor on the list are:

#### *Strengths:*

- What are your areas of strength?
- How have you developed these strengths? What is working for you?

#### *Areas needing improvement:*

- What areas did you identify as needing to improve?
- How has the “COVID factor” contributed to these challenges in your life?
- What can you start to do in order to improve in these areas?



**Ways to prevent setbacks and relapse** – Honestly assess your progress in each area and discuss specifically what you are doing including both your strengths and struggles

1. Avoiding people that I need to stay away from
2. Avoiding places that I need to stay away from
3. Avoiding things that I need to stay away from
4. Connecting with and reaching out to positive supports
5. Managing cravings
6. Coping with difficult emotions without acting out
7. Practicing self-care (Sleep, diet, time management)
8. Being honest and open
9. Making good decisions every day
10. Maintaining a positive attitude
11. Participating in hobbies and interests to combat boredom
12. Socializing with positive and supportive people
13. Demonstrating patience and avoiding impulsive behaviors
14. Listening to others without arguing or letting ego get in the way
15. Humility – Being “teachable”, cooperative, and ready to learn
16. Frustration tolerance and anger management skills
17. Managing moods and mental health to remain stable
18. Letting go of resentments
19. Use of skills to manage stress and anxiety effectively
20. Structured lifestyle without chaos or unpredictability
21. Caring for responsibilities (work, family, bills, chores, etc.)
22. Complying with legal obligations and following laws
23. Caring for physical health and medical conditions
24. Avoiding cockiness, overconfidence and complacency
25. Having a sense of meaning and purpose in life

**Consider the COVID Factor** – Has the pandemic influenced your progress (same, harder, easier- why?)



**Optional Follow Up Activity – Improving Through Group Feedback** – This is an optional activity to do as a follow up to the main discussion. It may work better with a group that knows each other at least somewhat and is open to sharing feedback with one another

**Directions:** One by one the group leader should accept a group member to step forward as a volunteer to receive feedback from the rest of the group. The volunteer in the group should be prepared to accept feedback in one or both of these areas:

1. **Encouragement** – Group members are invited to tell the person who volunteered for feedback, which areas that they have observed that this person is doing well with. Feedback should be encouraging and positive and not judgmental or condescending. Some examples of how this can be expressed below:
  - “I really think that you are doing great with **#8 being honest and open**. I really appreciate how you seem to always be honest in this group about how you are doing, and you are open about expressing your feelings which is really one of your strong points.
  - “I admire how well you are doing with **#19, Use of skills to manage stress and anxiety**. I think it is encouraging how you always seem to be relaxed and calm in this group every week and you seem to have so many skills for managing anxiety really well”
  - “I think its special that you consistently display **#10, Maintaining a positive attitude**. Even when you got into trouble with your probation officer you still remained positive and didn’t give up and I really admire that.
2. **Advice – This one is optional**, as some volunteers may not want to or feel ready to hear advice, but some group members should. If the volunteer is open to advice, the group should share some constructive feedback about ways for this person to improve, based on the list from the exercise: Again, it is important to express advice in a positive and non-judgmental way. See the example below:
  - “When it comes to **#12, Socializing with positive and supportive people**, I think it would be helpful for you to find some positive social outlets in your life to avoid isolation which can be dangerous. I started doing better myself when I started making more positive friends”

**Allow as many people in the group to take turns as the volunteer to receive encouragement and (if they are ready) some advice. The more people that participate, the better.**

If inspiration is the fuel that moves us forward, then progress is the mileage we accumulate along the road we travel on. The farther down the road we go, the closer we get to our destination and goal. Even if we go backward after a period of progress, the next time we travel that road moving forward we know the way a little better. Every time we try to move forward, we gain some experience and therefore make progress regardless of whether or not we reach our destination. All movements made in a positive direction are critical aspects of the upward change process.

- Taking the Escalator