

13. Forgetting Gratitude: You may be looking negatively on your life, concentrating on problems that still are not totally corrected. Nobody wants to be a Pollyanna, but it's good to remember where you started from and how much better life is now.

14, "It Can't Happen To Me": This is dangerous thinking. Almost anything CAN happen to you and is more likely to if you get careless. Remember, you have a progressive disease, and you will be in worse shape if you relapse.

15. Omnipotence: This is a feeling that results from a combination of many of the above. You now have all the answers for yourself and others, nobody can tell YOU anything. You ignore suggestions or advice from others. Relapse is probably the last thing on your mind, and imminent, unless drastic changes take place. "Let he who stands take heed lest he fall."

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Symptoms of Relapse

While each individual must maintain the disciplines that insure sobriety, there are ways in which others can help. Nearly every person close to the addicted person is able to recognize behavior changes that indicate a return to the old ways of thinking. Often these individuals and fellow AV members have tried to warn the subject, who by now may not be willing to be told. He may consider it nagging or a violation of his privacy. There are many danger signs. Most addicted people, if approached properly, would be willing to go over an inventory of symptoms with a spouse or other confidante. If the symptoms are caught early enough and recognized, the addicted person will usually try to change the way they think, to get "back on the beam" again. A weekly inventory of symptoms might prevent some relapses. This added discipline is one which many addicted people seem willing to try. The following list can be used by spouses, close friends, or the addicted person.

1. Exhaustion: Allowing yourself to become too tired or in poor health. Some addicted people are also prone to becoming "workaholics," perhaps intending to try to make up for lost time. Good health and enough rest are important. If you feel well you are more apt to think well - feel poorly and your thinking is apt to deteriorate. If you feel bad enough you might begin to think that returning to your addiction couldn't make it any worse. (Remember H.A.L.T. ... don't become too Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired!)

2. Dishonesty: This begins with a pattern of unnecessary little lies and deceits with fellow workers, friends and family. Then come important lies to yourself. This is called rationalizing - making excuses for not doing what you should do, or for doing what you know you shouldn't do.

3. Impatience: Things aren't happening fast enough, or others aren't doing what you feel they should do, what you want them to do, WHEN you want them to do it. (For the Christian, this can also include feeling God isn't answering your prayers. He does, but in HIS TIME, IN HIS WAY!)

4. Argumentativeness: Arguing small and ridiculous points of view indicates a need to always be "right." Others should be "reasonable." They should do things YOUR way and agree with YOUR opinions. When people fail to meet these unreasonable expectations it can be another excuse for you to return to your addiction.

5. Depression: Unreasonable and unaccountable despair may happen in cycles and should be dealt with and talked about. (For women, be aware of the pre-menstrual syndrome called PMS, and times in your monthly cycle when you are more vulnerable to relapse.)

6. Self Pity: "Why ME, Lord?" "Nobody loves me ... nobody appreciates all I do ..." (for them??). Get off of your pity-pot! Get your mind off of yourself by helping another person seeking recovery.

7. Cockiness: "I've got it made, I'm HEALED of my addiction," not afraid of it any more, going into drinking/drugging situations to show others you no longer have a problem. Do this often enough and it will wear down your defense.

8. Complacency: "My addiction is the furthest thing from my mind, I don't even think about it any more." It is dangerous to let down on your guard just because everything is going well. It's a good thing to remember where you came from and stay aware of the "wiles of Satan." "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes ..." (Ephesians 6:11, also see verses 12-18).

9. Expecting Too Much From Others: "I've changed, why hasn't everyone else?" It's a plus if they do - but it's still your problem if they don't. They may not trust you yet, may still be looking for more proof that you HAVE changed. You can't expect others to change their lifestyle just because you have. Remember, the only person you can change is YOU. You can pray that God will change them, then proceed to love them and try to change YOUR attitude toward them, learning to look at them as Christ does, to love, and accept them as He does you!

10. Letting Up On Self-Discipline: In your praying, Bible reading and meditation, daily inventory, and attending AV meetings and/or church. This can stem from either complacency or boredom. You can't afford to be bored with your program or your church, the cost of relapse is too great. If your church isn't meeting your needs, first take a second look AT those needs to see if they are realistic, PRAY, and try out another church, always remembering that NO church is perfect, because NO person perfect!

11. Wanting Too Much: Don't set goals you can't reach with normal effort. Don't expect too much of yourself OR others. It's always greater when good things happen unexpectedly. You will reach your goals if you do the very best you can, even though it may not happen as SOON as you want it to. Happiness is not having what you want, but wanting what you HAVE. Paul said, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." (Phil. 4:12)

12. Use Of Mood Altering Drugs: You may feel the need to ease things with a pill, and your doctor may prescribe it. You may have never had a problem with drugs other than alcohol, but you can easily fall to your addiction this way - about the most subtle way to have a relapse. Saying you're sober when you're using drugs, or clean when you're drinking, is only cheating yourself!