Persevering with Sobriety and Recovery

by BRENDA VANTA

How to Prevent Addiction Relapses

Quitting the use of an addictive substance, alcohol, cigarettes or an illicit drug, is a great achievement; however, it’s just the first big step towards recovery. Once you quit that addiction you have three options: either you’ll stay clean the whole life or you will have a relapse or, in some cases, you can become a chronic relapse (alternating between using the addictive substance and staying away from it). Rehab programs have a component that deals with relapse prevention. So, let's take a look at sobriety and recovery.

How can you stay clean and sober for the whole life?

1. Being drug or alcohol-free is a lifelong journey. Remember, those drugs once triggered the reward system in the brain. Your brain will ‘ask you’ for more of those because it felt good.

Hence, it is important to stay fully committed and focused and not use that drug again.

2. Get rid of the bad. Stay away from temptations. If you had an alcohol addiction, the last places where you want to hang out would be the liquor store or the bar. You should stay away as much as you can from those places where you can easily pick up and use that drug again. Emotional triggers are also linked with relapse, so you may have to stay away from certain people that you associate the addiction with as well.

3. Add more “goods” into your life. The “buddy system.” You probably heard how important it is to get a gym buddy to help maintain your schedule and fitness plan. Well, it also works when you recover from an addiction. He or she will support you, share experiences and motivate you. Some rehab classes are also conducted in groups for this reason, so you can be around others who go through the same experience. Being together with others who are in a similar situation is better than being alone during this process. Besides staying in touch with your buddy, you should also share your journey with family and friends.

4. Get a “to-do” list every day and follow it. Busy yourself with what you want to have more in your life while taking off what you don’t need. The more you organize your time, the less chances you’ll have to relapse. You have to avoid boredom and/or stress (and a “to-do list “can help with both) - because boredom and stress can trigger your cravings again. Also, a to-do list can help you track your goals and successes. Make sure you write down your plans and review the results periodically.

5. Diet and exercise. Add these two healthy habits to your drug/alcohol-free plan, because they work together: a clean diet that includes plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meat, nuts, seeds and beans will help detoxify your body. In addition, regular exercise will help your body release those “feel good” chemicals called endorphins. This way you will crave less of those harmful chemicals found in addictive drugs. Add some mind-body techniques such as meditation and yoga to create a perfect balance between your mind and your body and increase your self-awareness.

6. Don’t see a relapse as a failure. Just trust yourself, start fresh again with your program and with perseverance

and commitment, the relapses will occur less and less.