Clinical Guidelines for Relapse Prevention Module

OVERVIEW:

This module provides information about recognizing and responding to a relapse. Clients are presented with information about factors that contribute to relapse, such as early warning signs and triggers, and strategies to identify individual early warning signs and triggers. Clients work with you and family members (when available) to identify these early warning signs and triggers, and develop strategies to respond to these signs. You then work with the client to collaboratively develop and practice a Relapse Prevention Plan that incorporates the information from early warning signs and triggers identified earlier in the module.

Goals

1. Provide information on the factors that contribute to relapses, such as early warning signs and triggers.
2. Help the client develop and implement a Relapse Prevention Plan.

Topics

1. Introduction to Relapse Prevention
2. Developing a Relapse Prevention Plan

SESSION STRUCTURE:

- Informal socializing and identification of any major problems.
- Review the previous session.
- Discuss/review the home practice assignment. Praise all efforts and problem-solve obstacles to completing home practice.
- Follow-up on goals.
- Set the agenda.
- Teach new material (or review materials from a previous session if necessary). Take advantage of opportunities to role-play and practice skills.
- Summarize progress made in the current session.
• Agree on home practice to be completed before the next session. (Consider writing it down to help person remember)

GENERAL TEACHING STRATEGIES:

• The educational process should be collaborative. Do not treat the client as a student, but as someone with whom you are trying to share information and come to a common understanding.

• It may be helpful to ask the client questions regarding her or his knowledge of relapse (and common warning signs and triggers) and then use the handouts to “fill in the gaps.”

• When discussing a given topic (e.g., common warning signs; triggers), ask clients to give concrete examples, which will help them to better understand and remember the concept.

• Go at a comfortable pace, but do not force the material on the client. Because of possible cognitive difficulties, it may be necessary to present the information in small chunks.
  – Each handout provides a table of suggestions for pacing, based on a person who is working at a slow pace or a moderate pace. Some clients may be knowledgeable enough to go through a handout in one session or may take longer than the estimated number of sessions.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE HANDOUTS:

• Home practice options should be reviewed at the end of each session and you should help the client to select an option and plan how to complete it before the next session.

• Completed home practice should be reviewed at the beginning of each session. By reviewing completed home practice at the beginning of each session, the client understands the importance of practicing the skills learned in treatment in his or her own environment. You should reinforce attempts to complete home practice and to troubleshoot with the client when he or she was not able to complete the home practice.

• Each handout includes: sections of text, main points that are highlighted in boxes, questions, tables, and suggested home practice assignments.

• You can either take turns reading the text out loud or summarize the text for the client.

• The highlighted boxes are useful talking points and take home messages for the client. It may be used to help the client to connect information from the handout to his or her own life situation and goals.

• You should ask the client questions under the bolded question oval to facilitate discussion, assess the client’s knowledge, and understand his or her perspective.
• The tables, checklists and worksheets can be filled out together or used as discussion tools to individualize the topics to the client’s situation.

• You can use one of the home practice options or individualize the home practice for the client to practice the skills in a situation connected to her goal.

• The primary goals of home practice are for the client to implement in his or her own life the knowledge and skills learned in a session and to help clients take steps towards their goals.
#1: Clinical Guidelines for “Introduction to Relapse Prevention”

OVERVIEW:

This handout defines relapse and introduces the client to the idea that relapses can be prevented (which in turn, can facilitate recovery). In addition, common early warning signs and triggers are defined and described. Clients learn to identify the link between early warning signs and triggers.

Goals

1. Define relapse and instill confidence that client can take steps to minimize and/or prevent relapse as part of recovery.
2. Define common early warning signs and triggers.
3. Have the client identify her or his early warning signs and personal triggers.
4. Help the client identify the relationship between triggers and warning signs.
5. Help the client identify strategies for dealing with early warning signs and triggers.

Handout

1. Introduction to Relapse Prevention.

SUGGESTED AGENDA:

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<tr>
<th>Slow-Paced</th>
<th>Medium-Paced</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 1-Introduction to Relapse Prevention</td>
<td>Session 1-Introduction to Relapse Prevention; What are common events or situations that can “trigger” a relapse?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 2-What are common events or situations that can “trigger” a relapse?</td>
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</tbody>
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TEACHING STRATEGIES:

- Ask the client if she or he is familiar with the terms, “relapse,” “relapse prevention,” and “warning signs.”
• Recognize the client’s knowledge and experience regarding her or his symptoms and how they can lead to a relapse (this may be challenging as the client will likely only have had one previous psychotic episode). Praise the client for sharing information with you.

• Use the common early warning signs table as a strategy to help the client better remember the symptoms/experiences he or she was having prior to their initial psychotic episode.

• Discuss how client can share the information he or she has learned about early warning signs with a family member or friend. Also, help client practice how to approach this person to help fill in the gaps in terms of their early warning signs (and the timeline/order in which they occurred).

• Ask the client if she or he is familiar with the terms, “triggers,” and “stressors.”

• Recognize the client’s knowledge and experience regarding his or her initial triggers and stressors (and how they can lead to warning signs or symptoms in general). Praise the client for sharing information with you.

• Link the benefits of preventing triggers and recognizing early warning signs to helping the client make progress towards his or her goal. Review how a relapse could make it more difficult to achieve a goal.

• Introduce to the client the notion that alternative strategies (e.g., relaxation) can be used to combat common, everyday triggers and stressors.

• Ask the client to review the early warning signs and triggers tables with family members or friends (to help them identify other triggers that they might have missed).

**TIPS FOR COMMON PROBLEMS:**

• Be prepared for client denial of having ever had symptoms, an illness, an episode, even warning signs or triggers. Accept the denial and discuss the symptoms in the spirit of informing the client, but not accusing him or her of having them.

  ‒ Focus on symptoms/experiences that preceded either a hospitalization or receipt of treatment, rather than labeling them as symptoms or warning signs.

  ‒ At times it may be more effective to link learning the contents of the module to a goal that the person has previously identified. For example, you could say, “I think identifying early warning signs will help you stay in school or keep your job, rather than have to go to the hospital.”

  ‒ Accept the denial and discuss the triggers in the context of what gives the client stress on a day-to-day basis.

  ‒ Focus on coping strategies to decrease the effects of daily stressors or hassles.

• Client may deny link between triggers and early warning signs.
– Focus on daily hassles or stressors and general psychological or physical symptoms (e.g. headaches).
– Focus on general coping strategies that can improve the client’s well-being.

EVALUATING GAINS:

• After completing this handout it may be helpful to assess how much knowledge the client has retained about relapse and common early warning signs. You can assess a client’s knowledge using the following questions:
  
  1. What is a relapse?
  2. How does relapse relate to recovery?
  3. What are common early warning signs?
  4. What do you think are your personal triggers?
  5. What is the relationship between triggers and early warning signs of relapse?
  6. What can you do to cope with triggers?
THERAPEUTIC GOALS, SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES, AND PROBES FOR “INTRODUCTION TO RELAPSE PREVENTION”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Therapeutic Goal</th>
<th>Techniques &amp; Probes</th>
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</table>
| Define relapse and provide information on the relationship between relapse and recovery. | • Ask the client for his or her understanding of the term relapse:  
  – *What comes to mind when you think of the term relapse?*  
  • Discuss how relapse relates to recovery:  
  – *How does learning about relapses help you move forward in your recovery or make progress towards your goal?*                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Define common early warning signs of relapse.                                      | • Assess client’s knowledge of the early warning signs that preceded his or her psychotic episode:  
  – *What were some changes that you noticed before you had psychotic symptoms?*  
  • Describe and define early warning signs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Have the client identify his or her early warning signs of relapse.                | • Use the early warning signs table as an exercise to help the client identify warning signs that he or she may have experienced in his or her initial episode.  
  • Ask the client to check in with a family member or friend to help him or her fill in the gaps about warning signs that he or she might have missed.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Define and describe triggers and have the client identify their own personal triggers. | • Ask the client for his or her understanding of the term triggers (and/or stressors):  
  – *What events or stressors do you remember before your episode with psychotic symptoms?*                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
#2: “Developing a Relapse Prevention Plan”

OVERVIEW:

This handout describes what a Relapse Prevention Plan is and then walks the client through the steps so that he or she can complete his or her own personal Relapse Prevention Plan.

Goals

1. Discuss and describe relapse prevention planning.
2. Complete a Relapse Prevention Plan.

Handouts

3. Developing a Relapse Prevention Plan

SUGGESTED AGENDA:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slow-Paced</th>
<th>Medium-Paced</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 1-Developing a Relapse Prevention Plan, How you can develop a Relapse Prevention Plan, Tips for completing a Relapse Prevention Plan; review Marco’s Relapse Prevention Plan</td>
<td>Session 1-What is a relapse plan? How to develop a Relapse Prevention Plan. Review Marco’s Relapse Prevention Plan; Putting your Relapse Prevention Plan together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 2-Putting your Relapse Prevention Plan together</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TEACHING STRATEGIES:

- Ask the client if he or she is familiar with the term, “Relapse Prevention Plan.”

- Ask the client why developing a Relapse Prevention Plan is important.

- Offer hope and confidence that the client can reduce relapses and move forward in his or her recovery.

- Review how resiliency is improved by learning effective strategies to manage stressful situations in the future, such as the possibility of relapse. Discuss how the client uses personal strengths to help manage stressful situations.
• Ask the client what steps go into developing a Relapse Prevention Plan. Fill in the gaps of his or her knowledge.

• Review Marco’s Relapse Prevention Plan (example). Ask client for his or her thoughts on it.

• Assist client in completing his or her Relapse Prevention Plan.

• Encourage client to get assistance from support person(s) in completing his or her Relapse Prevention Plan.

• Review with the client’s support person(s) with whom he or she can share the Relapse Prevention Plan.

• Practice the steps of the Relapse Prevention Plan in session. Model the coping strategies for the client where needed. For example, practice relaxation strategies the client would use if he or she noticed early warning signs or practice making a phone call to a supporter to ask for assistance. Ask the client to share and practice the steps of his or her plan with a family member or supporter.

TIPS FOR COMMON PROBLEMS:

• Be prepared for client to deny needing a Relapse Prevention Plan. Accept the denial and discuss the need for strategies for staying out of the hospital or avoiding a relapse of symptoms.

• Normalize the identification of support people in one’s life as something that all individuals need, irrespective of whether they have had a mental illness or not. If needed, provide examples, such as having a plan to prevent the symptoms of diabetes or asthma from returning or worsening.

EVALUATING GAINS:

• After completing this handout it may be helpful to assess how much knowledge the client has retained about relapse prevention planning. You can assess a client’s knowledge using the following questions:

  1. What is a relapse?
  2. What is a Relapse Prevention Plan?
  3. Why is it important?
  4. What things go into a Relapse Prevention Plan?
**THERAPEUTIC GOALS, SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES, AND PROBES FOR “WHAT IS A RELAPSE PREVENTION PLAN?”:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Therapeutic Goal</th>
<th>Techniques &amp; Probes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss and describe relapse prevention planning.</td>
<td>• Ask the client for his or her understanding of relapse prevention planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Describe the steps of relapse prevention planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete a Relapse Prevention Plan.</td>
<td>• Review the example of a Relapse Prevention Plan (Marco’s plan).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have client complete his or her own Relapse Prevention Plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Practice the steps of the Relapse Prevention Plan in session.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ask client if he or she wants to share the plan with support person(s) in his or her life.</td>
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</table>
Introduction to Relapse Prevention Planning

Introduction and Module Overview

The handouts in this module will be about 2-3 sessions long. When you review the handouts with your IRT clinician, you will discuss strategies for reducing a relapse or minimizing the severity of a relapse. It can be helpful to identify stressful situations that may have contributed to symptoms in the past and make a Relapse Prevention Plan to more effectively respond to symptoms when they occur.

In this module we will:

- Learn how to identify early warning signs that could help reduce or minimize a relapse.
- Learn strategies to recognize stressful situations or “triggers” that could potentially lead to a relapse.
- Learn how to recognize early warning signs of a relapse.
- Develop a Relapse Prevention Plan than you can share with others to help you reduce or minimize a relapse.

What I expect from you:

- Willingness to discuss possible early warning signs and symptoms from a past episode.
- Working collaboratively to develop a relapse prevention plan.

What you can expect from me:

- Factual information about relapse prevention.
- Help identifying early warning signs and triggers of a relapse.
- Help developing and practicing a relapse prevention plan.

This module focuses strategies to prevent or minimize the effects of a relapse.

We will work together on making a relapse prevention plan to help you accomplish your goal.

A Message of Hope:

Many people with psychosis have used strategies to help them avoid or minimize the impact of a relapse, taking control over their lives and their recovery.
#1: Introduction to Relapse Prevention

Psychiatric symptoms tend to vary in intensity over time. Sometimes the symptoms may be absent; sometimes they may be mild or moderate; sometimes they may be strong. When symptoms become severe, it is usually referred to as a “relapse” or an “acute episode.” Some relapses can be managed at home, but other relapses require hospitalization to protect the person or other people.

Psychosis affects people in very different ways. Some people have a milder form and only have an episode once or a few times in their lives. Other people have a stronger form and have several episodes, some of which require hospitalization.

- Preventing or minimizing these periods of increased symptoms, or relapses, is a critical aspect of recovery from the illness.

There are many things you can do to prevent or reduce relapses. You have already learned some important relapse reduction strategies in the earlier handouts, including the following:

- Learn as much as possible about psychosis.
- Be aware of your own individual symptoms.
- Be conscious of when you are under stress and develop strategies for coping with stress.
- Participate in treatments that help you recover.
- Build social supports.
- Use medication effectively.

- Another strategy that can be helpful in reducing a relapse is to identify signs, symptoms, and stressors that happened before your first episode of psychosis.

**Question:**

- What steps have you taken already to help prevent or reduce relapse?
What are early warning signs?

Even when people do their best to avoid it, their symptoms may start to come back and they may have a relapse. Some relapses may occur over short periods of time, such as a few days, with very little or no warning. However, most relapses develop gradually over longer periods of time, such as over several weeks.

There are often changes in the person’s inner experience and changes in their behavior when a relapse is starting. For some people, the changes may be so subtle at first that they may not seem worth noticing. For others, the changes are more pronounced and distressing. When people look back after a relapse, they often realize that these early changes, even the subtle ones, were signs that they were starting to have a relapse. These changes are called “early warning signs.”

Learning about early warning signs can help you predict and avoid a relapse.

Questions:

- What early warning signs did you notice before your initial episode of psychotic symptoms?

- If you have, did you notice any early warning signs of your relapses?
**Common Early Warning Signs Checklist**

Some early warning signs are quite common. Others are more unusual. The following chart lists some examples of the more common early warning signs. Please check off the examples that reflect an experience you have had prior to your initial psychotic symptoms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early warning sign</th>
<th>Individual Example</th>
<th>I experienced something like this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preoccupied about 1 or 2</td>
<td>“I was always thinking about the number 11. Even when someone was talking to me I couldn’t stop thinking about the number 11.”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>things</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling depressed or low</td>
<td>“I started to feel that I wasn’t a good person. I couldn’t take pleasure in anything. My mood was sliding down and down.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling tense or nervous</td>
<td>“Even going for a walk made me nervous. It seemed like there were accidents waiting to happen everywhere.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neglecting your appearance</td>
<td>“My family asked me to change my clothes, but I just didn’t feel like it even though I was wearing the same shirt for the past week.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trouble sleeping too much</td>
<td>“I was tired and wanted badly to sleep. But somehow I couldn’t fall asleep. I was exhausted all the time.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>or too little</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social withdrawal</td>
<td>“I only wanted to be alone. I even waited to eat dinner until my family was in bed.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling irritable</td>
<td>“Even the smallest things would irritate me. For instance, I would fly off the handle if my mom called to say she was going to be 15 minutes late. I had no patience.”</td>
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</tr>
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**Home Practice Options**

Between sessions, most people find it helpful to try putting some knowledge or skill into practice at home, so they can see how it works in their own situation. Here are some home practice options for this handout that you can review now or at the end of the session.

1. Review the Common Early Warning Signs Checklist with a family member or supporter. Ask if the person noticed any early warning signs before the onset of the psychotic symptoms. If so, what were they? Ask for the person’s suggestions about the timeline of the early warning signs if you are unsure.
What are common events or situations that can “trigger” relapses?

Some people can identify certain events or situations that led up to a psychotic episode. The events or situations that seemed to contribute can be thought of as “triggering” symptoms.

The following chart lists some examples of common triggers. Please check off the examples that reflect an experience you may have had that was associated with an increase in symptoms.

**Triggers of Relapse Checklist**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Descriptions of Triggers</th>
<th>I experienced something like this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Not getting enough rest or sleep.&quot;</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;An increase in stress (at home, work, school, etc).&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Drinking alcohol or taking drugs.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;A major change in my life (e.g. moving to a new apartment, starting school).&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Arguments or tension with family members, friends or significant others (e.g. boyfriend or girlfriend).&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Discontinuing any prescribed medication that I was on.&quot;</td>
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<td>Other:</td>
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<td>Other:</td>
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Once you have identified a situation that appeared to trigger symptoms, it is helpful to think about how you might handle the situation differently if it were to occur again.

- For example, if you noticed that drinking beers with your friends may have triggered the initial episode, you could plan some activities with them that do not involve drinking.

- If you noticed that being under stress might have triggered an initial episode, you could plan to use a specific relaxation technique, such as deep breathing, the next time you encounter another stressful situation.

Questions:

- Are you able to identify situations or events that triggered the initial psychotic episode?

- If so, what are they? What do you think you could do to handle things differently?

Check it out:

- Use the symptoms you identified as early warning signs from the Common Early Warning Signs table to identify possible triggers for relapse.

1. Make a list of early warning signs and possible triggers using the following table.

2. Fill in the last column of the table with a strategy for how you could have responded differently to the situation in the future.
## Anticipating Triggers Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Warning Sign</th>
<th>Possible Trigger</th>
<th>How I could have responded differently</th>
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### Home Practice Options

(This can be reviewed now or at the end of the session)

1. Review the Triggers of Relapse Checklist with a family member or supporter. Ask if that person remembers any triggers before your initial episode with psychotic symptoms. Review strategies you could use to respond differently to that situation. Ask the person if he or she has any suggestions.)
Summary Points for Introduction to Relapse Prevention Planning

- Psychiatric symptoms tend to vary over time. When symptoms become more severe, it is called a relapse.

- Relapses of psychosis are more likely to occur when people are under more stress, stop taking their medications or use alcohol or drugs.

- Early warning signs are the subtle changes in a person’s inner experience and behavior that signal that a relapse may be starting.

- Learning about early warning signs can help you predict and avoid a relapse.

- It can be helpful to identify certain situations or experiences called triggers that led to the initial episode of psychotic symptoms in the past to avoid a relapse in the future.
#2: Developing a Relapse Prevention Plan

- A key part of successful relapse prevention is acting quickly and thoughtfully at the “first sign” of a symptom flare-up. To do this, clients and their families usually benefit from developing a relapse prevention plan in advance.

- The overall goal of this plan is to respond to warning signs early and effectively in order to minimize the need for hospitalization.

How Can You Develop a Personal Relapse Prevention Plan?

- Throughout this module you have identified your early warning signs and triggers related to the onset of symptoms.

- Developing a personalized Relapse Prevention Plan helps you put all of this information together in a document that you and your family or other support person(s) can keep handy in case of an emergency.

- Your Relapse Prevention Plan includes the strategies that you find helpful because you are in charge of what is in your plan.

- Plans for preventing relapses are most effective if they contain the following:
  - Triggers
  - Early warning signs
  - What might help if you are experiencing an early warning sign
  - Who you would like to assist you and what you would like them to do
  - Who you would like to be contacted in an emergency

  In developing a Relapse Prevention Plan, you may find it helpful to consult with the supportive people in your life. Peers, practitioners, family members, and others can help make suggestions about possible steps to take if early warning signs appear. Support persons can also have a part in the plan itself, if you want them to. For example, you might ask family members to let you know if they notice early warning signs or ask them to help you reduce stress by taking walk with you. Of course, you make the final decision about what you want in your plan and whom you want involved.
Tips for Completing your Relapse Prevention Plan

- Be specific.
  - Describe early warning signs and triggers as clearly as possible. How would another person notice that you were experiencing an early warning sign or responding to a trigger? For example, if you are under stress, would you be more likely to spend more time alone in your room? If you had stopped taking your medication, would you be likely to act more restless and spend time pacing?

  - Describe the strategies that you find helpful when experiencing early warning signs.

- Identify people who you feel comfortable talking to when you are feeling stressed or experiencing early warning signs.

- Include more than 1 strategy you can use when you experience a trigger or early warning sign in case you are unable to use the first strategy.

- Share your Relapse Prevention Plan with all the supportive people in your life and family members. They can help you remember to use your coping strategies, offer suggestions about resources that may be helpful, and be more supportive in your recovery.

- Keep a copy of your Relapse Prevention Plan in a place you will remember and you can easily access. Put your plan in a place you will see it often, such as on the back of your closet door, so whenever you go to get your clothes in the morning you can review it. Give copies to everyone included in your plan. Access to your plan will make it easier to remember what to do when you are feeling stressed.

- The following page gives an example of a completed Relapse Prevention Plan.

  - Marco is 21 years old and currently he lives with his parents. About 6 months prior, he was having difficulty at college because he stopped going to classes and eventually refused to leave his room. He became very paranoid and had to withdraw from classes that semester. In the last 3 months he started seeing a Psychiatrist who is prescribing medications and talking to a therapist about returning to college. His
therapist suggested that having a Relapse Prevention Plan could help Marco when or if he notices any symptoms when he returns to his classes.

- In the beginning of making his plan, Marco and his therapist explored his early warning signs and triggers and Marco talked to his family about the signs that they noticed.

- After completing his plan, Marco reviewed it with his father and his Psychiatrist. He and his father discussed what to say when Marco is feeling irritable and how to say it.

- Marco keeps a copy of his plan on his nightstand and makes an effort to review it every night before going to bed.
Marco's Relapse Prevention Plan Example

What are the warning signs that I need to look out for (in the order in which they occurred)?
1. Irritability—conversations tend to turn into arguments.
2. Decreased need for sleep—not going to bed until 3-4am.
3. Thoughts that people didn’t like me and were always watching me.

What types of triggers/stressors do I need to watch out for?
1. Increased alcohol use—drinking 3-4 beers daily.
2. Increased stress at school—at the end of the semester when I have tests and papers.
3. Conflict with my parents; arguing about going to class every day.

What can I do if these things happen?

Some coping strategies I can use if I am experiencing an early warning sign:
1. If drinking more regularly, I can stop and call my sober friends to hang out.
2. If feeling irritable, I can take a walk around the neighborhood or call my friend James to talk about computers.
3. If not sleeping, I can exercise during the day and tell my doctor.
4. If having thoughts people don’t like me, I can check it out with my clinician or my dad.

Who I would like to assist me, and what I would like them to do:
1. Dad to tell me I am being irritable after I have calmed down. It is helpful if he can talk calmly and slowly.
2. James could talk to me about computers, take a walk or go rock climbing with me.
3. My clinician could help me find strategies to cope when I feel that people are watching me.
4. My doctor can help me determine if I need a change in my medications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alberto Smith (my dad)</td>
<td>(###) ###-####</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandy (my clinician)</td>
<td>(###) ###-####</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Martin (Psychiatrist)</td>
<td>(###) ###-####</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Putting Your Relapse Prevention Plan Together

Now that you have learned about relapses and how to prevent one, it’s time to develop your own plan. First you’ll review what you have learned about preventing relapses. Then you’ll walk through a series of steps that will help you to create your own relapse prevention plan.

Preparing for your Relapse Prevention Plan

In past sessions, you did several things to get ready to make a Relapse Prevention Plan. It is useful for you to review what you have learned.
1. You thought about your initial episode with psychotic symptoms and figured out the situations and events that seemed to contribute to it. These are called “triggers” to relapse.
2. You learned how to spot small changes in your behavior, thoughts, and feelings that warn you that a relapse may be starting. These are called “early warning signs of relapse.”
3. You learned to talk to someone you trust when you spot early warning signs and to take action to solve problems that may be causing early warning signs. You also learned to keep an eye on early warning signs until they improve.

Completing your Relapse Prevention Plan

1. Using the information you gathered about your early warning signs and triggers to complete the first 2 sections of your plan. Try to identify early warning signs and triggers/stressors from the initial psychotic episode.
2. Review the Early Warning Signs Spot Check worksheet to help you complete both the coping strategies box and the helpful strategies for the supporter’s box on the plan. Be specific when you suggest strategies for your supportive person. What would help you if you are experiencing an early warning sign or stressor?
3. Complete the emergency contact list with up to date information.
4. Share your Relapse Prevention Plan with your family and supporters.
# Relapse Prevention Plan

(Adapted from Birchwood et al., 2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the warning signs that I need to look out for (in the order in which they occurred)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What types of triggers/stressors do I need to watch out for?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### What can I do if these things happen?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Some coping strategies I can use if I am experiencing an early warning sign:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who I would like to assist me, and what I would like them to do:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Who would I like to be contacted in case of an emergency?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2.</td>
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</table>

Check it out:

- Sharing your Relapse Prevention Plan

- It can be very helpful to have staff members, family members, friends, and other supporters take part in making your Relapse Prevention Plan and carrying it out. Once you have everyone's suggestions for a Relapse Prevention Plan and have developed a final copy, it's important to share it with people and ask them whether they would be willing to play a specific part in carrying out the plan.

Steps for Sharing Your Relapse Prevention Plan

1. Think about how you would tell the person you want their help such as, "I would like your help in preventing relapses."

2. Give the person a copy of your Relapse Prevention Plan and ask him or her to read it.

3. Ask the person to be a part of the plan. Be specific about what you would like the person to do.

4. If the person agrees, thank him or her.

5. Practice sharing your plan with your clinician playing the part of your supporter or family member. Be sure that you consider the information you want the
person to know about relapse, early warning signs, and triggers and how the person can help you with your Relapse Prevention Plan.

Home Practice Options

(This can be reviewed now or at the end of the session)

1. Practice a strategy in your Relapse Prevention Plan with a family member or other supportive person. For example, you could tell your family member or other supporter how you would like him or her to approach you if they notice an early warning sign, and then ask them to practice it with you. Such as, do you prefer that they call you aside, that they stay calm, use a minimum of words? You could also practice carrying out a step of your relapse prevention plan with a family member or supporter. For example, do you plan to ask a family member to take a walk or do a relaxation technique with you when you are feeling stressed out? You could practice how you would approach that family member and practice doing one of those activities in advance.
Summary Points for Developing a Relapse Prevention Plan

- Developing a relapse prevention plan can help you identify steps to get help when you or your family notices early warning signs.

- *Friends, family members, practitioners and other supportive people can be helpful in developing your Relapse Prevention Plan and carrying it out.*