



A Slip is Not a Slide: Dealing with Relapse

In our efforts to grow and develop, and to stay resilient, we are bound to encounter situations where we revert back to patterns of belief or behaviour that we have been working to change because they were not healthy or adaptive. Such episodes are almost inevitable in any process of change; what matters is how we manage them and move on not the fact that they happen. The following tips may help:

- **Pay attention to yourself and your situation.** Notice if your patterns of thinking or behaviour is changing in a way that you don't like. If you know that a difficult situation is coming up, such as a stressor at home or at work plan for it. Recognize your own triggers or vulnerabilities, as well as your strengths and supports. Take things gradually and keep looking after yourself. If something stressful that you didn't expect comes up, use good problem solving, clear thinking and goal setting to manage it. Remember that everyone reacts to situations differently. You are the expert on you and the best person to look after yourself. Try to stay away from situations that may trigger the old behaviour.
- **Have a plan:** It is important to design your own relapse prevention plan. When the going gets tough, your relapse prevention plan is something you can rely on to help prevent a relapse. That is, the plan will help prevent stressful times from taking you back to square one. Remember: "A lapse is not a relapse". Just having such a plan can lessen the chances you'll need it.
- **Create a coping menu.** Look at some of the skills and resources you have available to you. What strategies have you tried that worked? What did you say to yourself that worked? What kind of problem-solving alternatives were most effective? What are the goals and values you adhere to? You may need new strategies for new situations but it's a good idea to start with things that worked for you.
- **Create an emergency plan.** It's a good idea to have a kind of first aid kit that you can use if things really do start to go off the rails. It is best to do this while things are okay; it's tough to do this amidst a crisis. If you are taking on too much give yourself a break and 'depress'. Don't take on new pressures. Create a list of people that you can talk to or call on (and do it). If you have been neglecting your personal health, family or community try to reconnect. If you've been seeing a medical or mental health professional, contact them.

Remember that resilient people can get stressed and slip, like everyone else when they face a difficult situation. The big difference is that they bounce back and don't get stuck. Consider challenges as opportunities not setbacks.

Great effort is required to arrest decay and restore vigour. One must exercise proper deliberation, plan carefully before making a move, and be alert in guarding against relapse following a renaissance.

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