

## 7 Relapse Prevention Strategies, Stephen Girard

A very high percentage of alcoholics and drug addicts relapse because they fail to create a solid relapse prevention plan. The following plan outlines much of what I did to prevent a relapse during my first two years of recovery (sober 32<sup>nd</sup> year now), despite wanting to drink and drug on a consistent basis.

1. **MAKE A DECISION TO GO TO ANY LENGTH:** This was a big game changer for me, because in doing so I was more receptive to following the basic suggestions (sponsor, meetings, commitments, steps) as a newcomer in early sobriety. In addition, making this decision is a commitment to yourself, and the table for the ensuing footwork necessary to stay clean and sober.
2. **ASK FOR HELP:** Humility is often described as asking for help when you need it. Learn to ask others to help you. The bottom line is you'll be helping them in the process.
3. **MAKE 7 RECOVERY CALLS A DAY:** Making seven recovery calls every day will help you to learn how to ask for help when you feel like using. I used to tell the person I was calling that I was making a practice call. A call is when you pick up the phone: no texting or voicemails.
4. **IF YOU FEEL LIKE USING OR DRINKING TELL SOMONE STRAIGHT AWAY:** This relates to the previous suggestion. My experience has been that when you tell someone that you feel like drinking or drugging, it takes the power out of it. Making a recovery call or going to a meeting and telling either the group or an individual that you want to use is very beneficial.
5. **BOOKEND YOUR DAY WITH MEETINGS:** Plan your day around meetings instead of meetings around your day. When I was in early recovery I went to morning and evening meetings. This provided structure and helped me to stay connected to the program.
6. **HALT: DON'T GET TOO HUNGRY, ANGRY, LONELY OR TIRED:** Taking care of your body will serve you well. If you are struggling in any of these areas ask for help. Practicing self-care will help keep you emotionally balanced and mentally sharp.
7. **GET COMMITMENTS AT MEETINGS:** I suggest a minimum of two commitments. Commitments will get you to meetings and will put you in the middle of the pack. It will also put you in a great position to meet people and expand your social network, which is very helpful and fun.

You have the power to develop and reinvent yourself. Change your playmates, playgrounds, and playthings, and stand up to your disease.