

Mapping Your Relapse

Deep Dive · The Recovery Files

Forensic Recovery — Understanding the Chain to Break the Cycle

Important: This is Forensic Work, Not Punishment

5 Mapping Stages · 3-4 Hours

This mapping process is about understanding the chain of events that led to relapse—not to assign blame, but to gain the insights needed to build stronger prevention. Approach this with self-compassion and honesty.

In this workbook

- Part 1 · Stage 1: Pre-Relapse Landscape Analysis
- Part 2 · Stage 2: Trigger Event Examination
- Part 3 · Stage 3: Decision Point Mapping
- Part 4 · Stage 4: Substance Use Event Analysis
- Part 5 · Stage 5: Prevention Plan Redesign

Each reading is followed by its check-in questions and exercises, in the same order as the app. Your scored results are shown in the app.

PART 1 OF 5 · PART

Stage 1: Pre-Relapse Landscape Analysis

Pre-Relapse Landscape Analysis

Pre-Relapse Landscape Analysis

1. In the days/weeks before the relapse, what warning signs were present? (Changes in mood, meeting attendance, honesty, sleep, stress, relationships, etc.)

2. What vulnerabilities existed? (Unresolved resentments, untreated mental health, relationship conflict, financial stress, physical illness, etc.)

3. What recovery practices had weakened or stopped? (Meetings, sponsor contact, step work, prayer/meditation, self-care, etc.)

4. What was your emotional state? Were you experiencing HALT (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired)? Something else?

5. Looking back, can you identify the point where you were most vulnerable—before the actual relapse occurred? What was happening?

6. What could have interrupted the trajectory at this stage? What intervention, connection, or awareness was missing?

PART 2 OF 5 · PART

Stage 2: Trigger Event Examination

Trigger Event Examination

Trigger Event Examination

1. What specific event, emotion, or circumstance immediately preceded the decision to use? Be as detailed as possible.

2. Was this trigger predictable (a known vulnerability) or unexpected? Had you prepared for this type of trigger?

3. How did you interpret or make meaning of the trigger in the moment? What story did you tell yourself about it?

4. What emotions were activated? (Anger, sadness, fear, shame, loneliness, emptiness, boredom, etc.)

5. What coping mechanisms did you try before using, if any? Why didn't they work?

6. If you could go back to the moment just before the trigger, what would you need to navigate it differently?

PART 3 OF 5 · PART

Stage 3: Decision Point Mapping

Decision Point Mapping

Decision Point Mapping

1. What was the first moment you considered using? What was the exact thought?

2. What internal dialogue happened between the first thought and the actual use? Write the conversation your mind had with itself.

3. What rationalizations did you use? ("Just this once," "I deserve this," "It doesn't matter," "Nobody will know," etc.)

4. Were there moments where you almost chose differently? What was happening in those moments?

5. What would have needed to be different—internally or externally—for you to choose recovery instead of use in that moment?

6. Looking back, can you identify the exact decision point where the relapse became inevitable? Or were there multiple points where you could have changed course?

PART 4 OF 5 · PART

Stage 4: Substance Use Event Analysis

Substance Use Event Analysis

Substance Use Event Analysis

1. What substance(s) did you use? How much? Over what period of time?

2. What was the experience like during the use? (Relief, escape, numbness, pleasure, disappointment, etc.)

3. What happened immediately after? (Physically, emotionally, mentally, relationally)

4. What consequences occurred or began to unfold? (Immediate and anticipated)

5. When did you realize what had happened? What was that moment like?

6. What ended the use episode? What brought you back to awareness and the decision to stop?

PART 5 OF 5 · PART

Stage 5: Prevention Plan Redesign

Prevention Plan Redesign

Prevention Plan Redesign

1. Based on the pre-relapse landscape analysis, what specific warning signs will you now monitor more closely?

2. Based on the trigger event, what vulnerabilities or situations will you now prepare for differently?

3. Based on the decision point analysis, what mental/emotional "circuit breakers" will you install to interrupt future rationalizations?

4. What specific changes will you make to your daily recovery practice to address the weaknesses revealed by this mapping?

5. Who will you include in your accountability system, and how will they help monitor for warning signs?

6. If you face a similar situation again, what will you do instead? Create a concrete alternative plan.

7. What is your commitment to yourself about returning to recovery? What does re-engagement look like specifically?

8. How will you use this relapse as a teaching moment in your recovery rather than a source of ongoing shame?
