

Relapse Pattern Timeline Mapping Board

Map warning signs, engagement patterns & relapse signatures

Printable worksheet · 7 parts

Name _____ Date _____

The Recovery Files

Map your unique recovery journey to identify patterns, warning signs, and pivotal moments. Understanding where and when you begin to pull back is your strongest defense against relapse.

The Recovery Files

This tool is designed for use alongside professional treatment and is not a substitute for clinical care.

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Overview

Recovery isn't a straight line — it's a landscape of engagement, disengagement, growth, and vulnerability. This tool helps you map your unique recovery journey to identify the patterns, warning signs, and pivotal moments that shape your path.

Sobriety Periods

Life Events Mapped

Engagement Ratings

Reflections Written

Understanding the Relapse Process

Relapse is not an event — it's a process that unfolds over days, weeks, or even months before a substance is ever picked up. Understanding this process means recognizing that recovery requires ongoing vigilance, honest self-assessment, and the humility to stay connected to support.

Emotional Relapse

Bottling emotions, isolating, skipping meetings, poor self-care. You're not thinking about using, but your emotions and behaviors are setting the stage.

Mental Relapse

Romanticizing past use, thinking about people/places/things, bargaining, planning relapse. Part of you wants to use, part doesn't.

Physical Relapse

The act of using. Once mental relapse is in full swing without intervention, physical relapse becomes increasingly difficult to prevent.

How to Use This Tool

1. Recovery Timeline — Map your sobriety periods and significant life events chronologically.
2. Engagement Map — Rate your level of engagement across 8 recovery dimensions for different time periods.
3. Warning Signs Inventory — Identify which cognitive, behavioral, and emotional warning signs you've experienced.
4. Character Prompts — Deep reflection questions organized by theme: denial, rationalization, complacency, character defects, and isolation.
5. Pattern Analysis — Identify the "relapse signature" unique to you.
6. Action Plan — Synthesize your insights into a concrete, personalized relapse prevention strategy.

Clinical Note: This tool is designed for use in individual counseling, group therapy, or self-guided reflection. It is not a substitute for professional treatment. If you are at risk of relapse, please call SAMHSA: 1-800-662-4357 or 988.

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Recovery Timeline

Sobriety Periods

Map each period of sobriety — including what ended it and what was happening in your life

No sobriety periods added yet. Click "Add Period" to begin mapping your recovery timeline.

Life Events & Stressors

Map significant events that impacted your recovery — both stressors and milestones

No life events mapped yet. Add stressors, milestones, and pivotal moments from your recovery journey.

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Engagement Map

Recovery Engagement Map

For each recovery dimension, rate your level of engagement during different periods. Look for which dimensions decline first — these are your personal early warning indicators.

5 = Fully Engaged

4 = Mostly Engaged

3 = Going Through Motions

2 = Pulling Back

1 = Disengaged

☐ First 90 Days ☐ Months 3-6 ☐ Months 6-12 ☐ Year 1-2 ☐ 2+ Years ☐ Pre-Relapse ☐ Current

Meeting Attendance

Frequency and quality of recovery meeting participation

Step Work

Active engagement with the 12-step process

Sponsorship Contact

Frequency and depth of sponsor communication

Home Group Commitment

Consistency with home group responsibilities

Honesty & Transparency

Willingness to be truthful with self and others

Self-Care & Boundaries

Maintaining healthy routines, sleep, nutrition, boundaries

Healthy Relationships

Quality of connections and willingness to be vulnerable

Emotional Awareness

Ability to identify, process, and express feelings

Engagement Heatmap Overview

Blue = engaged, red/orange = disengaging. Look for your personal patterns.

First 90 Days

Months 3-6

Months 6-12

Year 1-2

2+ Years

Pre-Relapse

Current

Meeting

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Step

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Sponsorship

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Honesty

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Warning Signs

Relapse Warning Signs Inventory

Check the warning signs you've experienced in your recovery. For each, note when it first appeared and what was happening in your life at that time.

Cognitive Warning Signs (Thinking)



Behavioral Warning Signs (Actions)



Emotional Warning Signs (Feelings)



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Character Prompts

Character & Pattern Reflection Prompts

These deep-dive questions help you examine the character patterns, defense mechanisms, and blind spots that often precede relapse. Approach each with radical honesty.

☐ Denial ☐ Rationalization ☐ Complacency ☐ Character Defects ☐ Isolation

Q1.What truths about my substance use am I currently unwilling to face?

Q2.Who in my life has expressed concerns that I've dismissed or minimized?

Q3.What evidence of a problem have I explained away or rationalized?

Q4.In what areas of my life am I telling myself "it's not that bad"?

Q5.What would I say to a friend showing the same patterns I'm showing?

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Pattern Analysis

Period-by-Period Pattern Analysis

Select a recovery period to answer targeted questions about what was happening during that phase. This helps you identify your unique "relapse signature."

☐ First 30 Days ☐ Months 1-3 ☐ Months 3-6 ☐ Months 6-12 ☐ Year 1-2 ☐ 2+ Years

My Relapse Signature — Pattern Synthesis

Based on everything you've mapped — describe your personal "relapse signature." What happens first? What follows? What are the dominoes that fall before you pick up?

Example: "My pattern starts with skipping my morning meditation, then I stop calling my sponsor. Within 2-3 weeks I'm making excuses to skip meetings. I start telling myself I've got this figured out. Then a stressor hits and I have no support system in place..." // Write your pattern here:

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Action Plan

Personal Relapse Prevention Action Plan

Now that you've identified your patterns, it's time to build your defense. Answer each section to create a personalized, actionable relapse prevention strategy based on YOUR unique warning signs.

My Earliest Warning Signs

Based on your pattern analysis, what are the FIRST signs that your recovery is slipping? List 3-5 specific, observable behaviors or thoughts that signal the beginning of your relapse pattern.

My Non-Negotiable Recovery Actions

What are the recovery practices that you CANNOT afford to let slip, no matter what? These are your bedrock — the things that, when maintained, keep everything else in place.

My Accountability Structure

Who will you tell about your warning signs? Who has permission to call you out? How will you maintain transparency? List specific people and specific arrangements.

My Stress Response Plan

When a major stressor hits (and it will), what will you do INSTEAD of pulling back from recovery? Write specific, concrete actions — not vague intentions.

My Complacency Prevention Strategy

How will you keep your recovery fresh and urgent when things are going well? What practices will prevent the "I've got this figured out" mindset?

My Emergency Intervention Plan

If you find yourself in active craving or pre-relapse — the "just one won't hurt" moment — what is your step-by-step emergency plan? Be specific: who do you call, what do you do, where do you go.

My Recovery Commitment Statement

Write a statement to yourself — about why your recovery matters, what you've learned from mapping these patterns, and what you commit to doing differently. This is your anchor. Read it when the rationalizations start.

Dear Me, // I am writing this to remind you of what you know to be true when the disease tries to convince you otherwise...

Crisis Resources

SAMHSA National Helpline: 1-800-662-4357 (Free, Confidential, 24/7)

Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Call or text 988

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