

Renaissance Ranch Ogden

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The road to recovery from drug and alcohol addiction is often a long and difficult one. The path sometimes takes a few twists and turns before finally heading in the direction you really want to go. Relapse isn't always a part of recovery, but it certainly can be – and is – for many addicts. Relapse doesn't mean you've failed. It simply means you're human, and you're trying. Someone once said "Recovery is a journey between two stations. One station represents total chaos, and the other represents total serenity. What is important is not where you are, but what direction you are facing," and here at Renaissance Ranch, we believe this wholeheartedly. We help point you in the right direction so you can see your way clearly down the road to recovery from addiction.

By following the relapse prevention tips below, you'll be prepared for anything along the way. At our outpatient alcohol treatment center in Ogden, we have skilled and experienced professionals who can recognize the signs of an impending relapse and help you or your loved one maintain sobriety.

What Is a Relapse?

When someone who has struggled with substance abuse has achieved some period of sobriety and then returned to active use. Many people who are in early recovery experience at least one relapse while learning healthier, more sustainable habits. It's important to continue or return to treatment and learn new patterns and coping mechanisms.

Stages of Relapse

Relapse is far more complicated than the act of returning to drug or alcohol use. The process of relapse may start long before the physical act of using takes place.

Stages of relapse include:

- **Emotional relapse:** Use doesn't occur during this stage. Emotional relapse sets you up for the potential to use in the future. Signs of emotional relapse are congruent with post-acute withdrawal and may include mood swings, isolation, refusal to ask for help, poor self-care, and anxiety.
- **Mental relapse:** In this stage, thoughts like, "I could have a drink and then get right back on track," or "I could use a night out with my old friends," start to creep up. While active use isn't happening yet, thoughts are headed in that direction.
- **Physical relapse:** Drinking or drug use occurs here, after emotional and mental relapse. Relapse and recovery go hand and hand for some, but it doesn't have to be this way for you. The good news: relapse recovery is possible.

Common Relapse Triggers

A relapse doesn't always start with consuming drugs or alcohol. Typically, there are events or emotions known as triggers that precede drug or alcohol use. Some triggers are internal, while others are related to external events. **Stress, for instance, is a common internal relapse trigger.** Suppose an individual with addiction is used to coping with those feelings through drug use. In that case, it can be difficult to avoid returning to that behavior until new coping mechanisms are in place.

Common triggers of relapse are not always outwardly negative emotions or events. Encountering people or places that were connected to previous addictive behavior can trigger a relapse.



Relapse Prevention Strategies

Recognize the Signs of a Possible Relapse

Recognizing the signs of a relapse is the first step in preventing one. Sometimes, there is no warning that a relapse is imminent. However, researchers have identified many signs and steps that could be indicators of a coming relapse. ***Someone whose attitude toward treatment changes may be in danger of a relapse.*** For instance, they might decide that participating in their recovery program is not as important as it previously was. Mood swings can also be a sign of danger of a relapse. Often, ***when someone is faced with new outside stressors that are hard to handle,*** they will exhibit anger, depression, or other emotions that can be a sign of danger. ***A loss of structure can be a precursor to a relapse.*** For instance, if someone in treatment loses their job, a place to live, or other supports, a relapse may follow.

Build a Solid Support Network and USE IT

A successful recovery includes a group of family and friends you can count on for support. This group doesn't have to be large, but it must be filled with people who love you and whom you trust. You never know when your cravings will strike, and even if they hit in the wee hours of the morning, you should be able to call someone from your support network to talk them through. Trust that when someone says, "Call me anytime you need me," they mean it. Don't be afraid to do just that anytime you need to because at that moment, getting you safely to the other side of your craving is the most important thing in the world.

H.A.L.T. Your Relapse Before It Begins

Experiencing certain feelings can trigger bad behaviors. Feeling hungry, angry, lonely or tired (H.A.L.T.) can cause you to turn to the substances that once made you feel good. Minding these is key to staying sober, and they spell out the acronym H.A.L.T.

- **Hungry** – An empty stomach is a powerful ally for relapse. Letting yourself get too hungry can intensify cravings and lower your ability to withstand them.
- **Angry** – If you get upset, that feeling is often followed by a wave of "Forget this, forget everything. I don't care." In this state, the escapism of using can seem attractive, though it will only make everything worse. Exercise or meditation can help you either redirect or let go of anger.
- **Lonely** – Isolating is the hallmark behavior of the addict. The more time you spend alone, the further you get away from a healthy and sustainable recovery. Use your network!
- **Tired** – Our patience and resiliency are at their lowest when we are exhausted. Be attuned if you're more irritable or short-tempered than usual. Chances are good, a little extra rest will do you a world of good.

Beware of these H.A.L.T. feelings and know how to deal with them. Taking care of yourself, eating right, exercising and making new friends are all ways to help you feel more productive and have a better outlook on life.

Make Alternate Plans During Times You Are Most Likely to Use

If you are more likely to use during certain times, make a point to plan something else to keep your mind and body busy during those times. Go to the gym, head to the movie theater or simply express your feelings in your journal. Anything you can do that keeps you from stressing over not using and keeps you busy is perfect.

Use Positive Affirmations to Drown Out Self-Doubt

Practicing *positive affirmations is a great way to retrain your brain to replace negative thoughts with positive ones*. Look in the mirror and tell yourself how good you are, how blessed you are and how strong you are. Here are a few positive affirmations we especially love.

- I AM worth my own self-love and self-acceptance.
- I AM capable of doing anything I put effort into.
- My life matters.
- My health is an investment in my life.
- I AM a rockstar!

Success Happens One Day at a Time

Don't look at the big picture. Take your recovery one day at a time and deal with the emotions happening in the here and now.

How to Get Back on Track After a Relapse

Relapsing is not a failure of your efforts or your recovery process, and it doesn't mean you have to start all over again. Keep in mind that you have already made enormous progress. Here are some relapse prevention tips to help you move on with your recovery after a relapse:

1. Learn from the relapse. — Examine what you think led to your choice to use drugs or alcohol during your recovery. Were you upset, experiencing depression, peer pressure, or some other difficulties. Ask for help in minimizing your triggers.
2. Go to a group support meeting. — Having a support system can make it easier to stay on track. Being among supportive people can help you recommit to maintaining your recovery and build mutually helpful relationships.
3. Avoid your triggers. — Be creative in avoiding triggers that challenge your ability to stay sober, including certain places, people, activities, etc. Work on healthy ways to manage emotional reactions. This may seem difficult, but group support can help a lot.
4. Adopt new pastimes. — Find new ways to fill your time, vs. being alone too much with your thoughts. Pick up some new hobbies. Maybe, try an exercise program, volunteering, crafts, cooking, or whatever you enjoy.

5. Reenter treatment. — Treatment helped you overcome your habit of drug abuse, and it can help you recommit to maintaining your recovery. Reentering treatment offers you new opportunities to further develop the skills and tools needed for long-term recovery.

Five Rules of Recovery

Relapse prevention isn't as simple as ending your relationship with drugs and alcohol. Preventing relapse requires taking an active role in your recovery. Here, we'll explore the five rules of recovery that can help you stay on track, even when temptations arise.

Change Your Life

Successful, long-term recovery requires the creation of a life in which it's easier to stay away from your substance of choice.

Be Completely Honest

Addiction begets lying. When you're working on your recovery, complete honesty is key. When you find yourself telling fibs, or thinking about telling a "harmless" lie, you're walking a dangerous line.

Ask For Help

Many people who struggle with addiction believe that they can overcome the problem on their own. While this may be true in rare cases, going through recovery alone is extremely difficult, and in most cases, impossible. Working your program or utilizing an outpatient drug treatment center can be life-saving.

Practice Self-Care

For most people, using drugs and/or alcohol is a way to reward themselves, or to relax and unwind. When you practice proper self-care, you can meet these needs without using them. Self-care is not selfish. When you take care of yourself, you're able to show up for others in a way that wasn't possible when you were using.

Don't Bend the Rules

If you find yourself searching for loopholes within the rules of recovery, you're dangerously close to relapse. Making secret deals with yourself that you'll be able to use later in life – once you have things "under control" – is a sign that you need to reach out for support immediately.

Aftercare for Relapse Prevention

Maintaining recovery from drug addiction is generally easier for people who continue to practice, strengthen, and build on the important skills they develop in treatment. So, take advantage of aftercare resources that foster continued growth. Engagement in a support

group helps participants keep perspective, maintain balance, learn self-appreciation, communicate, and share mutual support with others. These are all essentials for living one's best life after leaving drug or alcohol abuse in the past.

Contact Renaissance Ranch Ogden for Help with a Relapse Prevention Plan in Arizona

Addiction to drugs and alcohol is powerful. Getting past the physical and mental dependency is tough, and for some, relapse happens despite their best intentions. While relapse certainly isn't a deal breaker, taking that step backward can make moving forward again more difficult. If you can continue moving forward in your recovery and avoid relapse altogether, you will reach your goals faster and with less effort.

When you're ready to kick your addiction to drugs or alcohol, Renaissance Ranch in Ogden, Utah can help. We use a multi-systemic approach to break the addiction cycle. Our program combines medical and psychological treatment, individual and/or group therapy, spiritual guidance, vocational coaching and your own dedication to becoming sober for a more successful recovery.

If you would like more information about our addiction recovery program, please contact us today.

You do not have to cope with recovery alone. If you or someone you love is struggling with alcoholism, drug addiction, or facing relapse get in touch. We can discuss treatment options and embark on a path toward recovery.
