A Checklist of Symptoms Leading to Relapse

While the individual must maintain the disciplines that insure sobriety, there are ways in which others can help. Nearly every person close to the alcoholic/addict is able to recognize behavior changes that indicate a return to the old ways of thinking. Often these individuals and fellow AA/NA members have tried to warn the subject, who by now may not be willing to be told; they may consider it nagging or a violation of their privacy. There are many danger signs. Most alcoholics/addicts, if approached properly, would be willing to go over an inventory of symptoms periodically with a spouse or other confidant. If the symptoms are caught early enough and recognized, the alcoholic/addict will usually try to change their thinking, to get “back on the beam” again. A weekly inventory of symptoms might prevent some relapses. This added discipline is one which many alcoholics/addicts seem willing to try. Following is a list of common symptoms leading to “dry drunk” to possible relapse – or to what AA/NA commonly calls “stinking thinking.”

1. **EXHAUSTION.** Allowing yourself to become overly tired or in poor health. Some alcoholics/addicts are also prone to work addictions – perhaps in a hurry to make up for lost time. Good health and enough rest are important. If you feel well you are most apt to think well. Feel poorly and your thinking is apt to deteriorate. Feel bad enough and you might begin thinking a drink or hit couldn’t make it any worse.

2. **DISHONESTY.** This begins with a pattern of unnecessary little lies and deceipts with fellow workers, friends and family. Then come the important lies to yourself. This is called rationalizing – making excuses for not doing what you do not want to do, or for doing what you know you should not do.

3. **IMPATIENCE.** Things are not happening fast enough. Or, others are not doing what they should or what you want them to do.

4. **ARGUMENTATIVENESS.** Arguing small and ridiculous points of view indicates a need to always be right. “Why don’t you be reasonable and agree with me?” Looking for an excuse to drink or use.

5. **DEPRESSION.** Unreasonable and unaccountable despair may occur in cycles and should be dealt with – talked about.

6. **FRUSTRATION.** At people and also because things may not be going your way. Remember – everything is not going to be just the way you want.

7. **SELF-PITY.** “Why do these things happen to me?” “Why must I be an alcoholic/addict?” “Nobody appreciates all I am doing!” (for them?) “Nobody understands...”

8. **COCKINESS.** Got it made – no longer fear alcoholism/addiction – going into using situations to prove to others you have no problem. Do this too often and it will wear down your defenses.

9. **COMPLACENCY.** “Drinking/using was the furthest thing from my mind.” Not drinking/using was no longer a conscious though either. It is dangerous to let up on disciplines because everything is going well. Always to have a little fear is a good thing. More relapses occur when things are going well than otherwise.
10. EXPECTING TOO MUCH FROM OTHERS. “I’ve changed, why hasn’t everyone else?” It’s a plus if they do – but it is still your problem if they do not. They many not trust you yet, may still be looking for further proof. You cannot expect others to change their lifestyle just because you have.

11. LETTING UP ON DISCIPLINES. Prayer, meditation, daily inventory, meeting attendance – this can stem either from complacency or boredom. You cannot afford to be bored with your program; the cost of relapse is always too great.

12. USE OF MOOD ALTERING CHEMICALS. You may feel the need to ease things with a pill, and your doctor may go along with you. You may never have had a problem with chemicals other than alcohol, but you can easily lose sobriety starting this way – about the most subtle way to have a relapse. Remember you will be cheating! The reverse of this is true for a drug addict who begins to drink.

13. WANTING TOO MUCH. Do not set goals you cannot reach with normal effort. Do not expect too much. It’s always great when good thing you were not expecting happen. You will get what you are entitled to as long as you do your best, but maybe not as soon as you think you should. “Happiness is not having what you want, but wanting what you have.”

14. FORGETTING GRATITUDE. You may be looking negatively on your life; concentrating on problems that still are not totally corrected. Nobody wants to be a Pollyanna, but it is good to remember where you started from, and how much better life is sober!

15. “IT CAN’T HAPPEN TO ME.” This is dangerous thinking. Almost anything can happen to you and is more likely to if you get careless. Remember, you have a progressive disease and you will be in worse shape if you relapse.

16. OMNIPOTENCE. This is a feeling that results from a combination of many of the above. You now have all the answers for yourself and others. No one can tell you anything. You ignore suggestions or advice from others. Relapse if probably imminent unless drastic change takes place.