

## **Create Your Own Personal Recovery Plan**

by Rita Milius

If you are serious about recovery, you will at some point come to realize that you need a *plan* in order to make it happen. Simply *wanting* to be sober, *intending* to change, and *trying* to make positive adjustments in your habits is not enough. Just like any other important endeavor, to truly be successful, you need to know where you are going and how you will get there....in very specific detail. Perhaps strategic planning has not been a high priority item on your agenda. But planning *is* essential for successful long-term recovery. Creating a Personal Recovery Plan and formalizing it in writing has many benefits.

### **Why Write a *Personal Recovery Plan*?**

Creating a personal, written recovery plan will definitely increase your likelihood for a successful recovery. To start with, your own *Personal Recovery Plan* will give you a blueprint to follow that is individualized and suited to address *your* unique needs. It will provide a structure, within which you can organize and catalogue ideas and strategies that are most likely to work for *you* to keep you on track with your goals. It can be all too

easy to forget or avoid commitments if they are merely ideas in your head, especially during times of high stress or anxiety. If your motivation wanes, or if you find yourself facing temptation, you can bolster your resolve by reviewing your Plan and reminding yourself of both your commitments and your reasons for making these commitments.

**Your Personal Recovery Plan will help you:**

- Identify and stay focused on your recovery goals
- Identify and stay focused on your motivations (personal wellness, family, etc.)
- Specify the steps that you are both *willing* and *able* to take in order to reach those goals
- Manage both your daily objectives and your longer-term goals
- Track your ongoing progress over time
- Identify personal triggers and ways you can avoid or manage them

**Getting Started with Your Personal Recovery Plan**

Before you begin to write out a plan of action for your recovery, you'll need to first evaluate your current status, determine what your major needs are, and determine what goals you wish to pursue. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

**1. What are my most compelling *motivations* for seeking recovery at this time?** Am I trying to avoid losing important people and things in my life....my job, my family, my friends? Do I want to feel better about myself, to be proud of myself and my behaviors? Do I want to physically feel better and become healthier? Any other reasons?

**2. What *challenges* will probably present the biggest barriers to my success?** Are my current coping skills inadequate? Do I need to improve them? Do I have support systems in place (family friends, support groups) for times when I may need assistance or encouragement? Do I have legal or financial issues that I need to address?

**3. Can I *commit* to following the steps I will create, so that I can change my life?** Can I honestly say that I am ready to make this major, positive change in my life, of embracing recovery? Am willing to do whatever it takes to make my recovery happen?

If you can identify your *motivations*, understand your *challenges* and recognize that the *outcome will be worth the effort*, you will be ready to create your Personal Recovery Plan!

### **Parts of Your Personal Recovery Plan**

When you are ready to write your Plan, make lists of the elements that you will need to address. List:

- Personal triggers (places, circumstances, people) you'll need to avoid

- Specific strategies for addressing each identified trigger situation
- Ways to improve self-care (relaxation strategies, socialization opportunities, health and wellness strategies etc.)
- Coping skills you'll need to learn or to improve (anger management, emotional awareness, self-regulation etc.)
- Relapse prevention strategies (attending counseling, going to support group meetings, getting a sponsor, connecting with a "sober buddy", etc.)

### **Writing Your Personal Recovery Plan**

You can create your written plan any way that feels most natural to you. In general, you'll be making "promises" to yourself about the positive changes that you plan to implement, in order to cease substance use and remain abstinent. You will want to detail specific steps that you will take to address each problem or issue that is a threat to your sobriety. In addition, you may also want to commit to certain consequences that you will be willing to incur, should you fail to live up to your promises.

Below is a sample template for a Personal Recovery Plan.

## Personal Recovery Plan

***Personal triggers that put me at risk for using (people, places, circumstances) to avoid:***

*Examples: Going to a bar after work; Having a beer while watching TV.*

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***How I will address each trigger:***

*Examples: Driving straight home from work; Drinking soda or juice while watching TV.*

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***Ways I will increase my self-care:***

*Examples: Set a regular bedtime and get 8 hours of sleep each night; Adjust my diet to include more healthy foods and snacks.*

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***Coping skills I will learn or improve and how I will do this:***

*Examples: Learn meditation by taking a class; Become more aware of my feelings by taking part in online emotional support groups.*

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***My Relapse Prevention Strategies:***

*Examples: Keep in contact with my sponsor, especially when I am feeling vulnerable; Regularly attend 12-Step meetings.*

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***Additional commitments that will help me stick to my Recovery Plan:***

*Example: I commit to being clean and sober for my son's upcoming graduation.*

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**Consequences that I agree to accept should I break any of the above promises:**

*Example: I accept that I will no longer be able to live at home if I do not keep the commitments I have made to attend 12 Step meetings regularly and maintain contact with my sponsor.*

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By creating a written document like this, outlining *specific steps* that you commit to, you “formalize” your recovery plans and therefore give more weight to your promises. It will be even better if you choose to share your Personal Recovery Plan with a loved one and sign it as a tangible sign of your pledge to keep your promises.