

NEBRASKA LICENSEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

A SERVICE OF BEST CARE EAP

ON THE ROAD OF RECOVERY – RELAPSE PREVENTION

Relapse prevention is essential to a successful recovery for alcoholics and drug addicts. Terrence Gorski, author of Staying Sober: A Guide for Relapse Prevention, states that the relapse process “has as much to do with how an individual is functioning as it does with whether or not that person is using alcohol or drugs.” Relapse is a complex process. It is not just the return to active alcohol or drug use. Relapse begins prior to the actual abuse of alcohol or drugs and is caused by unhealthy thinking and a return to unhealthy values, attitudes, choices and behavioral responses. Unhealthy thinking includes such internal thoughts as “I’m not really an alcoholic,” “I can control myself and my use;” and “I can use alcohol because I just have a problem with drugs.”

Signs of relapse thinking, attitudes and behavior include:

Discontinuing treatment/support group attendance	Difficulty managing feelings
Denial, defensiveness and anger	Relationship Conflicts
Negativity and self-pity	Avoidance or withdrawal
Sadness/grief	Job difficulties/practice problems
	Other compulsive and/or impulsive behaviors

If these relapse warning signs occur during the recovery process, relapse can be averted by taking the following steps:

1. Recommitment to working the 12-step recovery program.
2. Maintaining regular aftercare/continuing care group and 12-step meeting attendance and active participation in the recovery process.
3. Obtaining counseling from a qualified professional alcohol/drug addiction relapse prevention counselor.
4. Strengthening your emotional support system and increasing the involvement of others in your recovery process.
5. Consulting with NE LAP staff and developing an up to date relapse prevention plan.

Relapse can be prevented by understanding, accepting, and recognizing the unhealthy thinking of addiction, monitoring one’s own attitude and choices, and staying actively involved in a healthy recovery program.

Health care professionals with alcoholism or drug addiction have higher than average rates of abstinence and successful recovery when compared to the general population. It is very important to return to practice and be productive at work again. There is a lot at stake and there is motivation to reestablish a healthy lifestyle. However, sound relapse prevention practices are still needed to ensure a health care professional does not succumb to the lure of using alcohol or drugs again. There is too much to lose if there is a fall off the road to recovery.

If you are a licensed health service professional wanting more information about alcohol/drug abuse or addiction treatment, please contact the NE LAP at (800) 851-2336 or (402) 8055 or visit our web site at www.lapne.org. If you would like to schedule an educational presentation on alcohol/drug addiction and the health service professional, please ask for Judi Leibrock, NE LAP Coordinator.