



## RELAPSE PREVENTION

Recovery from an eating disorder, even when an individual is fully committed to recovery, can be challenging. Slips, lapses and/or relapses can all be a part of the experience. As the adage goes, “The path to recovery is not linear.” It is often three steps forward and two steps back. With the learning and relearning of new skills, however, full recovery is possible.

### TERMS

#### Slip

An unplanned, one-time deviation from the treatment plan (e.g., having ED thoughts/urges, engaging in an ED behavior). The individual is able to get back on track with recovery.

#### Lapse

A more significant engagement in ED thoughts and behaviors over a period of time. The individual is still able to get back on track with recovery.

#### Relapse

A repetitive pattern of ED thoughts and behaviors with an inability to get back on track. This often meets full criteria for an eating disorder again.



### Relapse Prevention Plan

Thinking through and making plans to address the challenges of recovery in the home environment is a part of a relapse prevention plan. There are various names for this plan, such as wellness plan and relapse reliance plan. Relapse prevention planning focuses on:

- Scheduling time to purchase food, to prepare meals, to eat meals and snacks
- Resting well and maintaining a sleep schedule
- Creating and maintaining a balanced work-life schedule
- Reducing stress
- Using newly acquired skills to manage conflict and struggles

\*Bartley & Streno, 2020

## OUTPATIENT TREATMENT TEAM

Securing an outpatient treatment team prior to discharge can make for a seamless, more successful transition to daily living by maintaining the gains of treatment and integrating them into daily life. Along with a robust aftercare plan, your outpatient treatment team can also expect summaries and recommendations from the Eating Recovery Center. Don't delay in seeking outpatient providers who offer specialized care in the treatment of eating disorders. A treatment team typically consists of:



Therapist



Registered Dietitian



Physician



Psychiatrist

## SUPPORT YOUR LOVED ONE

Collaborating with your loved one as they work with their treatment team and as they follow their relapse prevention plan is key in supporting their recovery. Keep in mind that your loved one will be discharging from a higher level of care into what can be called a "hostile recovery environment." We live in a culture of "do more, get more, be more." The pace and expectations can make it very difficult for your loved one to prioritize the processes and tasks of recovery once they return home, as doing so requires them to act and behave differently from their peers and social groups. Ways to stay supportive include:

- **Reviewing a list of strategies that have been helpful to recovery so far.**  
Examples: meal planning, meal scheduling, self-care activities, medication.
- **Identifying potential triggers that could increase the likelihood of a lapse and/or relapse.**  
Examples: social situations, travel, photos, scales, sudden change in plans, major life changes such as school, new beginnings and endings at work or at home.
- **Preparing for triggers by discussing healthy responses to these situations.**  
Example: Identifying coping strategies specific to situations that could be used rather than reverting to eating disorder behaviors.
- **Reminding your loved one that slips, lapses and/or relapses are part of the recovery process.**
- **Leaning on your own support network that includes the treatment team and trusted family and friends.**

“The words  
I love to hear  
from my sister are...  
'I hear you  
and I see you'  
and 'What can we do  
today to move  
through this?'”

– Lydia, ERC Program Alumna

For additional resources, visit [EatingRecovery.com/FamilyFriendsSeries](https://EatingRecovery.com/FamilyFriendsSeries)

For more information on this topic or if you have questions about this topic, please email [Resources@ERCPATHLIGHT.COM](mailto:Resources@ERCPATHLIGHT.COM)