

## GDC Session #11

### Coping With High-Risk Situations

#### Objectives of Session

1. Identify common high-risk situations or factors associated with relapse to cocaine addiction.
2. Help group members anticipate dangerous situations by identifying their personal relapse risk factors.
3. Help members begin to develop coping strategies to manage their high-risk situations to reduce the chances of relapse.

#### Methods/Points for Group Discussion

1. Use a discussion format to review the clients' answers to the handouts and the educational material for this session. Write the major points on a chalkboard or flip chart, if desired.
2. Ask group members to share their own experiences related to this material, as it is reviewed.
3. Research studies and clinical experience show that there are some fairly common and predictably dangerous situations or relapse risk factors associated with addiction.
4. Ask the group members to state what they think are the most common relapse dangers they face in their recovery.
5. Review the most common categories of relapse dangers that we know about from clinical work and research. These relapse dangers include:
  - Upsetting or negative emotional states (anger, anxiety, boredom, depression, guilt, loneliness, etc.).
  - Social pressures to get high or use chemicals.
  - Interpersonal problems or relationship conflicts.
  - Lack of social supports or a recovery network.
  - Inability to solve problems or manage stress.
  - Strong cravings or urges to use drugs, including alcohol.
  - Lack of structure in daily life or involvement in a regular program of recovery.
  - Positive feelings and a desire to celebrate.
  - The coexistence of a major psychiatric disorder along with the addiction.
  - Failure to follow through with a recovery program and attend counseling sessions and self-help groups.

6. Ask each group member to take a few minutes to identify two personal relapse dangers and coping strategies to handle them.
7. Have each member review their answers with others in the group. Ask other group members to give feedback to the member who is sharing his/her relapse dangers and coping strategies.
8. If time permits, review the handout “Ten Most Common Relapse Dangers.” Ask group members which relapse dangers they identify with. Discuss ways to cope with common relapse dangers without using cocaine or other substances.

### **GDC Session #11 Handouts**

1. “My High-Risk Situations.” Adapted from *Group Drug Counseling Participant Recovery Workbook*. Holmes Beach, FL: Learning Publications, Inc., pp. 24-25.
2. “Ten Most Common Relapse Dangers.” Adapted from *Recovery Training and Self-Help: Relapse Prevention and Aftercare for Drug Addicts*, National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1993.

### **Suggested Educational Videos**

1. Living Sober Video M: *Other Addictions*. Gerald T. Rogers Productions, 1000 Skokie Blvd., Suite 575, Wilmette, IL 60091, 1-800-227-9100.

## GDC Session #11, Sample Handout #1

### My High-Risk Situations

High-risk situations are those that threaten your recovery or trigger a strong craving to use substances. These are situations that remind you of using or that cause you to feel like you want to use drugs because others pressure you to do so. Upsetting emotions, serious conflicts with people, and difficult life problems are other potential high-risk factors that can increase your vulnerability to relapse. It is your ability to use your plan to cope with your high-risk situations that ultimately determines whether you stay drug free.

An example of a high-risk situation is going to a party where people are using drugs. This might make you feel like you want to use drugs too, especially if you used to enjoy those kinds of social functions. Another example of a high-risk situation is a family get-together where alcohol and other drugs are available or at which stressful family interactions such as arguments occur. It is helpful to identify the particular situations that are likely to put you at risk for using cocaine or other drugs before you actually face these situations. You can then develop a plan to avoid these situations, if possible, or deal with them so that you don't use substances. Your plan may involve going to meetings, talking to your sponsor or a supportive friend, engaging in some physical activity, assertively refusing substance use offers, changing your social habits, or actively planning social activities in non-threatening environments. Talking to other recovering people about their dangerous situations and how they cope with them can be useful. Their ideas may help you develop strategies that will help you deal with your high-risk situations.

The following situations pose the **greatest relapse danger to me at this time**. I should avoid them if at all possible. If I can't avoid them, I accept that I need to plan carefully and get as much support as I can. Two of my relapse dangers and my plans to deal with each of these high-risk situations are as follows.

1. Relapse Danger #1: *Being bored and missing the action of partying and getting high.*

Steps I can take to handle this situation without using drugs:

*Keep involved in NA meetings and activities so I can hook up with other clean people to learn what they are doing to cope with boredom.*

*Call my sponsor or other NA friends when my boredom starts me thinking about getting high. Ask them to get together to rap or do something like go to a movie or go to the Y to shoot hoops.*

*Make a plan for every weekend because this is the time I feel most bored.*

*Take up a new hobby that will help keep me busy and make me feel good. My son is into collecting rocks. I'm going to take him to the library so we can get books about rock collecting.*

2. Relapse Danger #2: *Feeling depressed about my life and how I messed it up.*

Steps I can take to handle this situation without using drugs:

*Keep remembering that it will take time to get my life together after quitting drugs.*

*Focus on the positive things I have—my son, my girlfriend, my job, and my improved health.*

*Keep up my recovery disciplines, especially when I don't feel like it and want to blow off meetings.*

*Talk about how I feel and get support from others in the program.*

It is helpful to get feedback about your plan from other group members. Ask your recovering peers what they think about your plan and if they have additional ideas about how you can cope with your high-risk relapse factors.

## **GDC Session #11, Sample Handout #2**

### **Ten Most Common Relapse Dangers**

1. Being in the presence of drugs, drug users, or places where you used to “cop” drugs or get high.
2. Negative feelings, particularly anger, sadness, depression, loneliness, guilt, fear, and anxiety.
3. Positive feelings that make you want to celebrate.
4. Boredom.
5. Getting high on any drug, including alcohol.
6. Physical pain.
7. Listening to drug use stories and dwelling on getting high.
8. Suddenly having a lot of cash or expecting a check.
9. Using prescription drugs that can get you high, even if you use them properly.
10. Believing that you are finally cured and no longer addicted, that is, that none of the above situations nor anything else stimulate you to crave drugs and that, therefore, it’s safe for you to get high occasionally.