

Lifestyle Coach Facilitation Guide: Post-Core

Preventing Relapse

Content Overview

This session emphasizes that a *lapse* is a small, temporary slip in weight loss efforts, while a *relapse* is a return to previous habits that is associated with weight gain. This session explains the chain of events that can lead to relapse, and highlights strategies for keeping a lapse from progressing to relapse. Participants learn to recognize high-risk situations and learn to plan for how to handle them and recover from a lapse, should one occur.

Lifestyle Coach Preparation Checklist

Materials

- Post-core handouts:
 - What is a Relapse?
 - The Relapse Chain
 - Keeping a Lapse from Becoming a Relapse
 - Recognizing High Risk Situations (2)
 - Planning for Your High Risk Situation
 - Planning for Comeback
 - Your Comeback Plan
- “Food and Activity Trackers”
- “Lifestyle Coach’s Log”
- Balance scale

Post-Core: Preventing Relapse

Key messages to reinforce

- A **lapse** is a temporary and small slip in your weight loss efforts.
- A **relapse** is a return to previous eating and activity habits and is associated with significant weight regain.
- In order to avoid or effectively deal with lapses, it is important to identify situations that might be high-risk, and prepare a plan to deal with those situations.

After the session

At the completion of this session, do the following:

- Use the “Notes and Homework Page” for notes and follow-up tasks.
- Distribute “Food and Activity Trackers” (4) for the following month.



What is a Relapse?

Ask: How many people here have lost weight before, only to gain it back? When you started the National Diabetes Prevention Program *Lifestyle Intervention*, did you have doubts or worries about keeping the weight off?

Present: It is not uncommon for people who have lost weight to start slipping back into old behaviors and seeing their weight slowly creep up. That said, just because it is not uncommon does not mean it is inevitable!

We are going to spend this session talking about how weight regain happens, and how you can **prevent** it.

Weight regain usually starts with a **lapse**.

A lapse might be overeating during dinner for a day or two, or skipping your physical activity for a week while you are on vacation. Lapses are a natural part of weight management. At some point, everyone has lapses – small slips, moments, or brief periods of time when they return to an old habit.

A lapse is a brief and small slip in your weight loss efforts.

REMEMBER that by itself, a lapse will not cause you to gain back the weight you have lost.

A lapse left unchecked, however, can grow into a **relapse**. A relapse usually results from a series of several small **lapses** that snowball into a full-blown relapse. The most effective way to prevent a relapse is to identify the lapses early and deal with them before they turn into a relapse.

A relapse is a return to previous eating and activity habits and is associated with significant weight regain.



The Relapse Chain

The **relapse chain** is a series – or chain reaction – of events that can lead to a full relapse. The chain is shown here using the case of “Rose,” who slowly but steadily lost 19 pounds during the lifestyle intervention over a seven-month period.

Rose had adopted healthy eating habits and had made walking a regular part of her week, then the following took place:

1. High risk situation:

Rose and her husband went for a long weekend at the beach.



2. No plan for the situation

Rose did not plan for how she would maintain her healthy eating and physical activity habits while on vacation.



3. Small lapse occurs

Rose decided “on the fly” that she deserved a few days without worrying about what she ate. However, when she got home she weighed herself and couldn’t believe that she was two pounds heavier than when she left for her trip!



4. Negative thinking and no plan for lapse

Rose became upset at the two pound weight gain and began feeling that there was no use trying anymore. She thought, “If I can’t just enjoy myself for a few days, why even bother?”



5. Another relapse and no comeback plan

Rose became further depressed and frustrated, and did not resume her healthy eating habits or walking routine.



6. Full relapse

A week later, Rose had gained a total of five pounds and decided against going to the scheduled post-core session.

Ask: What could Rose have done to break the relapse chain?



Keeping a Lapse from Becoming a Relapse

In order to deal most effectively with lapses, it is important to be prepared for them.

Present: A lapse (or a single occasion of uncontrolled eating or not being physically active) is not likely – by itself – to cause you to slip back into old habits and regain weight. However, when people eat something they know they shouldn't or stop being active, they often have self-defeating thoughts.

Step 1: The first step in dealing with lapses is to recognize that 99.9% of all people trying to lose weight and be active experience lapses. Lapses can and should be useful learning experiences.

Step 2: The second step is to **resist the tendency to think negative thoughts**. You are not a failure if you lapse – you are normal!

Step 3: Next, **ask yourself what happened**. Use the chance to learn from the lapse. *Was it a special occasion? If so, is it likely to happen again soon? Did you eat because of social pressure? Did you skip physical activity because you were too busy with other things, or because of work and family pressures?* Review the situation and think about it neutrally. Then plan a strategy for dealing more effectively with similar situations in the future.

Step 4: The fourth step is to **regain control** of your eating or physical activity at the very next opportunity. Do not tell yourself, “Well, I blew it for the day,” and wait until the next day to get back on track. Getting back on track without delay is important in preventing lapses from becoming relapses.

Step 5: **Talk to someone supportive**. Call your Lifestyle Coach, another participant, or another friend or loved one and discuss your new strategy for handling lapses.

Step 6: Finally, **remember you are making life-long changes**. Weight loss is a journey with lots of small decisions and choices every day that add up over time. Focus on all the positive changes you have made and realize that you can get back on track.



Recognizing High-Risk Situations

Present: Having completed the National Diabetes Prevention Program core sessions, you have probably already been faced with situations where you had to cope with (or think about) lapses. Now that you are in the post-core phase, with a focus on either maintaining your weight or losing additional weight, the high-risk situations you currently face may not be the same as those you faced during the earlier phase of the program.

In addition, situations may not be high-risk across the board. A situation that makes you want to eat high-calorie foods may not affect your physical activity routine, and vice versa. Also consider what situations seem to decrease your self-monitoring behavior, which is an easy way to start slipping on eating and activity. Finally, remember that both positive and negative situations can be risky for lapses.

Think about times in the past several weeks when you might have slipped or had a lapse. What was going on? What circumstances led to your lapse?

There are some situations that are commonly identified as high-risk by individuals trying to manage their weight. Review the categories on the following worksheet: **emotional, routine, social, and other**. Circle those that apply to you, and write in your own high-risk situations.

EMOTIONAL High-Risk Situations

Positive	Negative
1. You just got a new job and want to celebrate with good food and wine at your favorite restaurant.	1. You feel overwhelmed by the things you cannot control in your life.
2. You are on vacation, feeling relaxed, and enjoying being with your family.	2. You are feeling down and crave "comfort food."
3. It is football season and you want to enjoy all of the snacks and drinks that go along with a good game.	3. You are angry, upset, or frustrated.
4.	4.
5.	5.

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ROUTINE High-Risk Situations

Positive	Negative
1. You are on vacation and staying at someone's home or in a hotel.	1. You are ill and cannot do your usual activities.
2. You are traveling and eating out for each meal.	2. You are very busy at work or at home.
3. The weekend is relaxed (or busy) and you do not have a structured routine.	3. You feel exhausted and are having trouble sleeping.
4.	4.
5.	5.

SOCIAL High-Risk Situations

Positive	Negative
1. You are at a party and do not want to stand out by not having cake.	1. You have an argument with your spouse, a friend, or a co-worker.
2. You go out to dinner with friends and everyone orders high-calorie meals.	2. There is tension or stress in your family.
3. Someone gives you a box of chocolates as a gift.	3. Your children refuse to eat the low-calorie foods you prepare.
4.	4.
5.	5.

OTHER High-Risk Situations:



Planning for Your High-Risk Situations

Part of successful weight management is having a **plan** to deal with your high-risk situations so that they do not become lapses. **Develop a plan. Write it down.** Look at it when you find yourself faced with a high-risk situation, or in the middle of a slip.

Present: Your plan should involve taking action to change the situation, your thoughts and behaviors, or both. Make sure your plan is specific and detailed, so that you will be able to follow it when you are in the middle of a high-risk situation.

Healthy eating: I am at high-risk for stopping my healthy eating when:

Plan:

Physical activity: I am at high-risk for decreasing my physical activity when:

Plan:

Self-monitoring and support: I am at high-risk for missing a session or not

Plan:



Planning for Comeback

Present: Having a lapse is a natural part of weight management. Even when you have an excellent plan to handle your slips and high-risk situations, you cannot always prevent or avoid lapses. This does not mean you have failed or that you will regain your weight.

Keep these things in mind while planning your comeback:

- Reflect on your progress. Remember your purpose.
- Remember that a short period of overeating or skipped activity will **not** erase all of your progress.
- Be kind to yourself. Stay calm and listen to your positive self-talk (while sending away negative thoughts). How you think about your lapse is the most important part of the process. If you use it as a learning opportunity, you will succeed. If you give up and stop trying to make changes, then you are at risk for a relapse.

Ask: What kinds of elements might you include in your comeback plan?

Comeback Plan

Start using your Food and Activity Tracker daily

Make sure you write down everything that you eat and drink, taking care to be as exact in your portion size as possible.

Budget fewer calories

Decrease your calorie intake or increase your physical activity for several days to make up for your lapse.

Plan your meals

Start planning what you will eat at your **next** meal. Plan what you will eat for the next several days, including snacks. You might consider using pre-packaged frozen meals so that you know exactly what and how much you are eating.

Seek support

Call your Lifestyle Coach, another group member, or a good friend for a pep talk to help you start your comeback plan and to feel positive about your success.



Your Comeback Plan

Think about what will be the most effective comeback plan for **you** to recover from a lapse and prevent a full relapse. Write down these steps and keep your written plan in a place where you can easily find it when you need it.

1. What two steps can I take immediately after a lapse to get back on track?
2. What negative thinking might get in the way of putting my comeback plan into action?
3. What positive thoughts will I use to keep myself going with my comeback plan?
4. How will I reward myself when I get back on track?

Follow Up

Notes and Homework Page

While it is fresh in your mind, use this page to write down notes about the session. Consider what worked, what you need to do differently for the next session, whom you need to follow up with, information or ideas needing further research, and general concerns or issues that need to be addressed.
