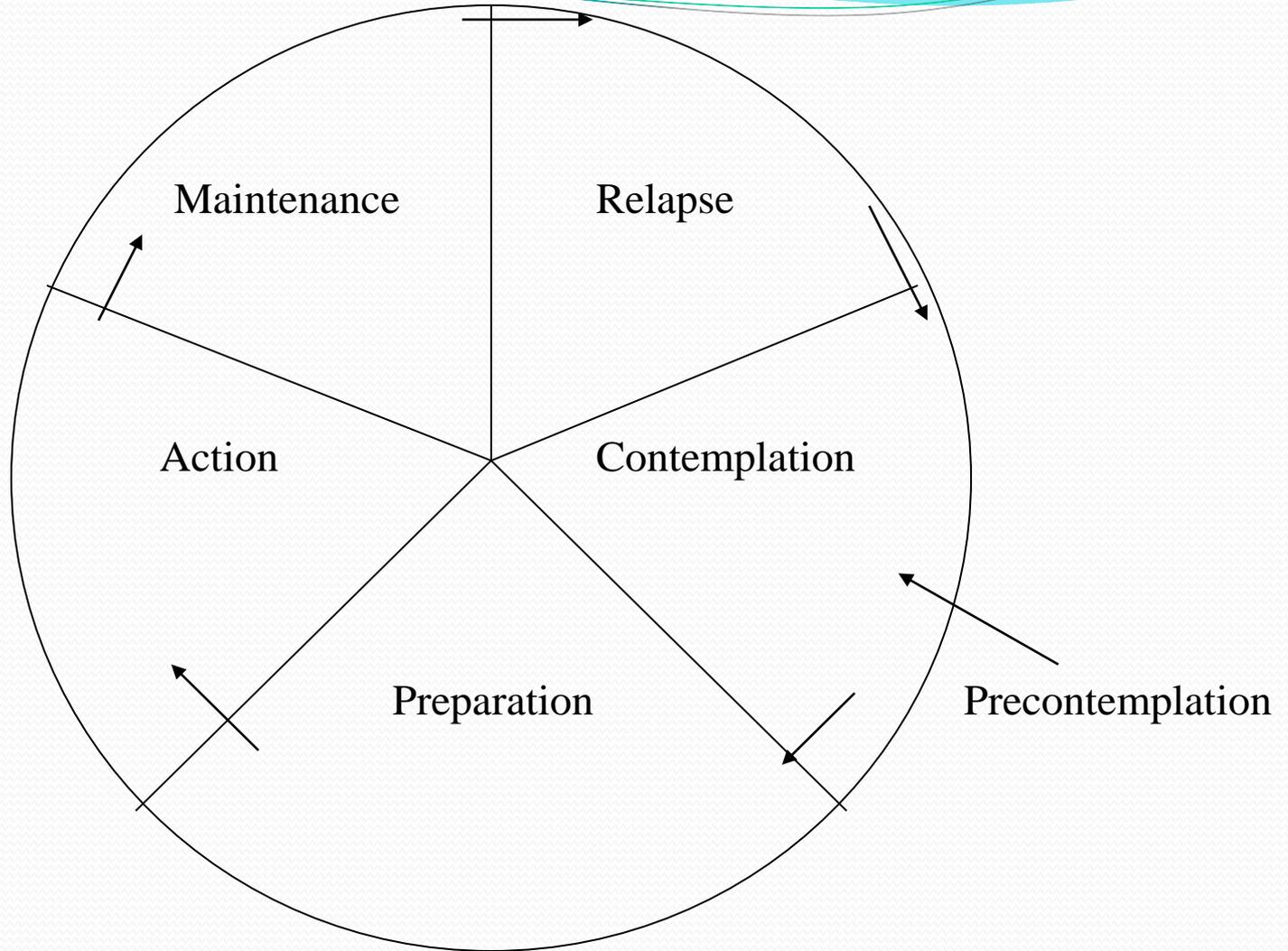


**The Chance To Change
Your Life
With The Tools Of
Relapse Prevention**

The Chance to Change Your Life

- **Your addiction has given you the opportunity to change your life.**
- Most people sleepwalk through life. They don't think about who they are or what they want to be, and then one day they wake up and wonder why they aren't happy.
- If you use this opportunity for change, you may at some point look back and think of your addiction as one of the best things that ever happened to you.
- People in recovery often describe themselves as grateful addicts. Why would someone be grateful to have an addiction? Because their addiction helped them find an inner peace and tranquility that most people crave. Recovery can help you change your life.

Making A Change In Your Life Is A Process



Prochaska and DiClemente's
Stages of Change



**HOW DO WE REDUCE THE
POTENTIAL FOR
RECOVERY'S
WORST
NIGHTMARE:
“RELAPSE”**

What is Relapse?

Relapse—

A relapse can be defined as a return to behavior which has been previously stopped.

For the alcoholic, a relapse means drinking alcohol again.

For the cocaine addict, a relapse is the use of cocaine again.

For the sexual offender, a relapse is a return to the abusive sexual behavior.

How Does Relapse Happen?

- Relapse does not happen in a vacuum, it is not an event, it is a process.
- You have to engage in the recovery process before you can have a relapse.
- There are many factors which contribute to this process.
- There is identifiable evidence and warning signs leading up to a relapse.
- Relapse prevention will help you identify the process of relapse and help you to develop coping skills to implement before your relapse process progresses to the point of a “full relapse”.

Some Important Statistics

- Roughly 50 to 60 percent of all people recovering from addiction will experience a relapse.
- 2/3 of all relapses happen within the first 90 days after treatment.
- Roughly 45% of people who experience a relapse, will do so within the first 12 months after treatment.
- This single largest contributing factor to a relapse is under estimating how powerful the relapse process is.

Some Encouraging Statistics

- Studies have been done which show that approximately one-third of those who enter recovery will achieve permanent success their first time.
- Another third have brief relapse episodes which eventually result in long-term abstinence.
- An additional one-third experience chronic relapses which result in varying degrees of recovery.
- **After 5 years of abstinence relapse is rare.** A recent Harvard University study was conducted and the study concluded that after 5 years of abstinence relapse is rare.

A Few Terms

Lapse--

- A lapse is very different from a relapse in that you have not returned to the abusive use of the substance/behavior--you have just gotten closer to abusing.
- A lapse can be thought of as a failure to implement an appropriate coping skill when you have experienced a feeling, thought, or ritual associated with your addiction.
- If you do not utilize healthy coping skills when faced with a lapse, you are much more likely to relapse.
- The further along in the relapse process you go, the more difficult it is to implement coping skills and thus avoid a full relapse.

A Few Terms

Linkages—

- In the past, you probably associated your abusive behavior with a set of life experiences including people, places, feelings, thoughts, and rituals.
- Some of these experiences were directly connected to your addiction.
- For example, if you smoke cigarettes, you can probably identify several experiences such as finishing dinner, getting up in the morning, taking a break with your friends at work, or talking on the phone as directly related to increased cravings for cigarettes.
- These experiences which are closely connected to your addiction are called *direct linkages*.
- Unfortunately, many other experiences are less easily identified as being connected to your addiction but result in just as powerful of a craving/desire to return to your addiction.
- These experiences are referred to as *remote linkages*.

A Few Terms

High Risk Situations—

- When we put ourselves in contact with a direct linkage we are in what is generally referred to as a *high risk situation*.
- Although it is important to avoid contact with high risk situations throughout your recovery, it is absolutely essential to avoid high risk situations early in your recovery.

A Few Terms

Anhedonia—

- Absence of pleasure from the performance of acts that would normally be pleasurable.

No ability to experience the simple joys in life.

Post Acute Withdrawal Syndrome

- **There are two stages of withdrawal.** The first stage is the acute stage, which usually lasts at most a few weeks. During this stage, you may experience physical withdrawal symptoms. But every drug is different, and every person is different.
- The second stage of withdrawal is called the Post Acute Withdrawal Syndrome (PAWS). During this stage you'll have fewer physical symptoms, but more emotional and psychological withdrawal symptoms.
- Post-acute withdrawal occurs because your brain chemistry is gradually returning to normal. As your brain improves the levels of your brain chemicals fluctuate as they approach the new equilibrium causing post-acute withdrawal symptoms.

The Symptoms of Post-Acute Withdrawal

The most common post-acute withdrawal symptoms are:

- Mood swings
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Tiredness
- Variable energy
- Low enthusiasm
- Variable concentration
- Disturbed sleep

Post-acute withdrawal feels like a rollercoaster of symptoms

- In the beginning, your symptoms will change minute to minute and hour to hour.
- Later as you recover further they will disappear for a few weeks or months only to return again.
- As you continue to recover the good stretches will get longer and longer.
- But the bad periods of post-acute withdrawal can be just as intense and last just as long.

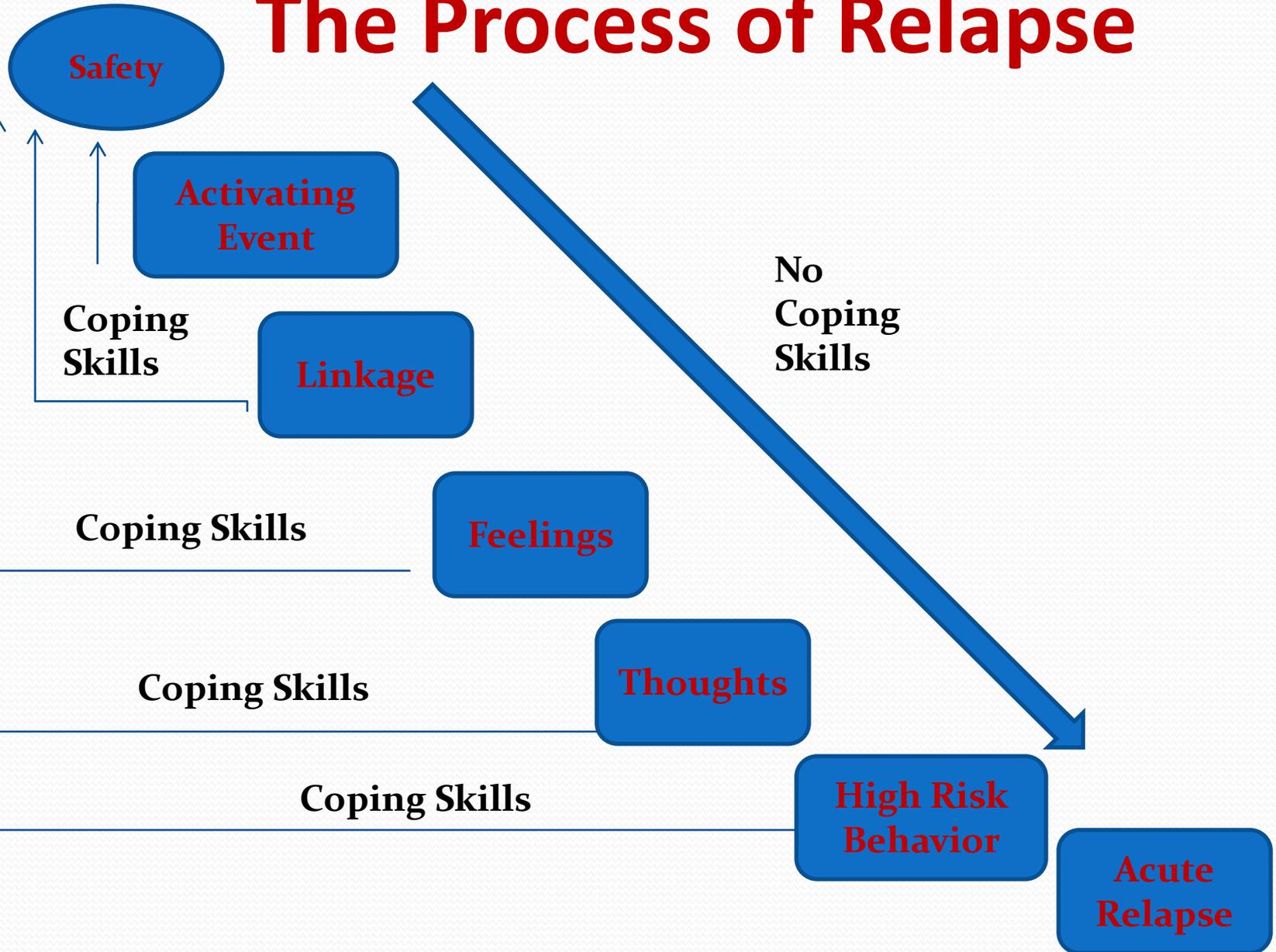
Each post-acute withdrawal episode usually last for a few days

- Once you've been in recovery for a while, you will find that each post-acute withdrawal episode usually lasts for a few days.
- There is no obvious trigger for most episodes.
- You will wake up one day feeling irritable and have low energy. If you hang on for just a few days, it will lift just as quickly as it started.
- After a while you'll develop confidence that you can get through post-acute withdrawal, because you'll know that each episode is time limited.

Post-acute withdrawal usually lasts for about 2 years.

- This is one of the most important things you need to remember.
- If you're up for the challenge you can get through this.
- But if you think that post-acute withdrawal will only last for a few months, then you'll get caught off guard, and when you're disappointed you're more likely to relapse.

The Process of Relapse



The First Rule of Recovery

- **You don't recover from an addiction by stopping using. You recover by creating a new life where it is easier to not use.**
- If you don't create a new life, then all the factors that brought you to your addiction will eventually catch up with you again.
- There are a few things and behaviors that have been getting you into trouble, and they will continue to get you into trouble until you let them go.
- If nothing changes, than nothing changes!!!!!!!!!!!!

The three most common things that people need to change in order to achieve recovery.

- **Avoid High-Risk Situations**
 - **Learn to Relax**
 - **Be Honest**

Avoid High-Risk Situations

Some common high-risk situations are described by the acronym, HALT:

How do you feel at the end of the day?

- Hungry-- You're probably hungry because you haven't eaten well.
- Angry -- You're probably angry because you've had a tough day at work or a tough commute home.
- Lonely-- You may feel lonely because you're isolated. You don't have to be physically alone to feel lonely.
- Tired –Lack of sleep or overworked.
- That's why your strongest cravings usually occur at the end of the day.

Avoid High-Risk Situations

Avoid:

- People (old using buddies or significant others)
- Places (any place that has the potential to have drugs or alcohol)
- Things (old using memorabilia or keep-sake, anything that reminds you of using)

That spark a linkage to your using.

How to avoid high-risk situations

- **Make a list of your high-risk situations.**
- Addiction is sneaky. Sometimes you won't see your high-risk situations until you're right in the middle of one.
- That's why it's important that you learn to look for them.
- Make a list of your high-risk situations and to keep it with you.
- Go over the list with someone in recovery so that can spot any situations that you might have missed.
- Make the list and keep it with you. Some day that list may save your life.

Learn to Relax

- **There are only a few reasons why people use drugs and alcohol.** They use to escape, relax, and reward themselves. In other words, people use drugs and alcohol to relieve tension or escape stress.
- Everyone needs to escape, relax, and reward themselves.
- Those are essential coping skills for a happy life. But addicts don't know how to do those things without using.
- Tension and the inability to relax are common causes of relapse.

Relaxation is not an optional part of recovery. It's essential to recovery.

- There are many ways to relax.
- Going for a walk
- Breathing exercises
- Getting a relaxing hobby
- Meditation.
- Meditation is an important part of that mix because the simple techniques don't always work.
- If you're under a lot of stress, you may need something more reliable like meditation.

Be Honest

- **An addiction requires lying.**
- You have to lie about getting your drug
- Using it
- Hiding its consequences
- Planning your next relapse

An addiction is full of lying.

- By the time you've developed an addiction, lying comes easily to you.
- After a while you get so good at lying that you end up lying to yourself.

Recovery requires complete honesty.

- You must be one-hundred percent completely honest with the people who are your supports: your family, your doctor, your therapist, the people in your 12 step group, and your sponsor. If you are honest with them, your chances of success are greatly improved.
- When you're completely honest you don't give your addiction room to hide. When you lie you leave the door open to relapse.
- Be honest with yourself first and the rest will follow.

The Stages of Relapse

- **Emotional relapse**
- **Mental relapse**
- **Physical relapse**

Emotional relapse

In emotional relapse, you're not thinking about using. But your emotions and behaviors are setting you up for a possible relapse in the future.

The signs of emotional relapse are: (Very similar to PAWS)

- Anxiety
- Intolerance
- Anger
- Defensiveness
- Mood swings
- Isolation
- Not asking for help
- Not going to meetings
- Poor eating habits
- Poor sleep habits

Emotional relapse

- Relapse prevention at this stage means recognizing that you're in emotional relapse and changing your behavior.
- Recognize that you're isolating and remind yourself to ask for help.
- Recognize that you're anxious and practice relaxation techniques.
- Recognize that your sleep and eating habits are slipping and practice self-care.

Mental Relapse

- **In mental relapse there's a war going on in your mind.** Part of you wants to use, but part of you doesn't. In the early phase of mental relapse you're just idly thinking about using. But in the later phase you're definitely *thinking* about using.

The signs of mental relapse are:

- Thinking about people, places, and things you used with
- Glamorizing your past use
- Lying
- Hanging out with old using friends
- Fantasizing about using
- Thinking about relapsing
- Planning your relapse around other people's schedules

Mental Relapse

Techniques for Dealing with Mental Urges

- **Play the tape through**
- **Tell someone that you're having urges to use**
- **Distract yourself**
- **Wait for 30 minutes**
- **Do your recovery one day at a time**
- **Make relaxation part of your recovery**

Physical Relapse

- Once you start thinking about relapse, if you don't use some of the prevention techniques mentioned, it doesn't take long to go from there to physical relapse. Driving to the liquor store. Driving to your dealer.
- If you recognize the early warning signs of relapse, and understand the symptoms of post-acute withdrawal, you'll be able to catch yourself before it's too late.

Relapse Triggers

- Identifying what triggers relapse, can prevent it.
- Relapse triggers can affect any individual in recovery that encounters people, situations, or settings they associate with past drug abuse.
- Often times, they experience strong urges to use drugs or alcohol and slip back into addictive use.
- Such cue-induced relapse, can occur long after the individual has stopped using drugs or alcohol.

Relapse Triggers

The 10 most common relapse triggers:

- Being in the presence of drugs or alcohol, drug or alcohol users, or places where you used or bought chemicals.
- Feelings we perceive as negative. Particularly anger, sadness, loneliness, guilt, fear, and anxiety.
- Positive feelings that make you want to celebrate.
- Boredom.
- Getting high on any drug.
- Physical pain.
- Listening to war stories and just dwelling on getting high.
- Suddenly having a lot of cash.
- Using prescription drugs that can get you high even if you use them properly.
- Believing that you no longer have to worry (complacent). That is, that you are no longer stimulated to crave drugs/alcohol by any of the above situations, or by anything else. Therefore believing it's safe for you to use occasionally.

Relapse Triggers

- **Exhaustion:** Allowing yourself to become overly tired. Not following through on self-care behaviors of adequate rest, good nutrition, and regular exercise.
- **Dishonesty:** It begins with a pattern of small and unnecessary lies and is soon followed by lying to yourself or rationalizing and making excuses to avoid working your program.
- **Impatience:** Things are not happening fast enough for you.
- **Depression:** Overwhelming and unaccountable despair may occur in cycle.
- **Frustration:** With people and because things may not be going your way.
- **Self-Pity:** Feeling like a victim, refusing to acknowledge that you have choices, and that you are responsible for your own life and the quality of it.
- **Cockiness:** "Got it Made," compulsive behavior is no longer a problem.
- **Complacency:** Not working your program with the commitment that you started with.
- **Expecting Too Much From Others:** "I've changed, why hasn't everyone else changed too?"
- **The Use of Mood-Altering Chemicals:** Taking prescription medication not as prescribed, drinking etc...

Signs Leading Up To Relapse

Return Of Denial

Discontinuation Of Treatment Or Self-Help Groups

Frustration

Easily Angered And Forming Resentments

Tendency Toward Loneliness And Isolation

Self-pity

Impulsive And Compulsive Behavior

Coping Skills

- **'Try to notice where you are, your surroundings including the people, the sounds like the t.v. or radio.**
- **Concentrate on your breathing. Take a deep cleansing breath from your diaphragm. Count the breaths as you exhale. Make sure you breath slowly so you don't hyperventilate.**
- **Mentally remind yourself that what you are going through is temporary and will be over soon. Give yourself permission to not think about it right now.**
- **Hold something that you find comforting, for some it may be a 12-step key tag or a medallion. Notice how it feels in your hands. Is it hard or soft?**
- **During a non-crisis time make a list of positive affirmations. Print them out and keep them handy for when you are having a hard time. During an episode read the list out loud.**
- **Call and talk with friend. Write an email. Go see a neighbor .**
- **Imagine yourself in a safe place. Feel the safety and know it.**

Coping Skills

The 5,4,3,2,1 Technique
To stay in the here & now

- Name 5 things you can see in the room with you.
- Name 4 things you can feel (“chair on my back” or “feet on floor”)
- Name 3 things you can hear right now (“fingers tapping on keyboard” or “tv”)
- Name 2 things you can smell right now (or, 2 things you like the smell of)
- Name 1 good thing about yourself.”

Creating Physical Boundaries

- **Hold your belly in or hold a set of your muscles taut.**
- **Feel a wall or bubble around yourself that keeps out what you want.**
- **Feel your energy or sense of strength.**
- **Feel yourself being tall or getting taller.**
- **Cross your arms or legs.**
- **Move to a location where you feel stronger or more protected.**
- **Experiment with changing your posture to a position where you feel grounded and empowered.**
- **Wear clothes or accessories that make you feel better, more protected or stronger.**
- **Be aware of colors that give you strength or a sense of confidence.**

Creating Cognitive Boundaries

- Remember the best time to gain control of panic, anger or fear is early, before it gets really going!
- Consciously think about how you feel and what you need to say.
- Visualize a barrier around negative emotions.
- See a barrier or wall between you and what you want to keep out.
- Visualize a protective bubble around you.
- Image or even verbalize that you now have control over your body, boundaries and your addiction.
- Assert boundaries out loud to your addiction.
- Visualize yourself as strong and empowered.

Simple Questions That Will Help

- Ask yourself: Does this move me toward my recovery or away from it?
- What will this decision cost me?

If you don't know the answer to those questions, then you know it is time to call someone from your support group.