

RECOVERY ACTION PLAN FOR TEENS

An action plan is a document that lists what steps must be taken in order to achieve a specific goal. Benjamin Franklin once said, “If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.” The Recovery Action Plan is a valuable tool for anyone wanting to take a proactive approach to their recovery.

Your Recovery Action Plan will help you identify reasonable and necessary steps to take in response to a relapse—returning to the place you promised God, yourself, or others you wouldn’t return to. In the past, sexual acting out or using porn may have been a way of medicating pain. Now, as you learn to walk in sobriety, the Recovery Action Plan will give you a new tool to help transform behaviors. A relapse doesn’t halt your healing or mean you are back at square one. If handled well, a relapse can be a growing experience that contributes to greater freedom and health.

The goal of a Recovery Action Plan is to implement actions to be taken in order to process the relapse in a positive, intentional way. You will have fewer relapses and a higher rate of freedom if you develop and implement a Recovery Action Plan.

In this approach, you are encouraged to identify logical and natural consequences if relapse occurs. No one likes pain—and neither does your brain! But if we choose a little pain in connection to a relapse, our brain will work with us to avoid this path in the future.

These consequences are not meant to be punitive. Rather, they are designed to help you:

- 01.** understand the natural and logical consequences if you choose to act out;
- 02.** stop trying to hide or ignore relapses; and
- 03.** rebuild trust with other people.

As a teen, you may have little experience or understanding of how your negative sexual behavior affects others or yourself. It is crucial that you begin to associate your acting out with logical consequences and learn how to develop healthy patterns when you are young and single. You should find two individuals to share your Recovery Action Plan with so they can keep you accountable if a relapse occurs.

A Recovery Action Plan can help you establish sexual health, be proactive with dating boundaries, and learn how to experience better relationships as a teen.

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

PROVERBS 15:22 (NIV)

CONSEQUENCES

Predetermined consequences give you a gameplan for what to do after going back to an unwanted behavior. Having consequences written out ahead of time will give you the ability to immediately take action without falling back into old patterns of “trying to make this all go away.”

NATURAL VS. LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

Natural Consequences

A natural consequence occurs as a result of a choice, without anyone imposing it.

- Trust is broken if I am hiding behavior from a family member or friend.
- A relapse creates guilt or shame in me, which makes me feel distant from others.
- Becoming absorbed in my addiction costs me valuable time, energy, and money that could have been used better.

Logical Consequences

A logical consequence is a reasonable outcome we choose.

- Since I acted out after watching YouTube videos alone late at night, I will turn off all electronics after 10:30 pm and disable access to YouTube.
- My cell phone continues to be a source for viewing inappropriate images, so I will disable the Internet through my phone carrier.
- When on social media, I have shared inappropriate pics or messages. I will close or suspend my account.

Consequences should be quantifiable. This will allow you to understand the outcome of your choices before acting out. When you know a relapse is tied to a clear, direct consequence, you will be less likely to listen to excuses or rationalize your behavior.

Below is a list of Recovery Action Plan steps. Remember, you may need to add or remove steps as your situation changes. This should be done in writing so each step is clear and non-negotiable.

- **Step 1:** Identify your relapse—the actions you’re committing to refrain from. This list should be re-evaluated at least every six months. (**Examples:** seeking out pornography; masturbation; sexting; sending nude photos; sexually acting out with others.)
- **Step 2:** Determine who you need to share your relapse with, and in what time frame. This typically includes a group member, a mentor, friend, or a parent. A good time frame is to share within 24 hours of the relapse. Knowing ahead of time that you have committed to being honest about a relapse within a short time frame will help you combat one of the most common lies on our way to relapse: “No one needs to know.”
- **Step 3:** Write out all the natural consequences of your relapse. (**Examples:** when I act out, I feel shame; when I use porn, I’m objectifying others; when I’m heading toward relapse, I’m distracted and distant from others.)
- **Step 4:** Write out a list of logical consequences you are choosing to follow if you relapse. (**Examples:** If I watch porn on my phone, I’ll disconnect the internet for one month. If it happens again, I’ll give \$50 to Compassionate Hope Foundation, who rescues children from human trafficking.)
- **Step 5:** Review your Escape Plan or create one. (The Escape Plan can be found within the Youth Leader Library.)
- **Step 6:** Describe your desired outcome for creating this plan. If you have a clear vision of how this plan will help you in your recovery, you are more likely to follow it. (**Example:** I want to live a sexually healthy life, completely free of porn.)

EXAMPLES OF NATURAL CONSEQUENCES WHEN I RELAPSE

Write out your own natural consequences on a separate sheet of paper.

- I feel shame, which ends up further driving my addiction.
- I am objectifying others.
- I am afraid of being “found out,” so I don’t act like myself around my friends and family. I keep them at a distance for fear of exposure.
- I am contributing to an industry that is destroying society and families.
- My relationship with God is distant because of the shame I feel.
- I am distracted at home, school, or work and become unproductive.
- I’m creating patterns that will be damaging in my future relationship/marriage.
- I deepen the destructive pathways in my brain and reinforce a negative behavior.

EXAMPLES OF LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES WHEN I RELAPSE

These examples are tied to an action to help you understand the connection of relapse to consequence. Write out your own logical consequences on a separate sheet of paper.

- If flirting or inappropriate behavior takes place with someone, I will remove them from my contacts.
- If I misuse social media, I will delete any triggering person from my contacts and stay off social media for one month. If I find myself repeating this behavior, I will delete my social media accounts indefinitely until I've established six-months of sobriety in all areas of my addiction.
- If movies are a problem, I will remove my access to movies from my home. I will agree not to rent movies alone or search any movie stores, real or online.
- If I view pornography on my phone, I will block Internet access on my phone for one month. If a relapse occurs on my phone after the month is up, I will remove Internet access until sobriety has been established for a six-month period.
- If I relapse with porn, I will donate \$50 to an organization that rescues individuals from the sex-trafficking industry.
- Reading romance novels triggered a relapse, so I will remove the romance novels from my home and read literature that is good for my personal growth.
- I will call my pastor, mentor, or group leader for advice and accountability.
- I will fill out a RETRAIN Tool daily and share it with a friend or family member. (The RETRAIN Tool can be found within the Youth Leader Library.)
- I will seek counseling for my addiction.
- I will allow access to any email or social media accounts to an accountability partner, at any time.
- I will have no phone communication (non-work-related) in any form (phone, text, instant messaging, etc.) with any person of the opposite sex, other than immediate family.
- I will read healing-oriented blogs or books about boundaries and addiction.
- I will share with a friend and/or family why I am off social media.
- I will install pornography-blocking software on all electronic devices.
- If relapse occurred on a non-essential device (tablet, gaming system, etc.), I will lose access to that device for a specified period of time.