

PROGRESSING THROUGH TREATMENT

EARLY

Primary Focus

- ▶ *Achieve abstinence*
- ▶ *Learn ways to manage cravings*
- ▶ *Identify and communicate feelings*

Challenges

As individuals stop their alcohol and/or drug use, they are giving up their primary source of support and most likely have not developed healthy coping skills.

Support networks that can provide feedback and structure are especially helpful at this stage.

Individuals in the **EARLY** phase of treatment programs may be...

- Unsure about stopping their substance use.
- Rigid in their thinking and limited in their ability to solve problems.
- Experiencing extreme emotional turmoil, grappling with intense emotions such as guilt, shame, depression, and anger about entering treatment.
- Resistant to treatment in some form:

Active Resistance: openly opposes being in treatment.

Passive Resistance: outwardly cooperative and goes to great lengths to give the impression they are engaged in the treatment process; however, not truly working towards change. When individuals engage in this type of resistance, they are primarily motivated to free themselves from external pressure.

Relapse can occur within any phase of treatment and should be viewed not as a failure, but as an opportunity for the individual and support network to learn from the event, integrate the new knowledge, and strengthen levels of motivation. If the individual is in a group treatment program, discussion of relapse can also give group members a chance to learn from the choices of others.

PROGRESSING THROUGH TREATMENT

MIDDLE

Primary Focus

- ▶ *Identify client's motivation for change.*

Motivation may be external (for example: pressure from family or legal system) or internal.

Challenges

People with addictions typically choose immediate gratification over long-range goals, so setting tangible goals is important.

Identifying any need for additional supports is crucial during this time.

This could include additional services for underlying mental/physical health complications, reaching out to additional recovery supports (AA, NA, or other supportive entities), or discussion with counselor about a more intensive treatment option.

Individuals in the **MIDDLE** phase of treatment programs may...

- Distinctly remember the comfort of their substance use, yet forget about the negative health, social, and legal consequences they experienced.
- Continue to move away from their relationship with their drug of choice, which may increase feelings of vulnerability.
- Still working on developing healthy coping skills to negotiate life's inevitable problems.
- Not yet see the benefits of recovery, which can make the task of staying on course with treatment difficult.
- Experience depression, lack motivation, agitation, or anhedonia (a condition in which formerly satisfying activities are no longer pleasurable).

PROGRESSING THROUGH TREATMENT

LATE

Primary Focus

- ▶ *Maintain the progress from the middle phase*
- ▶ *Learn to anticipate and avoid triggers that could lead to relapse.*

It is recommended that activities promoting drinking and drug use are avoided and replaced with positive activities.

Challenges

Individuals who relapse in this phase do so with new information, which empowers them to discover and acknowledge that some of the goals they set are unrealistic, certain strategies attempted are ineffective, and environments deemed safe may not be conducive to successful recovery.

Individuals in the **LATE** phase of treatment programs may...

- *Begin to engage in life; manage their emotions and cognitive processes more effectively, which enables them to face situations that involve conflict or cause emotion without turning to substances for comfort.*
- *Need additional support for underlying issues that may emerge, such as past trauma, emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse, relationship difficulties, loss of friends, shame/guilt, or poor self-image.*

It is important to resolve these underlying issues to prevent relapse and continued destructive behaviors.

Keys to Recovery

Everyone achieves recovery in their own way and time.

Many individuals move in and out of the phases, in no particular order, and at different paces.

Relapse can be a learning opportunity. With guidance, events and situations that trigger relapse can be recognized in order to prevent later relapse.