



Maintaining a Workplace and sobriety



How to Maintain Addiction Recovery in a High Stress Workplace

It is not uncommon for adults to experience stress at work especially when dealing with sales quotas, project deadlines and demanding clients. While it is difficult for anyone in this situation, those in addiction recovery face the unique challenge of leaving the stress in the workplace and refraining from turning to drugs or alcohol to cope. There are many ways for those in recovery to maintain sobriety without having to quit your demanding job. Here are 6 workplace addiction recovery tips when dealing with stress.

Workplace Addiction Recovery: 6 Tips to Maintain Sobriety

Be Open & Honest: As you learned in your addiction therapy program, harboring your thoughts, feelings and emotions can lead to a relapse. If there are certain behaviors or points of contention taking place at work speak to your higher-ups. Expressing that there may be some unhealthy policies or attitudes can certainly lead to positive changes.

Take Time for Yourself: Federal law mandates that your job gives you breaks, sick time and paid time off. While you don't want to seem as if you're taking advantage, make sure you take quality time for yourself. Spend it enjoying newfound sober activities like hiking, enjoy a spa day or just relaxing at home.

Determine Boundaries: Many of us are accessible 24/7 through our smartphones, but this can sometimes lend to being taken advantage of in the workplace. Set boundaries as to when you're available to answer work related calls and emails, especially after office hours and on the weekends.

Track Stressors: Privately write down work-related processes or colleague actions that are causing you unnecessary stress. This can help you better cope and prepare yourself for when these situations arise.

Attend Meetings: Especially if you're new if your sobriety journey meetings are extremely important to keep you on track, focused and prepared for stressful situations.

Keep in Touch with your Resources: Whether through your drug & alcohol addiction treatment center or at your sober living house you've met a vast network of therapists and sober friends. Be sure to stay in contact with them to help you on your long-term journey.

1 - Perform Regular Personal Inventories

When inventory is mentioned at work, many people quickly think of taking stock. You have to get rid of old product and replace it with the new. The same can be said in regards to the personal inventories that people in recovery need to perform on a daily basis.

For anyone who is recovery-and especially those in their first year of recovery- *anger* and *resentment* are major obstacles that can lead to relapse if they aren't addressed. Staying sober in the workplace may require you to address these emotions.

For example, you may be angry in having to answer a million questions regarding why you have been gone from work or having to think about how to tell you job that you're sober. You also may resent that people can talk so openly about social drinking in the workplace and are doing so in front of you.

Take some time, grab a paper and pen, and truly think about the underlying causes of your anger, resentments and your fears. Being able to talk through these issues with your sponsor or counselor in an aftercare program can be extremely beneficial in keeping you on an even keel and moving forward in your recovery.

2 - Choose Your Words Carefully

When someone who is new in recovery goes back to work, a question that can weigh heavily on their mind is *'should I tell my co-workers that I am sober?'*

The question of telling people at your job that you are sober can be tricky and you have to approach this with caution and tact. The fact is that you don't have to tell anyone that you got clean and sober... that is your business. Inevitably, questions will get asked and avoiding answering these questions will only make your co-workers more curious.

If and when you need to answer those questions, keep your responses short, to the point, and you can even inject a little humor in your reply. Some examples of what you can say can include:

- "I needed to get help in order to get healthy. I am feeling so much better, thanks for asking."
- "I have reached my quota"
- "I was sick and tired of being sick and tired"

You probably will be asked many questions regarding your decision to go to treatment and become sober; replying to those questions in a concise, confident and friendly manner will help the majority of people understand your situation.

Remember, it's up to you. If you don't want to tell your co workers about your sobriety, than you don't have to. If you don't want to keep it a secret, than just be open about it. Try not to stress about it too much.

3 - Be Prepared

Once you get back into the swing of things at work, the invitations to work parties, happy hours, and dinners with drinks may start flooding your inbox. Don't let the pressure of work gatherings lead you to relapse. You simply have to be prepared.

It is normal to feel uneasy if co-workers ask you to join them in some cocktails after work or dinner, and if you truly don't feel comfortable in those situations, you can politely decline. You have every right to create healthy boundaries.

If you do decide to go, be prepared of a few things!

- First and foremost, you always want to order AND get your own drinks from the bar. You never want someone who isn't in recovery getting your drinks for you.
- Have a club soda, soda, sparkling water or other favorite non-alcoholic drink in your hand. It may help you feel more comfortable.
- If there are fellow non-drinkers at a social event or work function, make it a point to introduce yourself, make conversation and hang. Don't be shy, social gatherings can still be fun as long as you keep your priorities in order.
- At the first sign that you feel uncomfortable, leave the function immediately-you can always touch base with the host or friends afterward. You don't have to tell anyone, or feel guilty. Just get the hell out of there.

4 - Get Support

- It was always important to continue working a program of recovery, whatever your program may be. If there is no one in your workplace who knows, make it a point to step outside and call someone. Don't bottle it up inside, there's no reason to.
- Finding similar support in the workplace may be more challenging, but it can be done if you know where to look. Within your workplace, you can turn to those work friends who are already supportive of your decision to pursue recovery or you may be introduced to others in the workplace who are clean and sober.
- Additionally, if your company has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), make an appointment to meet with them to see what recovery-related programs and resources they have to offer.

5 - Know Your Rights

Probably one of the most distressing questions that weighs on the minds of those new in recovery when they go to work is '*will I get fired because I went to treatment?*' or '*will I get fired for going to AA?*'"

The answer depends on your employer and the particular situation you face. In all cases, active drug use can often be a valid reason for firing an employee, but many employers have policies that are favorable to those who undergo treatment.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services offers great resources regarding federal laws that protect you from being discriminated against in the workplace, as well as in job training, housing, health care and educational opportunities.

Become familiar with these laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Workforce Investment Act.

Having a working knowledge of these laws will give you peace of mind upon returning to work, and provide you with options to pursue in the event you face discrimination.

You Got This!

There's no need to cushion the truth, sobriety is challenging. Adding in other factors like work and social events makes it a little more complicated. However, staying sober in the workplace shouldn't be a burden or an extra challenge.

Always remember why you are doing this. What is your reason to get and stay sober in the first place? Keep your recovery first, and you will be just fine.

We believe in you!!

Horizon Health Team

Your Horizon Health Care Team

Fill out the questionnaire below, calculate your score and determine how cravings affect you.

Adapted from the Alcohol Craving Questionnaire short form (ACQ-SF-R)

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement. When determining how you

Feel about each statement, think about how you feel right now. Complete each item.

G	If I had alcohol or another drug, I would probably consume it					
	Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
8	I miss drinking or using					
	Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
C	I am not making any plans to drink or use.					
	Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
0	I could not stop myself from drinking or using if I had alcohol or another drug here					
	Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
8	I want to drink or use so bad I can almost taste it.					
	Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
0	I would feel less irritable if I used alcohol or another drug now					
	Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
G	If I used alcohol or another drug, I would feel less tense					
	Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
0	Drinking or using would not be very satisfying					
	Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
0	I would feel less restless if I drank alcohol or used a drug					
	Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
E	If I were using alcohol or another drug, I would feel less nervous					
	Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
0	It would be easy to pass up the chance to use alcohol or another drug					
	Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
0	Drinking or using would put me in a better mood					
	Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree

Tally your scores using the grid below, and add them in the column on the right. For questions 3, 8 and 11, reverse the scores. For those questions, the score for strongly disagree is 5 and the score for strongly agree is 1. The score for disagree is 4, and the score for agree is 2.

	Question	Question	Question	Total
Compulsivity	4:	5:	6:	
Expectancy	1:	2:	12:	
Purposefulness	3*:	8*:	11*:	
Emotionality	7:	9:	10:	

Think about your score. Are you at risk of acting compulsively? Do you expect positive benefits from using alcohol or other drugs? Have you planned on using drugs? Do you anticipate relief from stress or withdrawal if you use?

A score higher than six in any category suggests you're experiencing cravings and are at risk for relapse. A score higher than nine in any category suggests you're experiencing severe cravings and are at a high risk of relapse.

Note: This questionnaire is a self-evaluation tool. It has been adapted from a scientifically-proven tool, but it has not been scientifically tested in its adapted form. It should not be used to diagnose a medical

condition. You should seek a health care provider for an official diagnosis if you believe you currently have a substance use disorder or are at high risk for relapse.

Avoiding Triggers

Think about the results of the craving questionnaire. List the triggers that remind you of past alcohol or drug use, or that may make you experience cravings. Remember, triggers can be external, internal or sensory.

WHAT ARE YOUR TRIGGERS?

People:

Places:

Things:

Emotions:

Senses:

Analyze your list of triggers. Think of realistic ways that you can avoid triggers. If necessary, return to page 33 and think of boundaries you can set to avoid triggers.

HOW CAN YOU AVOID YOUR TRIGGERS?

People:

Places:

Things:

Emotions:

Senses:

The simplest way to overcome a trigger is to take your mind *off* of it through distraction. You can distract yourself physically by walking away from a high-risk situation, practicing relaxation techniques or starting a conversation about a different topic.

Distractions are more effective if you know you're about to experience a craving. If you know you're going to a place where alcohol or other drugs will be present, make a conscious effort to avoid them or plan ways to distract yourself. The most effective distraction is to leave the area and go somewhere safe.

Talking to supportive friends, family members or peers can help relieve the anxiety and feeling of helplessness that accompanies cravings. Sponsors and therapists are valuable sources to talk to if you experience a severe craving and are thinking about drinking or using. They can help you determine the cause of the craving and the best ways to overcome it.

Some friends or family members may worry when they learn that you're experiencing a craving. If you know someone is likely to panic and make the situation worse, you may want to avoid contacting them.

EXTERNAL TRIGGERS	INTERNAL TRIGGERS	SENSORY TRIGGERS
People	Thoughts	Sights
Places	Memories	Sounds
Things	Stress	Smells
Situations	Trauma	Tastes
		Touches

Coping Skills

Now that you understand cravings and triggers, know how they affect you and have a list of ways to avoid triggers, it's time to learn to cope with them. Coping skills help you dampen the effect of triggers and overcome cravings.

Distraction

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TALKING

Talking to supportive friends, family members or peers can help relieve the anxiety and feeling of helplessness that accompanies cravings. Sponsors and therapists are valuable sources to talk to if you experience a severe craving and are thinking about drinking or using. They can help you determine the cause of the craving and the best ways to overcome it. Some friends or family members may worry when they learn that you're experiencing a craving. If you know someone is likely to panic and make the situation worse, you may want to avoid contacting them. But it's important to find someone you trust to help you through the situation and to avoid isolation.

Going With the Craving

One way to overcome a craving is to experience it or ride it out. It's important to do this in a safe, secure environment that is free of alcohol or other drugs.

Focus on the craving. Put the craving in words. Describe what it feels like. Think about its intensity, where it occurs and how it changes. It may be helpful to journal your thoughts.

Concentrating on the craving can make it go away and help you understand it. It's usually helpful to practice the steps before a craving occurs so you're ready to go with it when you experience it.

Remember Negative Consequences

Cravings often remind us of positive experiences. However, you chose sobriety because alcohol or other drugs caused problems. When you experience a craving, think about the damage the substance caused the last time you used it. Think about the progress you've made in sobriety and the damage that relapse would cause. Think about the risks of using.

Review the list of reasons why you became sober on page 20. Recreate the list on your cellphone, on a piece of paper or in some other manner to keep on you at all times.

When you experience a craving, review the list. Without reminders, it can be difficult to recall negative consequences of alcohol or drug use while you're experiencing a craving.

Self-Talk

When you're addicted to alcohol or another drug, the brain develops memories and associations with drinking and using. When you experience a craving, it may automatically trigger certain memories or thoughts. If you feel like you have to use now or if you will die without the drug, ignore those exaggerated thoughts.

You can combat negative thoughts by challenging them. Think specific thoughts to remind yourself that you don't have to use now and that you won't die without it. Normalize the craving by understanding that everyone goes through this and everyone experiences cravings. It may be helpful to verbalize positive thoughts.

Saying No

Saying no to someone who offers alcohol or other drugs is one of the most difficult skills to develop. We want to appease others, even strangers, when they invite us to join them in an activity. But saying no is one of the most important skills to develop for someone in sobriety.

If friends or family members offer you alcohol or other drugs, you can say no. You can walk away. Remember the boundaries you created to maintain sobriety and healthy relationships. Enforce consequences when people choose to cross your boundaries.

WAYS TO SAY NO:	TIPS FOR SAYING NO:
I Can't	Change the conversation
I Don't want to	Propose something else to do
I don't feel like it	Change Locations
Not Now	Pretend you received a call or text
Maybe another time	Pretend you have work or something else to do
I'm not that person anymore	I've gotten my life together and don't want to do those things any longer

Relapse can be triggered by exposure to addictive substances, risky behaviors, trauma and other high stress situations. If for example you know that you have been invited to a gathering and you know that your old friends from your substance use days will be there and they more than likely will be using, this could trigger you to relapse. Remove yourself from those situations and any other high stress situations that may cause you to relapse.

MAKE THE CHOICE:

You made a choice to become sober. Your friends, family members and providers may have influenced your decision, but they did not make it for you! Reflect on your decision and commitment to live a sober life.

Coping Behaviors Questionnaire

Coping with triggers is easier said than done. Avoiding and overcoming triggers sounds simple. In real life, it can be incredibly difficult. You can prepare for cravings by assessing your coping skills.

Battling a substance use disorder is a lonely fight. Many people don't understand addiction, so they don't know how to react when they encounter it. But there are many resources available for individuals in recovery. There are people in your community waiting to help you. Turn to friends and family you love and trust for support. Find a sponsor, a mentor or a peer at a support group meeting to turn to when times get tough. Call an addiction therapist.

Our sincerest hope is that you find the team at Horizon Health to be a support system to cheer you on your journey to living a sober life. If you need additional services or help of any kind, speak to your counselor and get a referral to case management. We are here to help you in any way throughout your journey.

There are also trained peer support specialists available as an added support to you if you would like to utilize them in your recovery.

The Coping Behaviors Inventory (CBI) was developed to assess the coping techniques alcoholics used to avoid drinking. An adapted version of the inventory begins on the next page

Complete the questionnaire and determine which skills you need to practice more often or work on.

Adapted from The Coping Behaviors Inventory (CBI)

Think of ways that you've tried to stop yourself from drinking or using drugs. Determine how often you have tried each of the techniques below. Circle the number that most accurately describes how often you have used the technique.

1 Thinking about how much better off I am without drinking or using

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

2 Calling or texting a friend

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

3 Keeping in the company of nondrinkers or nonusers

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

4 Thinking positively

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

5. Thinking of the mess I've got myself into through drinking or using

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

6. Stopping to examine my motives and eliminating the false ones

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

7. Thinking of the promises I've made to others

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

8. Staying indoors or hiding

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

9. Pausing and really thinking the whole addiction cycle through

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

10. Leaving my money at home

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	

11. Recognizing life is no bed of roses but drinking or using is not the answer

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

12. Going to a support group meeting

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

13. Knowing that by not drinking or using I can show my face again without fear of what others will think

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

14. Cheering myself up by buying myself something special instead

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

15. Facing up to my bad feelings instead of trying to drown them

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

16 Working harder

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

17. Realizing it's just not worth it

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

18. Waiting it out

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

19. Remembering how I've let my friends and family down in the past

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

20. Keeping away from people who drink or use

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

21. Going for a walk

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

22. Looking on the bright side and trying to stop making excuses for myself

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

23 Realizing it's affecting my health

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

24 Start doing something in the house

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

25 Considering the effect it will have on my family

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

26 Reminding myself of the good life I can have without drinking or using

	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

27 Getting in touch with old friends who are better now

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

28 Making up my mind that I'm going to stop playing games with myself

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

29 Eating a good meal

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

30 Avoiding places where I drank or used

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

31 Thinking about all the people who have helped me

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

32 Saying I am well and wish to stay so

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

33 Going to sleep

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

34 Remembering how it has affected my family

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

35 Forcing myself to go to work

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

36. Trying to face life instead of avoiding it

USUALLY	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
0	1	2	3

The inventory measures behaviors related to positive thinking, negative thinking, avoidance, distraction and seeking social support. Review the results and think about them. Do you tend to think positively or negatively? Do you tend to avoid triggers or seek social support? Which coping strategies are effective for reducing cravings? Which strategies could you work on?

Decide How You'll Cope

The best way to cope with cravings is to practice coping skills before a craving occurs. Write down realistic ways that you'll overcome triggers or cravings when they occur. The best time to think about how you will cope is when you are not in that situation. Think ahead of how you will cope with triggers and temptations.

- 1 What will you do when you see alcohol or another drug?**
- 2 What will you do if you see drug paraphernalia or items that remind you of alcohol or another drug?**
- 3 How will you respond if you pass a location where you used to buy alcohol or other drugs?**
- 4 How will you say no when asked to drink or do drugs?**

5 What will you do if you're pressured to use or drink?

6 What will you do if you crave alcohol or other drugs when you're alone?

7 How will you avoid going to a high-risk environment if asked?

8 Who will you call when you feel like you're in a high-risk situation?

9 Who will you call when you experience a craving?