

# Managing Triggers

How Stress Impacts Addiction



**Be a  
Recovery  
Advocate!**

## Did You Know

Stress is one of the most common triggers to the reoccurrence of substance use because of how it interacts with almost every aspect of life. Not only is stress a trigger, but it can also enhance other triggers such as loneliness or fatigue.

## Knowledge Domain

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Coping with stress can be a difficult process for many people, and the more chronic the stress, the harder it is for a person to adapt to it. A person who is chronically stressed may begin to use a substance to cope with tension from stressors or to relieve symptoms of anxiety or depression as a result of stress. Research suggests that the greater number of stressors an individual is exposed to, the greater the chances of developing a substance use disorder later in life.

## Recommended Group Activity

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What stressors could lead someone to develop a substance use disorder or to reoccurrence of substance use?

- Identify as many stressors that you can think of that patients may face in their day to day life.
- Brainstorm ways that you can help address those stressors.
- Think of some stress management techniques that you can provide to patients.

## To Learn More

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### Chronic Stress and Vulnerability to SUD

<http://bit.ly/2knDXHI>

### Coping with Stress

<http://bit.ly/2krVj6m>

### Stress and Recurrence of Use

<http://bit.ly/2kUWDyU>

# How We Talk About Addiction Matters

## Comparing SUD to Other Chronic Conditions



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### Did You Know

Like other chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and asthma, substance use disorder often involves cycles of relapse and remission.

### Knowledge Domain

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Substance use disorder (SUD) is a chronic disease that affects the brain's reward, motivation, and memory systems. SUD shares many features with other chronic diseases, such as genetic disposition, environmental influences, and disease progression. Both SUD and many other chronic diseases are heritable and genes play a large role in the vulnerability to disease.

Like other chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes or asthma, SUD cannot be cured, but it can be managed. Treating SUD as a chronic condition instead of a moral failing, shifts the goal of treatment from a quick cure to long term management of the disease. Similar to other chronic disease, medication can be used to manage a person's disease and reduce or eliminate their symptoms.

### Recommended Group Activity

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Compare substance use disorder with other chronic diseases such as cancer, asthma, or heart disease.

- Do they have similar relapse patterns?
- Do they affect the body in similar or different ways?
- What other features do substance use disorder and other chronic disease share?

### To Learn More

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**Addiction as a Chronic Disease**

<http://bit.ly/2msoZB2>

**ASAM Definition of Addiction**

<http://bit.ly/2kq0RhG>

# How We Talk About Relapse Matters

## Choosing Empowerment Over Shame



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### Did You Know

The National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates that roughly 40 to 60 percent of people who have gone through treatment will experience some kind of relapse, such as using once before returning to treatment or returning to regular substance use.

### Knowledge Domain \_\_\_\_\_

The chronic nature of substance use disorder means that for many people, recurrence of use is part of the recovery process. Although it is common, going through that experience can be disheartening, and patients may feel ashamed for having “failed” their treatment. Understanding that recurrence of use is not a failure but an opportunity to modify a treatment plan can help people to think about the topic differently. Instead of shaming someone, encouraging them to continue with treatment is going to help them move forward on their recovery journey.

### Recommended Group Activity \_\_\_\_\_

Think about ways that you can help empower your patients:

- Could you host a class educating people about treatment options, giving them the choice to choose what works best for them?
- Could you start a gathering of those in recovery to celebrate their recovery?

### To Learn More \_\_\_\_\_

#### Treatment and Recovery

<http://bit.ly/2kwHxzw>

#### Shame Promotes Relapse, Not Recovery

<http://bit.ly/2kUjVVu>