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Tips for Early Recovery: A Handout for Patients

The following tips for early recovery are ways that you can increase your chances of success. In addition to things like medication and therapy, these are some more tools for your recovery toolbox.

Plan for cravings. What are you going to do when a craving arises? It may be hard to think of what to do in the moment so it's helpful to take some time *before* the situation arises to think and plan. Write down 5 things you can do when you have an intense urge or craving. These should be *behaviors* (things someone else could see you doing) and the more specific you can be, the better. Include names and phone numbers of people you can call in an emergency situation. Also take some time to remember and write down *why* you have decided to get sober. Think about your values. You may even want to include a picture here to remind you of why you are doing this.

Behaviors (something someone else could see me doing) that I can do when I have an urge or craving (for example: go to a meeting, call my sponsor, and talk to my therapist):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

People I can call when I have an urge or craving (include phone numbers):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



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Why I'm getting sober (describe and/or include a picture):

Additional tips for early recovery:

Schedule schedule schedule. It's risky to have too much free time in early recovery. Free time could lead to boredom which could lead to trouble at this early stage. Use a calendar app in your phone or a paper planner or notebook to schedule what you'll do hour by hour. At the beginning of each day, review your schedule. Use the next tip, **important recovery behaviors**, to help you fill in your schedule.

Important Recovery Behaviors. What are the important behaviors that are anchoring your recovery in place? (Remember, a behavior is something that someone else could see you doing. *Thinking positively*, for example, is not a behavior. Going to a meeting, calling your sponsor, or going for a walk are all examples of behaviors.) Write down these behaviors in the chart below. The more specific, the more helpful this exercise will be. At the end of each day, check off whether you've done that behavior. If you start noticing that check marks are missing, this is a red flag for relapse and a sign to get back on track.

Recovery Behavior	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday



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Stay away from triggers. In early recovery, the more distance you can get from your triggers, the better. Stay away from people and situations that may be triggering. This often involves changing your routine. For instance, if you drive the same way home from work every day and pass your dealer's neighborhood on the way, try changing your route home from work so that you won't pass that street.

People, places and things. As much as you can, surround yourself with people, places and things that are supportive of your recovery. If you don't have many supportive people, places and things in your life right now, try a Narcotics Anonymous or Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. These are great places to start finding support.

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