

Clinical Guidelines for “Relapse Prevention Planning”

OVERVIEW:

This handout for this topic provides information and a strategy for relapse prevention planning. Both the concept of a relapse and an early warning sign are introduced, followed by a discussion of triggers that can bring about relapse. Finally, a plan for responding to early warning signs is discussed.

Goals

1. Educate participants to the idea that symptoms wax and wane but flare-ups can be managed.
2. Help participants identify OBSERVABLE early warning signs.
3. Help participants identify potential triggers for symptom flare-ups
4. Help participants consider developing a relapse prevention plan and develop one if willing.

Materials Needed

1. Educational forms – Relapse Prevention Planning

TEACHING STRATEGIES:

- Be matter of fact about the content; normalize variations in symptoms over time.
- Discuss how relatives can elicit information from the person in NAVIGATE if he/she is not present in the session. Help them practice how to approach this person and discuss his/her symptoms or early warning signs if he/she is not attending family sessions.
- If the client attends, the family can actually discuss early warning signs, triggers, and develop a relapse prevention plan. This is more difficult, though possible, if the client does not attend.

- The relapse prevention section of the IRT is very extensive—this is a good time to work with the IRT clinician to see, even if the client is not attending family meetings, regularly, if a family meeting might be useful.

TIPS FOR COMMON PROBLEMS:

- Be prepared for participants to be nervous talking about relapses—the experience needs to be normalized and families helped to see these are normal but can be managed. Also, be prepared that first episode clients may not have experienced a relapse. They may also firmly believe that they will never have one.
- If the client does not attend, it may be impossible to complete a relapse prevention plan. However, the client will complete a relapse prevention plan in IRT and the relatives could be coached to ask the client to talk about the plan, using good communication skills.

THE MOST IMPORTANT GOAL OF THE SESSION:

Help participants understand that symptoms go up and down, but early steps to act on them can often minimize big problems.

EVALUATING GAINS:

- After completing this module it may be helpful to periodically assess how much knowledge the participant has retained about the symptoms and course of psychosis. You can assess a participant's knowledge using the following questions:
 1. What are some of the common signs of a relapse?
 2. What are some of the common triggers for a relapse?
 3. Has your family member in NAVIGATE had a relapse?
 4. What is your family's relapse prevention plan?