



The Power of Relapse Exercises

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Introduction

Relapses are horrible for self-esteem and self-confidence. We have all done it for something when we've tried to quit. On QuitGamble.com, we believe pain is the cause of addiction. We use pain as a collective word for feelings we don't want to feel like: stress, loneliness, boredom, anger, anxiety, etc. Gambling, alcohol, drugs, sex, shopping, etc., are methods we use to escape the pain.

Relapse can be incredibly painful; hence, it could trigger more relapses if we don't use it as part of the recovery process. In this template, we're tackling the following four areas:

1. Understand what happened when you relapsed.
2. Build your defenses stronger
3. Forgive yourself
4. What's the next step.

Part 1

Understanding what happened

Let's begin by analyzing the situation when you relapse. The better you understand this part, the better prepared you'll be next time you're in a similar situation. Please take your time and answer

EXERCISE 1 - When did it relapse happened?

EXERCISE 2 - What did you do then?

EXERCISE 3 - Did you see or hear anything that triggered the gamble?

(Example: Someone said something, you saw a tv commercial.)

EXERCISE 4 - Where were you?

(Example: at home (room), at work, on the bus...)

Exercise 5 – Had anything happened earlier that day that might have triggered any painful feelings?

Example: You had been criticised, arguing, stressed, etc

EXERCISE 6 – Can you remember what you thought of or feelings you had when you got the urge to gamble?

Try to remember any thoughts and/or feelings you had.

These questions will hopefully give you an understanding of what happened. As mentioned above, we believe pain is the cause of addiction. *Can you relate to that? Do you use gambling to escape something?*

EXERCISE 7: – Based on the answers above. Can you identify any pain involved in triggering the relapse?

If you can identify pain, describe it as vividly as possible

We believe it's so hard to stop gambling because gambling is doing something for us. Therefore, the first questions we usually ask new members on QG are:

What happens when you gamble? Does it create a moment of peace? A period when nothing else matters? Perhaps the answers can explain why it's so hard to quit?

We believe the answers to these questions are the foundation of a successful recovery from gambling. Spend time with them. The first thing that comes to mind might be, "I want to win like I did that one time. I'm chasing a win." Try to think beyond winning money. Instead, try to identify thoughts and feelings you don't have when you gamble.

PART 2

BECOME PROACTIVE – BUILD YOUR DEFENCES

EXERCISE 1: Write down the situations you're most likely to gamble.

Let's identify these situations. Start by mapping out your day: what happens in the morning, before lunch, lunch, afternoon, evening? (Perhaps you need to put them in even smaller parts.)

When do you want to gamble the most? In what situations?

EXERCISE 2: Create distraction strategies

Determine one, or several, actions you'll take when any of your moments of temptations are triggered. *Be proactive and plan for what you will do for each critical moment.* Take your time. The more careful you think things through, the better results you'll get.

When X happens, I'll do A, B or C

Situation:

Counter actions:

Most likely, you'll not find all moments of temptation right now. Don't worry, come back to exercise 1 and 2, every time you notice you feel the urge to gamble. The exercises are a good start. Over time, you can work on identifying and eliminating these triggers. On QuitGamble.com, we try to help you do that.

PART 3

FORGIVE YOURSELF

Any relapse sucks! It's painful, and people often feel like shit. We believe relapse is part of the process, though. Feelings like anger, depression and guilt block the connection with our needs. In our Nonviolent Communication course, you can learn everything about our feelings and needs in a fun and engaging way.

The following exercises intend to help you understand why the relapse happened. If you want to know more about self-empathy, check out the video in the relapse guide again or the complete program on the members' pages. We can also recommend a blog post called: [How to apply self-empathy while playing padel](#)

The self-empathy process has 4 stages:

1. Observe what you say to yourself.
2. Ask yourself what feelings were involved in the situation (before the mistake occurred)
3. Ask yourself what needs you tried to reach when you made a mistake.
4. Ask yourself what needs you failed to meet.

Please do the following steps and see what happens.

STEP 1 – Thinking back on the relapse. What do you say to yourself?

Do you criticize yourself? What language do you use?

STEP 2 – What feeling did you have just before the relapse?

If it's easier, list the thoughts you had and go from thought to feeling.

(Example: I thought, this is never going to work. The feelings might have been hopeless, sad, frustrated)

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In the past, we would probably have stopped after step two full of these negative emotions with one question in our head. What's wrong with me? **Could you relate to that?**

STEP 3 – What need did you try to meet when you gambled?

Check out the examples in [the relapse guide](#) if you need some inspiration. Did you escape anything?

STEP 4 – What need did you fail to meet when you gambled?

This will help explain why you're upset about the relapse.

(Example: broken trust, need for development)

It's okay to be sad when we fail at something important. Mourning is a solid motivator for change, not because we feel shame or guilt, but because we want to change. By transforming self-hatred, frustration, and anger into mourning, we free the ability to learn from our mistakes. Remember Emerson;

"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."

A gambling relapse is a temporary mistake; What you need is an upgraded strategy, something that can help you decrease the urge to gamble and build your defenses stronger at the same time. That's what QuitGamble.com is all about.

PART: 4

What's the next step?

You can now choose to continue your own, or you're welcome to join the community on QG. There are also helpful organizations like Gambler Anonymous or other problem gambling groups worldwide.

We have a few tools on QuitGamble.com that we think can support you. Useful tools:

- [The Happiness Test](#) (Help you understand why it's so hard to stop gambling.)
- Change Plan course (Helps you become proactive instead of reactive)
- Nonviolent Communication course (Recommended to anyone)
- The community on QuitGamble.com (Members, news feed, forum, chat, groups)

We're cheering for you! Good luck in your recovery!

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