

The Four P's of Prevention

Predict your challenges. This does not mean you will need a crystal ball or tea leaves, but anticipate what challenges could present themselves. Predict, based on previous experiences, people, places, and things that could activate thoughts, feelings, and triggers. Allow yourself the option of not having to meet this challenge. In some cases, especially when your recovery is at stake, avoiding the situation all together may be the best solution. If abstinence is important to you, you need to make that a priority.

Plan: Look ahead of time. Prepare for these challenges. Allow yourself a contingency plan. If it is a person, you are meeting and they may trigger urges to use, plan how you are going to handle that situation. Do you discuss your concerns with him/her prior to meeting? Would it be better to meet with him/her in a sober environment (a restaurant that does not serve alcohol)? If it is a place, how to plan to manage your circumstance if it becomes uncomfortable? If it a thing (say for instance a weekend where your family is going to be gone and leaving you alone), what can you do to maintain your abstinence?

Pause: Allow yourself sometime in the situation to gauge where you are at. This would be a self-check to assess where you are at and what you are feeling. You do not have to tough out every situation. If it is uncomfortable allow yourself the option of leaving. At times, individuals allow the urges to build up. The longer they continue unchecked, the more difficult you are making it for yourself. If leaving is not a option, even disengaging for a brief time (taking a walk, stepping outside, practicing relaxation techniques) can help.

Process: Looking back on how you managed the situation will allow you to be prepared for the next situation. It is important to acknowledge your accomplishments, identify what helped navigating that situation, and build on that. If the situation did not go so well, process what could have been done differently.

There are going to be challenges in maintaining abstinence, especially in early recovery. A commitment to abstinence means changes in your life. You are making that decision because it will benefit you in the long run. The consequences of using are greater than the benefits you have received from using. However, adjusting to abstinence initially, will take some thought and effort. The more prepared you are for these challenges the better position you are putting yourself to remain abstinent.