

# What is a relapse?

## What if I relapse?

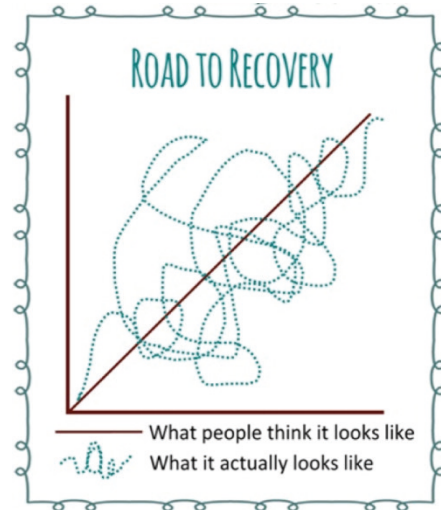
**Recovery is never a straight trajectory forward, but instead involves many ups and downs, lapses and even relapses.**

It is important to note that a lapse is not a relapse. A lapse is a temporary return to an eating disorder behaviour, while a relapse is a full-blown return to the eating disorder behaviours & thoughts. Neither signifies a failure to recover.

Lapses are simply a part of the recovery journey. They are set back and can provide a very useful opportunity to consolidate the strategies that work for you, help you to identify your triggers, and can provide an opportunity to learn new coping techniques.

**“The first time I lapsed after treatment, I freaked out. I called my therapist immediately and I was so scared and felt like a failure. But my therapist reminded me that it was just a one-off and I could get back on track right away. It helped me to realise I was much stronger than before, because I made healthy decisions even after a lapse.”**

A relapse is also a natural part of the journey back to health and can also act as useful learning opportunity. This can help you to recover more quickly or easily next time.



If a relapse does occur:

- Focus on navigating your way back to health
- Seek help from your treatment team and support network
- Use the coping skills and techniques you have learned
- Try to identify the triggers that led to the relapse and consider how you could manage these triggers next time
- Boost your self-esteem by spending time with your support network and engaging in activities that you enjoy

Relapses may be prevented by:

- Making sure you have a solid support network
- Sticking with your treatment plan, and talk to your treatment team about any challenges you are having
- Participating in activities that make you feel positive about yourself
- Avoiding media and social media channels that promote being thin, or make you feel bad about yourself
- Talking to your friends and family about your concerns and what they can do to support you

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