

Lesson 13 – Treatment 5

Safety Plans

Read these Scripture verses and lesson below. Then answer the questions that follow on a separate sheet of paper. If you believe this lesson would be helpful to others you know, feel free to share it with them.

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’” (Luke 14:28-30)

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”
(2 Corinthians 10:5)

When we do not think through our choices or take unhealthy thoughts captive, we end up making poor decisions that end up putting us in risky situations or even worse, turning our lives into a mess. Most people have internalized systems for rejecting poor thinking and considering the consequences of choices. Those of us who have habitually entertained the same thoughts we should have taken captive could use another tool to make the kind of choices that will yield better results in life. In treatment, we call this tool a Safety Plan.

Safety Plans are a list of statements committing to principles to avoid high risk situations as well as statements addressing a plan to escape high risk situations. A good Safety Plan will not only help us to avoid making bad decisions but will also assist us in making good decisions.

Avoidance statements generally begin with “I will” or “I will not”. Someone with a history of alcoholism who wishes to remain sober may use statements like, “I will not enter a bar” or “when I am feeling like I want a drink, I will call my sponsor.” Using words like “always” or “never” are counterproductive to a good Safety Plan because once part of the plan is violated, it is easy to justify scrapping the entire plan.

Sometimes, we end up in a high risk situation after making a seemingly unimportant decision. Then we need a way of escape. This is where we would use “If ... then” statements. The person described above may commit to something like, “If I am invited to a party and after my arrival, alcohol is served, I will immediately go to the host and politely excuse myself.”

For an effective Safety Plan, we want the plan to be short enough to remember (not memorized) yet detailed enough to make it applicable to situations we find ourselves in. Vague statements will not serve us well.

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1. Create a Safety Plan for finding a wife (if you are already married, assume you are not) after your release from prison. Consider how your offense, your faith, your plans for a family need play into your plan.
2. Create a Safety Plan for successfully completing parole (if you are discharging your sentence, assume you will spend your first year out of prison on parole). Consider whatever you already believe parole will be like, your stipulations if you already know them, and how your faith will play a role of honor during this season.
3. Create a Safety Plan specifically addressing your offense (how not to reoffend). Consider the decisions you made not just during the offense but also those leading up to your offense.