

Session 4: Relapse prevention

THERAPIST SUMMARY SHEET

- Aims**
- Learn and practise speed refusal skills.
 - Identify potential high-risk situations that may occur in the future.
 - Develop a specific relapse prevention/relapse management plan for anticipated high-risk situations.
 - Encourage use of relapse prevention/relapse management plan to prevent use of speed.
 - Learn how to deal with a lapse.

Materials needed for Session 4

- Photocopy the “Refusal skills” reminder sheet and give to client.
- Photocopy “Preparing for high-risk situations” sheet and give to client.

Key elements of Session 4 *(may be photocopied for quick reference).*

PHASE 1: Session introduction

- review week
- review homework tasks
- set agenda

PHASE 2: Speed refusal skills

Use the following strategies:

- discuss rationale for learning speed refusal skills
- discuss non-verbal measures
- discuss verbal measures
- complete exercise 1: rehearsing speed refusal
- give client refusal skills reminder sheet

PHASE 3: Relapse prevention

Use the following strategies:

- Identify high-risk situations by –
 - discussing a rationale for relapse prevention
 - identifying high-risk situations from self-monitoring
 - completing exercise 2: identify/anticipate high-risk situations
- Prepare for high-risk situations by –
 - identifying people and means of maintaining skills
 - completing exercise 3: preparing for high-risk situations

- Regulate consequences by –
 - discussing behavioural self-rewards for abstinence or maintaining goals
 - completing exercise 4: regulate consequences
- Devise a relapse prevention plan by –
 - discussing a written relapse prevention plan
 - discussing when and where to use the plan
 - discussing need to monitor early warning signs
 - discussing refining and updating the plan as necessary

PHASE 4: Session termination

- Terminate session, including:
 - reconfirm important motivating factors from session 1
 - elicit self-motivational statements
 - summarise commitments and changes so far
 - affirm and reinforce changes so far
 - explore potential additional areas of change raised previously
 - support self-efficacy to change
 - deal with any special problems (including referral)

DETAILED INTERVENTION

PHASE 1: Session introduction

Review the week, homework tasks and set agenda

Start with an informal discussion about general activities, and also determine whether there are any important issues that have arisen, any questions so far.

Review the homework activity with the client, and discuss how the client was able to manage/challenge their thoughts about using speed. If the client has not completed the homework task, ask them to do so now. In addition, check how well the client was able to use the activity record and list of pleasurable activities.

Review the client's speed use pattern for the week. Did the client meet the planned goals for tapering? Reinforce positive changes and address minor problems if convenient.

Set the agenda for the session by explaining to the client the issues that will be covered.

PHASE 2: Speed refusal skills

Rationale for learning speed refusal skills

As previously stated, in the early stages of modifying use of speed, it is important to consider avoiding high-risk situations completely. However, it is acknowledged that avoidance is not a long-term solution, nor is it always a practical one. One particularly unavoidable situation might involve a person offering your client speed. There are a number of strategies that can make saying NO easier. Discuss the following elements of speed refusal with your clients.

Non-verbal measures for refusing speed

(Monti et al., 1989)

1. Make direct eye contact with the other person to increase the effectiveness of your message.
2. Stand or sit up straight to create a confident air.
3. Do not feel guilty about the refusal and remember, you will not hurt anyone by not using.

Verbal measures for refusing speed

(Monti et al., 1989)

1. Use a clear, firm, confident and unhesitating tone of voice.
2. "NO" should be the first word out of your mouth. A direct statement is more effective when refusing the offer.
3. Suggest an alternative (e.g. something else to do/eat/drink).
4. Request a behaviour change so that the other person stops asking (e.g. ask the person not to offer speed anymore).
5. Change the subject to something else to avoid getting involved in a drawn out debate about using/drinking.
6. Avoid using excuses and avoid vague answers, which will imply that at a later date you may accept an offer to use.

Exercise 1: Rehearsing speed refusal (Monti et al., 1989; NIDA, 1998)

- Select a concrete situation in the recent past, where the client was offered speed.
- Ask the client to provide some background on the person involved in the situation (the 'offerer').
- For the first role-play, have the client take the part of the 'offerer', so they can convey a clear picture of the style of that person, and the therapist shall model the speed refusal skills outlined above.
- Discuss the role-play. The therapist should say, *"That was good, how did it feel to you?"* Be sure to praise any effective behaviours and offer clear constructive criticism.
- Repeat the role-play, with the therapist playing the role of the 'offerer' and the client playing himself or herself.
- Discuss the second role-play using the same guidelines as above.

Photocopy the "Refusal skills reminder sheet"¹¹ on page 63 and give to the client. Go through the refusal skills at the top of the page to help summarise the previous exercise.

Explain the rationale for learning and practising refusal skills to the client. Use the following information:

"It is often difficult to refuse someone who is offering you speed. This is particularly the case if you don't want to offend the other person. It can be tough to say 'no', particularly when you have said 'yes' before. But, equally important are your feelings and your goals, so it is a good idea to practise what you might say in these situations before they happen. To help you say 'NO' comfortably, take some time to prepare some responses you might make to different people who might offer you speed."

Ask the person to fill in the table on the sheet and nominate some responses they may use when confronted by 'a friend they used to use with', 'a co-worker', 'a party', or other potentially 'high-risk' situations. Write down the exact words the client feels they can use in each of these situations, using the key principles. This sheet can then be taken with the client.

Note – if appropriate, the client may want to practise saying these responses out loud during the session, or you may like to conduct a role-play around one of the nominated scenarios.

¹¹ NIDA, 1998

Refusal skills reminder sheet

Tips for responding to offers of speed:

1. Say no first.
2. Make direct eye contact.
3. Ask the person to stop offering speed.
4. Don't be afraid to set limits.
5. Don't leave the door open to future offers.
6. Remember there is a difference between being assertive and being aggressive. Assertiveness means being direct but not bossy, being honest but not big-headed, and being responsible for your own choices without forcing your opinions onto others.

People who might offer me drugs	What I'll say to them
A friend I used to drink or use with:	
A co-worker:	
At a party:	
Other:	

PHASE 3: Relapse prevention

Rationale for relapse prevention

Once clients have learned the skills and behaviours to help them quit/cut down on the use of speed, they are ready to begin preparing for life after therapy where they must manage on their own. The rest of this session is concerned with anticipating future situations that pose relapse risks to the client. This session can be a way of increasing the client's self-efficacy about how they will cope in these high-risk situations, perhaps circumventing a relapse in the process (Wilson, 1992).

At this stage, both you and the client have the benefit of hindsight to assist you in collaboratively preparing for future high-risk situations. That is, you know how the client has responded to the different skills/techniques taught in previous sessions, as well as how they relate to events, thoughts and behaviours. In addition, the client has hopefully incorporated some of the skills/techniques into their repertoire of coping strategies, and will have a greater understanding of their problem (Wilson, 1992).

Identification of high-risk situations from self-monitoring

It is inevitable that certain events will occur in the client's life that will pose threats to maintaining abstinence or reduced use. Indeed Wilson (1992) reports that the average person will experience at least one adverse event in a 12 month period.

A vital first step in preventing relapse is to identify those high-risk situations in advance and allow the client time to prepare for them when they occur. Take time in the session to revisit the self-monitoring record the client has been completing for homework as a guide to the types of situations that have posed problems for them in the past. In addition, probe for additional life events the client anticipates will probably pose difficulties for them. These might include loss events (social, financial, failure to complete tasks, loss of status etc.) or even happy events that can also increase risk of relapse (celebrations, completion of projects etc).

Exercise 2: Identify/anticipate high-risk situations (Wilson, 1992)

- Ask the client to brainstorm high-risk situations or changes that they can anticipate in the future (e.g. adjustment to new situations, financial changes, and social separation).
- Use the following questions to assist the client to generate the list: "What kinds of people/places/things will make it difficult for you to stay on top of things/feel good about yourself? What situations do you consider to be high-risk for relapsing? How will you know when a slip occurs?" Alternatively, use the client's self-monitoring forms completed in previous sessions as a prompt.
- Write these situations down in the space provided on the "Relapse prevention plan" handout (below).

Preparation for high-risk situations

In preparing for the high-risk situations that will inevitably occur, it is useful for the client to take stock of everything he or she has learned during the entire four-session intervention. This will also help the client to generalise the lessons learned during the sessions to real life situations.

Documenting which strategies are most useful in dealing with specific high-risk situations can also be useful, and can serve as a reference for the client at a later stage.

Exercise 3: Preparing for high-risk situations (Wilson, 1992)

- Look at the list made in the previous activity that will detail the client's anticipated high-risk situations.
- Ask the client to think back about all the different skills they have learned during the therapy sessions, and nominate which ones are appropriate to use in each of the high-risk situations. Examples may include: speed refusal, coping with cravings, challenging unhelpful thoughts, relaxation etc.
- Write these coping behaviours down on the space provided on the "Relapse prevention plan" handout on page 67.
- Explain to the client that not all situations can be anticipated in advance. Therefore it is useful to think about some generic coping strategies that the client can employ regardless of the situation. Write these down in the space provided on the handout ("General coping strategies for any situation").
- Also ask the client whether there are any additional skills they think they may need to assist them in future situations. Record these on the form ("Additional skills required") and discuss options for referral with the client to ensure he/she receives the necessary treatment.

Regulate the consequences of thoughts and behaviours

Finally, discuss with the client how they intend to reward themselves for remaining abstinent. It is important for the client to create their own rewards as reinforcement for their behaviour, as this may not always come from other sources (e.g. family, friends).

Ask the client what it is that they enjoy doing. By planning time/criteria for participation in these activities the client can learn to regulate the consequences of their behaviour/thoughts for themselves.

Exercise 4: Regulate consequences (Wilson, 1992).

- Refer back to the "Relapse prevention plan" handout on page 67.
- Ask the client the following questions: "How will you know that you are successfully maintaining your behaviours? How can you reward yourself for a job well done?"
- Write these 'rewards' down on the "Relapse prevention plan" handout.

Identify support people and additional means of maintaining skills

An important step in preventing relapse is identifying key people in the person's life who can help encourage them to keep to their goals, and support them through the challenges they will face. Thus, at this point it is also important to ask the client:

“Who can help you to maintain these skills you have learned?”

Record a list of support people on the second page of the Relapse prevention plan. It can be very useful to record contact phone numbers on this sheet to enable clients to contact support people (including agencies) quickly if a high-risk situation is encountered and support is required rapidly. Some clients find it useful to carry a purse or wallet-sized card with support people/agencies and contact telephone numbers.

If the client chooses to list relatives/friends on their support list, remind them it is a good idea to talk to these people about their plans sometime over this next week, and explain to their relatives/friends what type of support they are hoping to receive from them (e.g. distraction, general chat etc.).

Using the relapse prevention plan

Now that you have collaboratively worked out a relapse prevention plan for high-risk situations with the client, you need to ensure the client uses his/her plan effectively (Graham, 2000). To do this, Graham (2000) suggests you talk with the client about the following things:

- when to use his/her plan;
- how to regularly monitor their early warning signs of relapse; and
- refining and updating the plan as necessary (ie. coping strategies, forms of treatment and supports) and as circumstances change.

Discuss this information with your client, and document your client's “early warning signs of relapse” on the second page of the Relapse prevention plan.

PHASE 4: Session termination

Formal termination should be acknowledged and discussed at the end of this session. Reinforce the client's progress and situation through the sessions and include:

- Reconfirmation of the most important factors motivating the client that were identified in Session 1.
- Summarise commitment and the changes made so far.
- Affirm and reinforce changes already made.
- Explore additional areas of change that might now be identified.
- Elicit self-motivational statements for maintenance of change and further change.
- Support self-efficacy.
- Deal with any special problems that might emerge during termination, including referral to other agencies as required.

Relapse prevention plan

Anticipated high-risk situations	Coping strategies	Reward
General coping strategies for any situation:		
Additional skills required:		

My early warning signs of relapse are:

- More moody or irritable
- Just not wanting to see people
- Sleep more
- Sleep less
- Eat more
- Eat less
- Getting easily tired
- Giving up on exercise
- Not wanting to deal with day-to-day things (opening mail, paying bills etc.)
- Putting deadlines off
- Putting off housework/other responsibilities
- Craving more
- Not keeping up the skills and techniques learnt during intervention
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

If I see these early warning signs I will take some action immediately and refer to my Relapse prevention plan.

Support people I can call on are:

Support person / agency	Contact number
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____