SelfImproveCoach

Relapse Prevention Session Blueprint

A collaborative CBT guide to maintaining gains and responding to setbacks

1 Frame the conversation

- Explain that recovery is rarely a straight line. A difficult day does not erase progress.
- Agree the aim: recognise early signs, reuse helpful skills and know when to seek support.

2 Review what has changed

- Ask: What feels different from when we began? What are you doing now that was difficult before?
- Review goals, functioning, meaningful activities and outcome measures where appropriate.
- Identify the skills and conditions that supported improvement.

3 Map personal warning signs

- Explore early changes in thoughts, feelings, body sensations and behaviour.
- Look for familiar maintaining patterns: avoidance, reassurance seeking, withdrawal, overchecking or rumination.
- Ask: What would someone close to you notice first?

Clinical reminder: distinguish a temporary setback from a sustained deterioration; reassess risk and needs when indicated.

Move from recognising patterns to a personalised response plan

4 Create an early-response ladder

- GREEN | Staying well: continue routines, valued activities, social connection and skills practice.
- AMBER | Early signs: name the pattern, reduce avoidance, restart one manageable action and review supports.
- RED | Significant deterioration: contact appropriate clinical or crisis support; follow an individual safety plan where relevant.

5 Rehearse the plan in session

- Choose one realistic trigger or setback scenario and ask: What might happen next?
- Practise a specific response, such as behavioural activation, problem solving, graded exposure or flexible thinking.
- Plan when, where and how the client will use the skill; check feasibility and accommodations.

6 Build a support and review plan

- Identify supportive people and services, how to contact them, and what help to request.
- Agree a review point and signs that indicate the plan needs adjusting.
- Avoid promising that relapse can always be prevented; focus on preparedness and early action.

Therapist Prompts and Client Plan

Use these questions to make relapse prevention concrete and collaborative

7 Helpful therapist questions

- What are your earliest signs that things may be getting harder?
- Which CBT skill has been most useful, and what makes it easier to use?
- What could get in the way of following your plan? What is a smaller first step?
- Who would you contact if difficulties persisted or safety became a concern?

8 Worked example: social anxiety

- Warning sign: declining invitations and replaying conversations for hours.
- Early response: attend one manageable social activity, notice safety behaviours and review what was learned.
- If difficulties grow: discuss barriers, revisit the formulation and seek further clinical support as needed.

9 Complete together: personal plan

- My early warning signs: _____
- One helpful action I can take: _____
- Skills and people I can draw on: _____
- When I will review my plan / seek additional help: _____

Takeaway: Notice early • Respond flexibly • Reconnect with what matters • Ask for support when needed.