

# The 4 R's of Dealing with Relapse

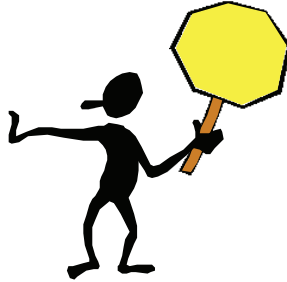
by Janet Wheeler

Occasional slips and failures are not unusual, especially in early recovery. If, in spite of your efforts to resist your old patterns, you find yourself revisiting old behaviors, the most important thing is to turn quickly from those activities and recommit yourself to your recovery. These four words starting with the letter "R" can help guide you through that process:

## RESIST

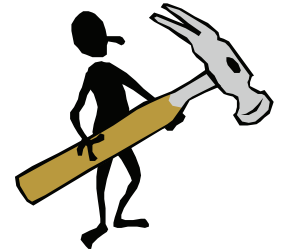
Resist the urge to waste both time and energy telling yourself you're a loser or a hopeless sinner. It's not productive. On the flip side, don't try to convince yourself that a slip or fall is not a big deal. It is a VERY big deal. The reality is that relapses show you there are still some issues in your life that haven't been dealt with yet.

Instead of beating yourself up, use your energy to explore what those issues might be and ask God to show you what to do about them.



## RENEW

Renew your commitment to recovery. Don't let a slip take your focus off your original desire to find healing and freedom. Avoid making promises— they only set you up for failure. Promises say "from this day forward I guarantee I will be perfect." It's a statement that



none of us can make. Perfection is an all or nothing proposition. There's no such thing as practically perfect. We either are or we aren't. If we are anything less than perfect, even if it is a significant improvement, we have broken our promise. We're done. We failed.

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*Only God can heal  
our deepest wounds and  
restore our true selves.*

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## REVIEW

Review what's been going on in the hours, days, and weeks just prior to the relapse. Were you feeling isolated, rejected, helpless, stressed, or inferior? These and many other thoughts and emotions can actually be some of the non-sexual triggers that push you toward your compulsive behaviors. If you can isolate what they are for you, you can begin to work with a counselor, pastor or trusted friend to find ways to lessen their impact. Very often, these are re-occurring feelings that have haunted you for many, many years. It's time to get to the bottom of them.



## REPENT

Repent to God for falling back into your old habit of seeking something other than HIM to deal with life's struggles. God wants, and is fully able, to be our provider, protector, and comforter, but he never forces us to accept the blessings he offers. If we insist on dealing with things in our own way, he won't interfere, but he *will* continue to love us and beckon to us to cast all our cares on him and allow him to heal our brokenness and soothe our fears.



Making a commitment, on the other hand, is saying "No matter what it takes, I will keep picking myself up, turning to God and others, and focusing on what it takes to live healthy and whole. If I fall, I will get up and keep going. I will not give up until I have found freedom."

Commitments are open ended. They are ongoing. In fact, they are never over unless we intentionally decide to throw in the towel and quit trying. If we occasionally miss the mark we were striving for, it is not over. We just stop and learn what we can learn from the situation and continue on toward our goal.

True healing takes time and hard work. God will do the work that is needed in to change our hearts, as long as we keep surrendering our fears, frustrations and failures into his capable hands. We are never alone. As our relationship with him grows stronger we will become increasingly more aware that he is always by our side, ready to help support us when we are feeling our most vulnerable. All we need to do is turn to him.

*"When I said, 'My foot is slipping,' your unfailing love, Lord, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy." — Psalm 94:18-19 (NIV)*