



# Aftercare for Drug & Alcohol Rehab

**NOMA**  
RECOVERY

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Overcoming addiction is a long journey, full of challenges, struggles and triumphs. Recognizing the dangers of substance abuse and beginning the path to recovery through rehab is an important starting place, but completing rehab doesn't bring your recovery journey to a close. After you leave rehab, it's important to understand the temptations you may face and the tools available to help you prevent relapse and continue your recovery.





After Rehab

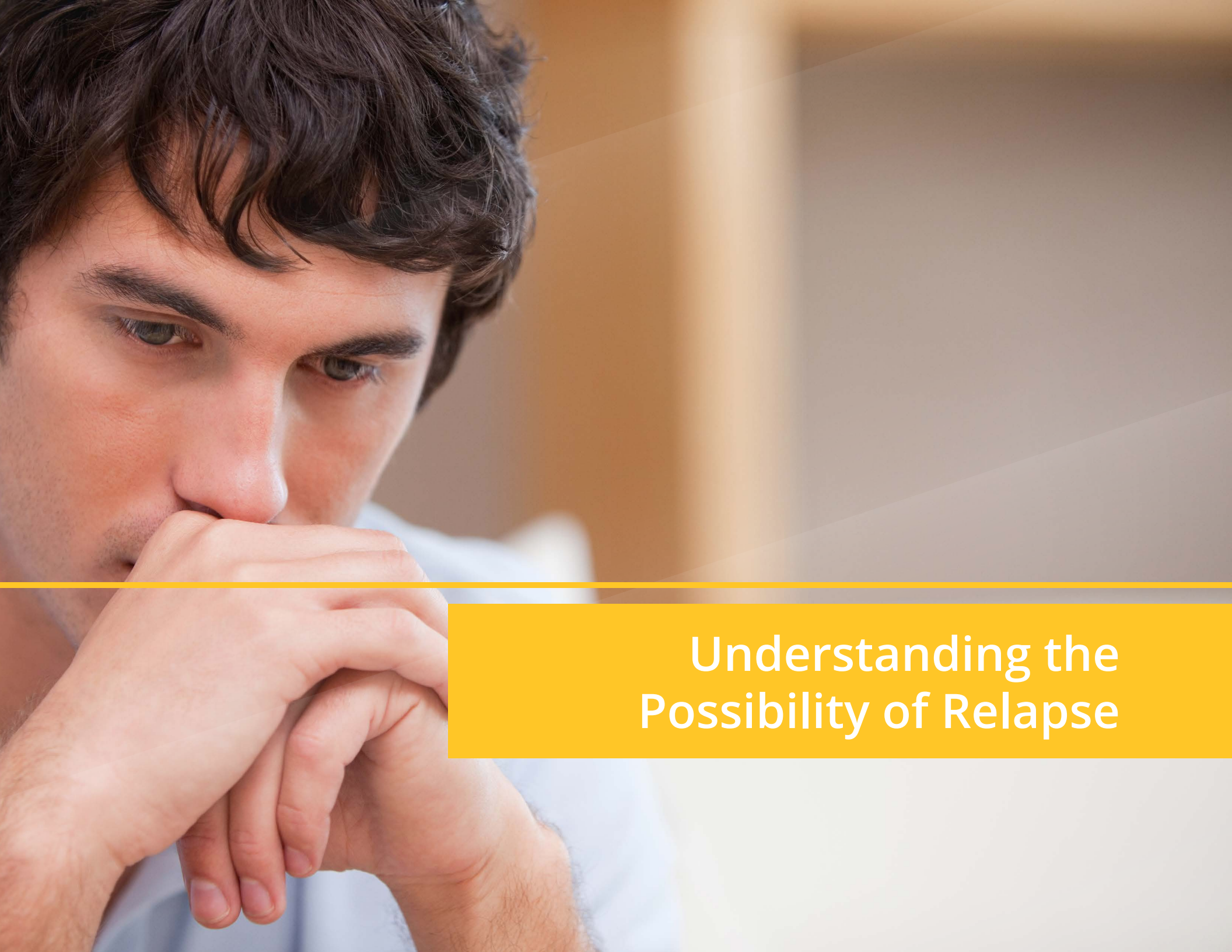
## It's important to understand the new parameters of your life outside of the treatment program so you can be aware of the challenges you will face.

The time you spend in an addiction treatment program is important to your health, both short and long term. In the short term, your body has detoxified and begun to recover from the effects of substance abuse, and through therapy, you have started to learn coping mechanisms that will help you stay on the path to recovery.

Completing rehab can be an intimidating prospect. Your time there was monitored and support structures were available to help you if the urge to relapse appeared, but once you have completed your program, those support structures may not seem as readily available.

It's important to understand the new parameters of your life outside of the treatment program so you can be aware of the challenges you will face. Caring for yourself after rehab is vital to your continued sobriety. There are many avenues of support that you can find outside of rehab that can help you remain on the path of recovery.





## Understanding the Possibility of Relapse

Once you have completed a treatment program, you may feel as though you don't need to actively pursue sobriety because you have overcome your addiction. However, once you have returned to your day-to-day life, the stress of work, family or other things can put you at risk for a relapse.

Often times, people view a relapse as a single event, but it typically happens over the course of many occasions.<sup>1</sup> It is usually rare for a relapse to result from a single emotionally damaging occurrence, though it is possible.

There is a difference between a lapse and a relapse. A lapse might be a single occurrence. If you recognize and acknowledge your lapse and return to your recovery plan immediately, you may not suffer a major setback, but if a lapse is not dealt with, it can become a full relapse, with all manner of old habits returning to your life. A relapse is a return to substance abuse.

Altering your lifestyle habits can be difficult, and sometimes it may seem as though changing is harder than it's worth. Life often involves a series of emotional setbacks that can weigh on the mind and encourage your thoughts to turn back to the drugs or alcohol that you struggled to overcome.

These types of emotional stresses can be triggers for a lapse. Feelings of stress and anxiety can trigger a desire to return to old habits. A significant part of addiction revolves around the reward sensations associated with many substances. During times of emotional upheaval, it may seem like returning to those substances may help you cope.

Other things can act as triggers, reminding you of drug or alcohol use and sparking cravings that put you at risk for a lapse.<sup>2</sup> These triggers could stem from a piece of music, an old photo or a familiar location. You might also interact with someone who is connected to your old life, and they might invite you to start using again with them.

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Any of these can be part of the path to a lapse, but they are only part of the process. Once these emotional stresses or physical cravings have developed, you may start to think that returning to your old habits will make you feel better. This can lead you to put yourself in a situation where it is easier to succumb, such as going to a bar or spending time around drug-using acquaintances.

Once you put yourself in one of these situations, it is much more difficult to avoid a lapse, and once you lapse, you may feel guilt and shame that can lead to a full relapse. Understanding these risks and taking steps to build support structures for yourself is an important part of the recovery process. By learning how to handle a lapse and finding people who can encourage you when you start to feel the emotional stresses and physical cravings, you can give yourself a better chance of fending off a relapse.

A young woman with long, wavy blonde hair is shown in profile, looking down at her smartphone. She is wearing a light-colored, sleeveless top. The setting is a modern, bright cafe or office space with large windows in the background. The windows show a blurred view of a city street with buildings and trees. In the foreground, there are white tables and chairs, and a small table with a blue water bottle and a coffee cup. A yellow banner with white text is overlaid on the image.

Setting Yourself Up for Success



## Developing strong coping mechanisms is important to handling and reducing your cravings, and there are many ways in which to build positive skills that can help you overcome cravings.

The dangers of relapse are real, but you can help yourself by preparing for the various triggers that might lead you to relapse. In order to do this, you have to develop a strategy for dealing with the mental, emotional and physical challenges that you may encounter throughout your life. Fending off a relapse requires understanding that a lapse, while still a setback, does not mean that all of your hard work has been wasted, and if you return to your strategy, you can eventually diminish your cravings and learn to cope without them.

Developing strong coping mechanisms is important to handling and reducing your cravings, and there are many ways in which to build positive skills that can help you overcome cravings. These coping skills might include meditation, finding new outlets for your energy, recognizing risky behaviors, learning techniques for handling emotional stress and practicing your reactions to possible situations.



What you are eating also impacts your mental and physical well-being. Eating balanced meals and exercising can help your body and mind realize the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Knowing how you feel when you eat well and exercise can help you recognize and manage life's emotional and physical stresses.

Learning how to provide yourself with positive rewards can also be an important part of your strategy for relapse prevention. These rewards can be anything from special treats to fun activities, so long as they don't counteract your strategy.

Building these types of coping skills should be a vital aspect of your relapse prevention strategy, but it's also important to find a strong support structure to help you if the temptation to relapse becomes too strong for your coping skills.



## Finding Good Support Systems

One of the most dangerous aspects of recovery for someone struggling with addiction can be the strong undercurrent of individuality inherent in this country. Many people believe they must endure recovery by themselves and that the only way to be truly successful in recovery is to make their own way. Asking for help may even feel like a failure.

This mentality can be as destructive as the substance abuse it is attempting to overcome. There should be no shame in asking for help when attempting to recover from addiction.<sup>3</sup>

Developing strong support groups can help you maintain your recovery strategy and combat the temptation of relapse. There are a variety of avenues you can pursue in order to build a strong support structure. Just as your internal coping mechanisms are vital, so also is developing a community of people around you who can be there with you through the good and bad times.

**Developing strong support groups can help you maintain your recovery strategy and combat the temptation of relapse.**



Family and friends are often a good source of encouragement and stability. As people who care about your well-being, they can be there to assist you when no one else can. Your treatment facility may also offer support programs that utilize the skill and dedication of their therapists to help you build more coping skills.

Locating and joining a local support group can put you in contact with other people who are also living the sober life. These interactions can help you see the possibilities of success and encourage you to continue on your own road to recovery.

Community and faith-based support groups are also possible places for you to find support. A strong sense of community can bring necessary support to your life.

Through these different opportunities, you can develop a support structure that will be present to help you if you experience the urge to relapse.



## The Support of Family and Friends





Family and friends can be an important part of your support group, depending on your relationship with them. Drug and alcohol addiction can be fraught with enabling behavior and denial. During your treatment program, your family might have been involved in your therapy and treatment, and this may have been a good opportunity for them to learn about the behavior they supported and how to deal with it.

After rehab, your family can be a strong source of support while you acclimate to independent living again. There are many opportunities for continued education both for yourself and for your family and friends that can help them learn about addiction and the recovery process.<sup>4</sup>





Your family can also accompany you to support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous so they may continue to learn about the struggles of addiction and also to support your continued recovery by their presence.

In a similar way, your friends can be a source of support by helping you engage in fun and safe activities and by helping you to avoid scenarios that might involve temptation. With the support of your family and friends, you can maintain a healthy lifestyle.

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Support from Your Treatment Center

You may also be able to find support opportunities with your treatment center. Many treatment centers offer a variety of aftercare services including intensive outpatient programs, sober living programs and personal monitoring.

Intensive outpatient programs are often available for those who are leaving an inpatient residential treatment program but still require a certain level of support and education. These programs typically meet a few times a week and last for around two months. They can help you discover more about addiction and delve into your personal needs for recovery.

Sober living homes may also be an option for you through your treatment center. These homes provide a more organized environment than an independent living situation. Those who live in the house are also on the path to recovery, and this can foster a community that helps each other through difficult times and builds the necessary skills to live independently.<sup>5</sup>

Personal monitoring may be important immediately after leaving rehab. Typically, this involves pairing up with a sobriety mentor who can provide continued support. Your mentor can work with you to develop coping skills and prepare your recovery strategy. Your sobriety mentor can also engage with your family and friends in order to best determine how to help you maintain your recovery strategy. These partnerships often last for around three months and involve frequent contact.





## Finding Support Groups & Dual Diagnosis

Engaging with peer support groups can be another beneficial way to aid your own recovery. Participation in groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous may provide the sort of accountability and structure that you may need to remain sober while also allowing you to live independently.

When you are able to share and discuss your struggles with addiction and continued sobriety, you can recognize challenges that may not have been otherwise apparent. You can also take comfort in the fact that others struggle in similar ways and still maintain their own sobriety. Seeing others successfully living their recovery can have a positive impact on your own outlook.<sup>6</sup>

Those struggling with addiction may also develop mental health issues, such as depression or anxiety. Sometimes these mental health issues may have led to your addiction. In order to live a healthy life, both the addiction and mental health issues need to be identified and treated. Dual diagnosis refers to the combined diagnosis of mental health and substance abuse problems.<sup>7</sup>

Support groups can be important for the treatment of both substance abuse and mental health issues. Finding encouragement and structure with others who struggle with addiction and mental health can make the difficult path of sobriety easier to bear.





Living in a Supportive Community



All of these pieces can fit together into a strong support structure, and it is important for you to engage in a supportive community. This may be family and friends, or the support offered by your treatment center or other community-based support groups.

There are many faith-based community groups that you can engage with and find support. If you find yourself drawn to a particular religion, you may be able to find a support group that consists of other believers of that faith. This can encourage deep bonds of solidarity, and religion can also provide opportunities for you to build daily routines through prayer, meditation or other practices.<sup>8</sup>

Regardless of whether you are interested in religion or not, an important part of building a strong support structure is developing a good community. Your friends and family are part of your community, but there are many opportunities to expand your community to include people who can have a positive influence on your recovery.

A man with a beard and short hair, wearing a blue denim shirt over a white t-shirt, is sitting at a wooden table. He is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression, his hand resting on his chin. On the table in front of him are a blue coffee cup on a saucer, a slice of cake on a plate, a tablet computer, and an open newspaper. The background is a wall of horizontal wooden planks.

## Learning to Avoid Temptation



Developing a strong, cohesive support structure is important for your continued recovery, and unfortunately, that sometimes involves excluding people from your life. As someone who is committed to live a sober life, surrounding yourself with people who continue to abuse drugs or alcohol will only put you at risk for a relapse.

During your substance abuse, you may have developed friendships with other people who also struggled with addiction. While it may seem rude to avoid them, if they persist in their substance abuse, they can only interfere with your goal of recovery. They may view your recovery as a judgment on them and may attempt to pressure you into using again. Even if they don't attempt to pressure you, seeing them using may trigger cravings.

Not only can interacting with people from your old life create temptations, but it also involves revisiting places where you drank or used drugs. These locations can trigger cravings. If you meet someone you used to drink with at a bar, not only will that person's actions provide temptation but the location itself can have a negative effect on your resolve to remain sober.





Staying away from these temptations is vital to avoiding a relapse, and this often means removing yourself from friendships and locations that are dangerous to you. Breaking away from these relationships can be a challenge, but it is important to surround yourself with positive influences.

If you find yourself in a difficult situation, remember the coping skills you have learned through your treatment program. Rely on your support structure: call a family member, a friend or a sponsor. The support structures you develop are there to help you when you face temptation.



Recovery for Life





Completing rehab is an important step on your journey of recovery, and it is a new beginning. You can take the skills you learned during your treatment program and begin to apply them to your life. The stricter confines of a treatment program are gone, but there are many new forms of support that you can develop in order to maintain a sober life and build upon the progress you have already made.

There are many challenges, struggles and triumphs ahead of you, but with a good recovery strategy, a determination to live a sober life and strong support structures, you can live a healthy life. Recovery does not occur overnight. It is a lifelong commitment, but the rewards are worth it.



## Sources

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## Treating Addiction at its Core

Therapy should treat more than just your symptoms. Addiction is a deeply rooted disease—one that can't simply be removed—and the emotions, history and attitudes behind your behaviors need to be resolved in order to heal your mind and body.

Balance creates strength. It is vital that your treatment includes various methodologies to create a solid foundation on which to build your recovery. Our fluid, individualized process completely focuses on your growth and leads you to long-lasting recovery.

**1 (855) 834-6682**

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