BACKWARD STEPS TO ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS

TRIGGERS — External, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Which areas are the riskiest for you? Which do you have the most difficulty combating? Rate each category from 0-10 (where 10 is the riskiest or most difficult).

a. ______ Conditioned responses in certain settings
b. ______ Unpleasant emotions
c. ______ Unpleasant physical sensations
d. ______ Pleasant emotions
e. ______ Pressure from others
f. ______ Conflict with others
g. ______ Socializing
h. ______ Testing personal control

IMAGINING/FANTASIZING — Start to imagine what it would be like to... how you would feel, how you would think and act ... then...

“STINKING THINKING” — Irrational beliefs, cognitive distortions, and rationalizations that you used to convince yourself to take the backward step.

a. ______ Negative exaggeration; awfulizing; catastrophizing.
b. ______ Self-downing / self denigration.
c. ______ Rationalizations:
   “It won’t really matter.”
   “I deserve it.”
   “I will only have one.”
   “It’s been a long time.”
d. ______ Low frustration tolerance:
   “I can’t stand it.”
   “It’s awful.”
e. ______ The tyranny of the should:
   “It shouldn’t be so hard.”
   “I shouldn’t have this problem.”
   “S/he shouldn’t speak to me that way.”
   “The world stinks, and it shouldn’t!”
PLANNING
— ‘I’ll just go down to the store and buy a bottle.’
— ‘I’ll finish this project and then go to the bar.’
— ‘I’ll take some money out of my other account.’
— Others: ________________________________________________

ACTING — Behaviors that led to UNDESIRABLE OUTCOMES (list them)

Teach yourself how to respond at each step. Even though it gets harder to intervene at each step along the way, it can be done. Practice rehearsing relapse preventive self-talk in SMART Recovery group meetings (role-playing is an excellent exercise), out loud at home, into a tape recorder, or in writing.