Backward Steps to Addictive Behavior

Just as recovery is a *process* and *not an event*, relapse is also a *process*. As a part of your relapse prevention plan, cultivate your awareness of these five common backward steps toward addictive behavior:

TRIGGERS External, interpersonal, and intrapersonal.
Rate each trigger category in the list below 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

EUPHORIC RECALL Remembering past experiences with your drug of choice (DOC) in a positive light, while overlooking or discounting the negative consequences of using or doing your DOC.

UNHELPFUL THINKING Irrational beliefs, cognitive distortions, and rationalizations that you use to convince yourself to take the backward step.
Review the list below and check the types of unhelpful thinking that create problems for you:

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 (LFT):
"I can't stand any more of this!"
"Auuuugghhhh!! This is awful!"

e.___ The "Tyranny of the Shoulds":
"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 Thinking ahead and planning a strategy for "using or doing" your DOC.

– "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."
– Other planning examples:_____

ACTING Engaging in behaviors that have led to undesirable outcomes in the past (make a list).

_____
_____
_____

This exercise is a first step in cultivating an awareness of the signs that may indicate that you are slipping back into your old addictive behaviors.

The next step in your relapse prevention strategy is to develop your own personal plan for how you will respond when you notice that you've taken a "backward step". The Change Plan Worksheet may be helpful for this purpose.