

Worksheet 12.1: Timeline example

Looking ahead and contingency planning can really help to smooth the recovery path. Although it is not realistic to assume this will avoid all lapses and relapses, it can reduce the likelihood of major relapses. In addition, lapses are an important part of the recovery process as Edi reviews, reflects and learns from the experience. It is important for carers to keep giving lots of support and positive affirmations through the maintenance stage while also looking out for signs of relapse. Creating a timeline can be a useful way of predicting when risk of relapse increases.

In pairs or as a group think of a scenario in which Edi has some potentially difficult events coming up, or use this scenario.

Scenario

Jade, age 15, is recovering from bulimia nervosa and hasn't had any binge/purge episodes for 6 months. She enjoys running and yoga and has established a regular eating pattern with the help of a nutritionist who she really respects. Jade has never had a formal diagnosis or been offered any other therapy but has found the nutritionist has really helped her in many ways, not just with meal planning. They have agreed that it is time to stop having regular meetings and the nutritionist suggests they create a timeline to see if there are any future events that might trip Jade up. Then they can make some plans just in case.

- Help Jade to create a timeline of future events that might prove to be stressful.
- Help Jade to identify specific stress issues that might trigger a lapse or relapse
- Help Jade to come up with some ideas (menu of options) that might help her to minimise stress and/or provide soothing distractions that might help her to avoid relapse.
- Help Jade to think up some strategies if she does slip up.

Timeline

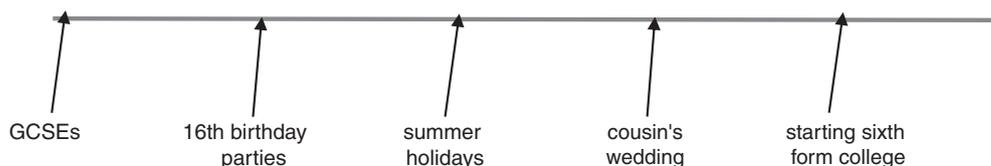


Figure 12.2 Timeline for Jade – identifying key upcoming events

- Specific aspects of each of the above events that could prove challenging are...

- Menu of options that might be helpful for Jade to reduce the risk of relapse...

- Strategies if Jade does slip up are...

When Edi has had a recent relapse, it is important to review what has happened and make a plan to get back on track. How the carer and Edi respond to a lapse or relapse is actually more important than that the lapse occurred. Addressing it early and diligently can prevent a single lapse from becoming a full scale relapse or from truly derailing Edi's recovery.

A useful relapse prevention plan can be found at www.mirror-mirror.org/relplan.htm.