

## Life Skill #1

### TOOL: "FASTER" AWARENESS SCALE

Anything that speeds up the body dulls the awareness of physical and emotional pain.

The FASTER Scale is a neurochemical model of relapse presented in the form of a behavior scale for relapse awareness. Before relapse happens, many biological, psychological, and social changes affect your neurochemistry. You speed up to avoid fear and pain increasing anxiety and anger. Emotions can be used to mask pain. This depletes neurochemicals, causing hopelessness and exhaustion. In this state of exhaustion, addicts isolate themselves and feel they cannot cope without chemicals. Relapse is inevitable. Every letter in the word "FASTER" stands for one of the steps in the relapse scale on the following pages. This scale reflects a progression of strong emotions that mask pain. It explains neurochemically what you go through in your descent to relapse. Remember anger and anxiety release adrenaline and norepinephrine, which speed up the body. After speeding up, you get ticked off, and then exhausted. Have you relapsed because you felt the hopelessness of exhaustion? Remember your last words and feelings before you relapsed.

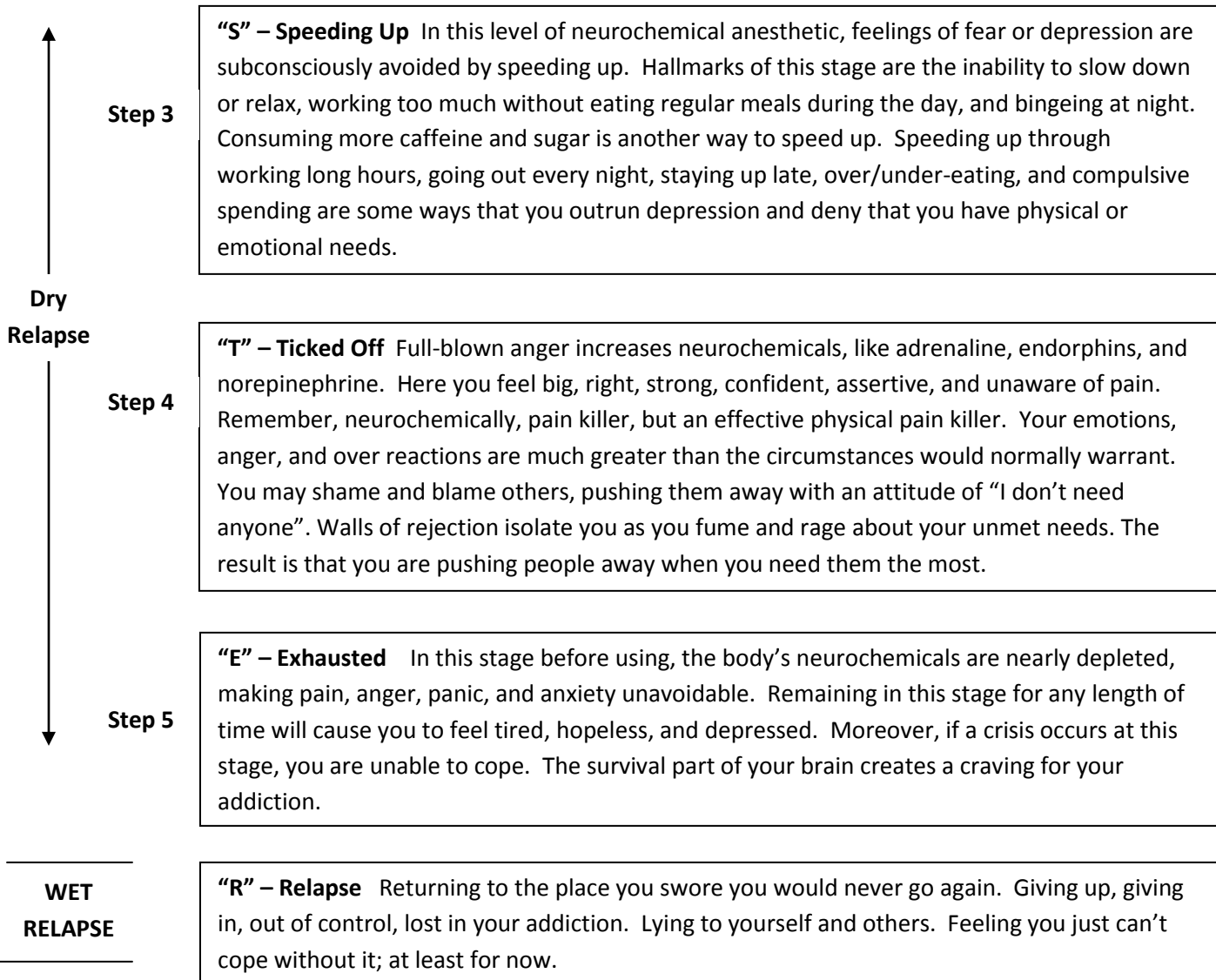
**"R" – Recovery** The highest state on the model is the first stage – Recovery. This depicts "surrender". It is an attitude of acceptance of life on God's terms, taking both the good and bad with an attitude of gratefulness for God's love and help from others, moving forward openly and honestly, and facing and resolving problems. It is becoming part of the solution rather than the problem. Keeping secrets causes relapse. Recovery means staying accountable.

↑  
Step 1  
Dry  
Relapse

**"F" – Forgetting Priorities** A sudden change in plans and priorities is one of the first signs of a dry relapse. For example, a person plans to go back to school in order to obtain a degree. One week later, the plan changes. The plan now is to go out and get a job, a new car, an apartment and to think later about going back to school. Either consciously or subconsciously, the person facing the new challenge wants to find a way to avoid it. New priorities produce excitement – releasing chemicals in the limbic system, which speed up the body and diminish fear or boredom. You begin to avoid simple life tasks or recovery commitments.

↓  
Step 2

**"A" – Anxiety** The next level of neurochemical release is brought about by drama – overreaction or under reaction to circumstances and to others. In the stage, old tapes are run over and over again. In recovery circles, this is called "blaming people, places, and things for the way you feel". When you become critical of other people's behavior, your focus is directed toward them, and away from yourself and your own problems. Faith and worry cannot exist in the same mind at the same time. When you choose to worry about things, especially things you can't control, you feel an emotional charge, an anxious adrenaline rush fueled by the "regrets" of the past and the "what if's" of the future. Unfortunately, your ability to see and resolve today's problems is greatly diminished.



All of the steps have one thing in common: **procrastination**. As you fail to deal with problems, you move down the FASTER Scale. Crisis comes at a time when you are least able to deal with it emotionally. The short version of the FASTER scale is **speeding up > ticked off> exhausted>relapse**. Procrastination makes problems worse, and isolation eliminates the wise counsel of your sponsor, friends, and family, who will help you see the big picture and resolve problems. **Addicts must accomplish isolation in order to relapse**. Regular accountability (using the FASTER scale) is the antidote for isolation.

To learn more about this tool and coaching with a Relapse Prevention Specialist contact Tammy Hardin (865) 789-4939, [www.EmotionalAndAddictionRecovery.com](http://www.EmotionalAndAddictionRecovery.com)

To learn more about becoming a Relapse Prevention Specialist contact Michael Dye at [www.GenesisProcess.org](http://www.GenesisProcess.org)