

## AGGRESSION RELAPSE CYCLE

### RELAPSE

**Relapse**, whether it is the aggressive response to feeling angry, use of substances or both, **is a process** that creates a sense of helplessness which perpetuates the aggression-relapse cycle.

### 4 PHASE PROCESS

1. **The Buildup Phase:** Changes occur in **Behaviors, Emotions, Sensations, and Thinking**. The person begins to **feel** angry, frustrated, deprived, etc and begins a process of rationalizations (**stinking thinking**) to justify why he/she has a right to be angry and aggressive, to drink or use, or both. The thoughts begin to generate **behaviors** which are high risk for relapse to aggression or alcohol/drug use.
2. **The Use/Explosion Phase:** Having been unaware of the changes which occurred in the Buildup Phase the person sees using or aggression as the only option available and becomes aggressive and begins to use or both.
3. **The Remorse and/or Relief Phase:** During this phase there is a combination of guilt, Shame, remorse, anger and self-blame which is coupled with a sense of relief after discharging the emotions which built up. Promises are often made that it will never happen again.
4. **The Honeymoon Phase:** For a period of time the aggressor will be loving and generous toward the victim/victims. Unless the cycle is interrupted there will be a re-activation of the Buildup Phase and the process starts over again.

### TRIGGERS

**Triggers** are environmental factors including: **people, places, things, events** and **times** which generate irritable reactions and increase relapse potential.

### CUES

**Cues** are the changes which take place in a person's **Behaviors, Emotions, Sensations and Thinking** in a response to a Trigger. These changes are **progressive** and move from **subtle and manageable to overt and unmanageable**.

1. **Behaviors :** These are things that you Do! Pacing, Wandering, Fist Clenching, Withdrawal, Pouting, Gesturing, Going to High Risk Situations, Associating with Persons who Use, Avoiding Supportive People, etc.
2. **Emotions:** These are things that you FEEL! Anger, Sadness, Guilt, Shame, etc.
3. **Sensations:** These are changes WITHIN YOUR BODIES! Heart pounding, Perspiration, Headache, Muscle Tension, etc.
4. **Thinking:** These are the words you are SAYING TO YOURSELF about the situation and HOW YOU SAY THEM (Excuse making, confused, angry, fearful, etc)