

If your commute home brings on cravings, anxiety, or thoughts about using, you are not doing recovery “wrong.” A familiar road, a certain time of day, traffic stress, or the feeling of being alone after work can all become connected with past routines. The good news is that you can experiment with the parts of the commute you can control—without trying to overhaul your whole life at once.

The goal is not to make every trip feel easy. It is to create enough structure and support to get through a vulnerable stretch safely, then adjust based on what actually [windstream](#) helps. Below are practical ways to change your route home in sobriety, manage routine triggers, and respond to after-work cravings while keeping work, treatment, and family responsibilities in view.

First, Notice What Makes the Commute Difficult

“The drive home is a trigger” is a useful starting point, but getting specific makes it easier to choose a response. For a few days, note what happens before, during, and after the commute. This is not a test or a demand to write a long journal entry. A quick note on your phone can be enough.

- **When:** Does it happen at a certain time, after a particular shift, or on specific days?
- **Where:** Is there a particular road, store, neighborhood, or stop you associate with using?
- **What you feel:** Are you tired, hungry, tense, lonely, restless, or relieved to be done?
- **What happens next:** Do you drive past somewhere, stop to run an errand, or go home to an empty house?
- **What helps even a little:** A call, a snack, a different route, music, or having someone meet you?

You do not need to identify every cause before making a change. If you already know that a certain stop or stretch of road is strongly connected to past use, plan around it. If cravings feel intense or you are worried you may act on them, contact a trusted support person or treatment provider rather than trying to manage the moment alone.

Change the Commute, Not Your Whole Life

Changing your route home in sobriety can help interrupt an automatic routine. It does not have to be a dramatic detour. Consider a safer, practical alternative that avoids a high-risk stop or gives you a different sequence of events after work.



- Try another route for a week, even if it adds a few minutes.
- Use public transit, carpool, or ask someone you trust for a ride on especially difficult days, if those options are realistic.
- Plan errands for a different time or ask someone to go with you rather than stopping alone on the way home.
- Set a destination before leaving work, such as home, a support meeting, or a planned appointment.
- Choose audio ahead of time—a familiar playlist, a recovery podcast, or a calm voice on the phone—so you are not making decisions while stressed.

Keep driving safety in mind. Do not text or hold a phone while driving, and do not use an audio or phone plan that distracts you. If you feel too distressed or impaired to drive safely, pull over somewhere safe and contact someone who can help you figure out the next step.

Make a “If-Then” Plan for the Risky Part

A specific plan can be easier to use than a general promise to avoid triggers. Write one or two short “if-then” statements before the workday begins:

- **If** I feel an urge to stop at the usual place, **then** I will take my planned alternate route and call my support person once I am parked.
- **If** traffic makes me tense, **then** I will leave extra time when possible, slow my breathing, and avoid making an unplanned stop.
- **If** I arrive home and feel alone, **then** I will follow my first-hour routine and check in with someone before the craving builds.

Keep the plan somewhere easy to see. It can be a note in your bag, a reminder on your phone, or a card in the car. The point is to reduce the number of decisions you have to make in a difficult moment.

Build a First-Hour-Home Routine

For many people, the commute is only one part of the vulnerable window. The transition from work to home can bring fatigue, stress, hunger, or a sudden lack of structure. A short landing routine gives that hour some shape without filling every minute.

1. **Arrive safely.** Put your keys in their usual place and take a moment to notice how you are feeling.
2. **Meet a basic need.** Drink water and have a simple snack or meal if you are hungry.
3. **Connect.** Send a check-in text, make a planned call, or attend a scheduled support activity.
4. **Change gears.** Take a shower, change clothes, walk, or do another low-effort activity that signals the workday is over.
5. **Keep the evening manageable.** Choose one next task, not a long list of chores you have to finish immediately.

It may help to keep easy food at home, charge your phone before work, or arrange a regular check-in for the days you find hardest. These are small supports, not a guarantee that cravings will disappear. If one part of the routine is unrealistic, adjust it rather than deciding the entire plan has failed.

Protect the Basics: Sleep, Food, and Appointments

Recovery planning has to fit a real schedule. Sleep, meals, and treatment appointments can be difficult to coordinate around work and family, but they are worth treating as practical parts of the week—not extras you only manage when everything else is settled.

- **Sleep:** Aim for a reasonably consistent bedtime and wake time when your work schedule allows. Prepare for the next morning before bed so the evening is not packed with last-minute tasks.
- **Food:** Keep a portable snack available if you often leave work hungry. Plan a few simple meals rather than expecting yourself to cook from scratch every night.
- **Appointments:** Put counseling, medication-related visits, groups, and other recovery appointments on your calendar. Ask about available scheduling options if work hours make attendance difficult.
- **Support:** Decide in advance who you can contact and how. Save the number or write down the meeting information before you need it.

Some people notice that tiredness or missed meals make after-work cravings harder to manage. That does not mean sleep or food alone will solve the problem; they are supports that can make it easier to use the rest of your plan. If sleep, appetite, mood, or cravings are persistently difficult, bring that up with a qualified healthcare or treatment professional.

Match Treatment Intensity to Real Life

There is no single schedule that works for everyone. Treatment options can range from regular outpatient appointments to more frequent intensive outpatient care or partial hospitalization. The right level depends on clinical needs, safety, available support, and what a person's life can accommodate. A professional assessment can help you discuss those factors.

Be honest with your provider about the commute, work hours, caregiving, transportation, and other commitments. You do not have to pretend that an appointment time is workable if it conflicts with your shift. Ask what scheduling options, referrals, or step-up and step-down plans may be available. If the current plan does not feel sufficient—or feels impossible to maintain—tell the treatment team so you can review it together.

Marietta Spring Treatment is one resource to explore when learning about treatment services. Use a provider's website as a starting point, then contact the organization directly to confirm current services, availability, costs, and whether its programs fit your needs. An online resource cannot replace an individualized assessment.

For information about workplace-supported recovery, the CDC/NIOSH workplace-supported recovery resource offers information relevant to employers and workers. You can review general resources without sharing private medical details with a supervisor. If you need to discuss schedule or leave arrangements, consider getting advice from an appropriate workplace contact or professional about what information is necessary in your situation.



Returning to Work Step-by-Step

Returning to work after treatment or time away can bring relief, pressure, and uncertainty at the same time. A gradual, coordinated plan may be more sustainable than expecting yourself to restart at full speed immediately. When possible, discuss the plan with your treatment provider and the people responsible for workplace scheduling or leave. You can focus the conversation on work arrangements and practical needs without volunteering details you do not want to share.

- Confirm your start time, transportation, and any schedule changes before your first day back.
- Identify where you can take a break and how you will handle a difficult moment at work.
- Keep treatment appointments in the calendar and ask in advance about conflicts.
- Plan the trip home before the workday starts, including your alternate route and first-hour routine.
- Review the plan after a few days. Keep what helps; revise what adds stress without benefit.

If returning to work raises concerns about your health or recovery, talk with your treatment team. The aim is not to prove that you can manage everything without support. It is to build a plan that is safe, realistic, and responsive to what is happening.

A Simple Weekly Plan

Start with a small experiment rather than changing every part of your routine at once. Here is a one-week checklist you can adapt:

When One practical action What to check afterward Before the week begins Choose an alternate route and save a support contact. Is the route safe and realistic for your schedule? Each workday Bring water and a snack; confirm the plan for getting home. Did hunger, fatigue, or uncertainty affect the commute? After work Follow a short first-hour routine and check in with someone if planned. Which step was easiest to keep? Once during the week Review

appointments and ask your provider about any scheduling barrier. Does the treatment schedule fit your actual week? End of week Keep one helpful change and adjust one that did not work. What is the next manageable experiment?

For example, you might test a new route, have a snack before leaving, and call a support person after you park. That is enough for one week. If it helps, keep it. If it does not, look at what got in the way and try a different adjustment with support.

When to Reach Out for More Support

Cravings can vary, and a difficult commute does not automatically mean you need a completely different plan. Still, contact your treatment provider or recovery support if urges are getting more frequent, your current care feels inadequate, or you are struggling to follow through safely. If you are in immediate danger or believe you may harm yourself or someone else, seek emergency help in your area.

You can change the route, add a check-in, or create a calmer landing at home without solving everything in one day. Start with the part of the commute you can influence, build a modest weekly routine, and review it with people who support your recovery. A workable plan is one you can adjust as your needs and schedule change.