

Addiction Recovery and Prevention Program

SIX TASKS

TASK #1 -- Stress Relieving Coping Tools/ Emotional Regulation (EMOTIONAL COPING TOOLS)

- Increase use of coping strategies to help regulate emotions and daily stressors
- Increase emotional/stress tolerance
- Develop mindfulness and acceptance
- Develop better ability to identify, label, accept, tolerate and change emotions (often with a different emotion)
- Identify active behavioral coping strategies that can be used in the heat of the moment to alter mood/emotion. These need to be pre-planned and pre-practiced outside of the heat of the moment so that they are easier to use:
 - Call someone just to talk (for distraction)
 - Call someone to talk about triggers and desires, etc.
 - Text or call spouse or significant other just to check in or emotionally connect
 - Slow/deep breathing
 - Exercise (#1 way to restore brain functioning)
 - Meditation/Visualizations
 - Key words -- Relax, etc.
 - Physical cues -- rubbing hands or fingers together
 - Read a book, inspiring quote, scripture, etc.
 - Get up and go for a walk.
 - Get up and go get a drink of water.
 - Listen to an uplifting audio book or talk.
 - Schedule an activity during your vulnerable times.
 - Do process writing or "Clearing Out the Emotional Closet" exercise.

TASK #2 -- Eliminate Underlying Psychological Issues (COUNSELING)

- Participate in individual, couple, family counseling
- Address mental/emotional issues causing emotional distress (e.g. trauma, abuse, guilt, shame)
- Change learned automatic responses to avoid uncomfortable emotions. Decrease avoidant behaviors.
- Access and change the thoughts/emotions associated with negative/traumatic memories

TASK #3 -- Develop a Relapse Prevention Plan (TRIGGERS & MOTIVATIONS)

- TRIGGERS -- Develop skills to deal with the cravings (dopamine spike) and refrain from acting on the trigger (the desire to engage in the compulsive or addictive behavior). Key is the moment of desire not the acting out behavior itself. A dopamine spike only lasts a few minutes and will decrease if you can utilize a coping strategy such as distraction to avoid another dopamine spike.
- Accept that you will have cravings, but they can decrease in time as the brain changes.
- Identify your unique triggers: situational, cognitive, emotional (most are emotional triggers cued by situational or cognitive triggers). Triggers by definition cue the release of dopamine.
 - What are your triggers, cues or typical relapse scenarios that are most likely to create an urge to lapse back to old negative behaviors?
 - Identify your thought triggers as well as strategies to counteract the trigger, e.g. Things you can say to yourself, "Don't go there," "It's not worth it," "No!", etc.
- MOTIVATION -- Develop the ability to "remember what you really want" in that moment. Keep pics of family on your phone and around to look at often to remember what you want and motivate yourself to stay the course. Check in with yourself often on your level (1 low -10 high) of motivation to make positive changes.
- Motivational coping -- Create new motivations to compete with the old motivation for addictive/compulsive behavior:

- Positive Motivations -- Creating the feeling of wanting to remain sober. Identify positive consequences of not relapsing (1-immediate, 2-long-term, 3-impacting yourself, 4-impacting others). Identify your top 5 positive consequences that generate the strongest positive motivational/ feeling states. Practice daily feeling/ visualizing and generating the feeling and associated motivational state.
- Negative Motivations -- Identify a list of the losses or negative consequences of relapsing (1-immediate, 2-long-term, 3-impacting yourself, 4-impacting others). Identify your top 5 negative consequences that generate the strongest negative motivational/ feeling states. Practice daily feeling/visualizing and generating the feeling and associated motivational state.

- Activities
- Things -- Go-to toolbox of items (e.g. pictures, music, etc.)
- Let your support people know how to best help/support/respond:
 - 1-in general,
 - 2-if I am moving toward relapse or have relapsed and I'm asking for help,
 - 3-if I am moving toward relapse or have relapsed and I'm not asking for help.

TASK #6 -- Attend to Biological Health (HEALTH)

- Actively address your mental, emotional, physical health (e.g. Nutrition, water intake, sleep, exercise, medications, etc.)
- What are you feeding your mind and your body?

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**TASK #4 -- Address the Reward/ Motivational System (LIFE SATISFACTION)**

- Create a life worth living/increase overall Life Satisfaction:
  - Safety
  - Emotional Well-Being
  - Productivity
  - Leisure/Fun
  - Career/Retirement
  - Personal Development
  - Health
  - Relationships
  - Creativity
  - Financial/Material
  - Self-Acceptance
  - Life Purpose/Meaning
- Help push the dopamine system back towards normal by associating dopamine spikes with other rewarding activities.
- Create a list of your daily/weekly "Commitments" (instead of goals) with a place to check them off.

**EMOTIONAL REGULATION/COPING TOOLS** (tools to compete with negative emotions, e.g. anger, anxiety, stress -- BLAHST: bored, lonely, angry, hungry, stressed, tired)

- Holding a piece of ice
- Square breathing
- Visualization (close your eyes)
- Jumping Jacks
- Distraction

**TASK #5 -- Structure an Ongoing Support System (SUPPORT SYSTEM)**

- People -- 12-Step Sponsor, Accountability Partners, 12-step Groups/Meetings
- Places

(Reference: Dr. Tim Worden's "The Neurophysiology of Addiction and Brain Based Relapse Prevention")

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