

Substance Thoughts

Another approach to relapse prevention is to learn how to identify and deal with **substance thoughts**. **A substance thought is a memory, association, wish, want, need, desire, urge, or craving related to alcohol or drugs.** Substance thoughts are normal and are due to environmental factors, withdrawal symptoms, post acute withdrawal symptoms, from simply breaking an attachment, and from old coping styles. Recording your substance thoughts will help you learn to **recognize** when you are having substance thoughts. Increasing this awareness is important if you are trying to stop using, otherwise you may have substance thoughts and not even recognize that you are having them. How do you stop something you don't even recognize? The earlier you recognize your substance thoughts, the better the chance you have to effectively deal with them. In some instances, small substance thoughts can develop into urges and cravings. Your best chance of surviving these thoughts or urges is to intervene at the earliest point of recognition. Once you have recorded your substance thoughts in your journal, you may begin to notice habitual patterns related to your substance thoughts. Notice the substance thoughts recorded in the example on the next page. What **patterns** do you recognize?

Substance Thoughts Journal Example

*Rating	9	6	8	10
Triggers	Memories of past	Feeling nervous	Memories of past	Seeing beer
Time	3:00pm	6:30pm	9:00pm	8:15pm
Day	Thursday	Saturday	Thursday	Saturday
People	Mike	Chestnut people	Chestnut people	Chestnut people
Places	Chestnut	Funks Grove	Chestnut	Van – Gas station
Situation or event	Talked to counselor about past situation. I wanted to run	Recreation Group. I wanted to run.	Movie on child abuse. Bad memories. I wanted to run.	Saw woman buying beer.
Feelings (physical and emotional)	Angry, sad, self-pity	Paranoid, inadequate, nervous	Tired, sad, angry, self-pity	Angry
Intervention Response	Withdrew, talked with Mike	Talked with peers, diversion	Talked, withdrew, allowed myself to feel, talked to Tory, went to AA, took action, tried positive thinking	Blaming, passive-aggressive, left station, assertiveness, diversion, took action
** Consequence of Intervention Response	Felt good about self; 35 minutes	Felt better, had a good time; 10 minutes	Felt good about self; 10 minutes	Felt good about self; 15 minutes

The blank pages of the substance thoughts journal are for you to record your own substance thoughts. Please start recording your substance thoughts as they happen while you are in treatment. Recognizing your patterns and triggers should help you identify high-risk situations for relapse. It is suggested that you continue to record your substance thoughts after you leave treatment as you spend more time in your home environment.

Substance Thoughts Journal

*Rating				
Triggers				
Time				
Day				
People				
Places				
Situation or event				
Feelings (physical and emotional)				
Intervention Response				
** Consequence of Intervention Response				

* Rate the strength of each substance thought on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the strongest.

** The consequence of your intervention response should include how long the substance thought lasted, if you used substances or not, and how you felt after you put your intervention into action.

What kinds of patterns and triggers do you recognize from your own substance thoughts?

In your substance thoughts journal, you should have recorded your intervention responses. Intervention responses are the things that you do to deal with your substance thoughts. A response to a substance thought may be to use substances, but an intervention response is what you did to minimize the effect of your substance thought so that you didn't use substances. In your substance thoughts journal, what were your intervention responses?

Of your intervention responses, what things did you do that were most helpful?

What things did you do that weren't very helpful?
