

Script for Experiential Exercise 1

Close your eyes or gently gaze at the floor.

Take a few normal breaths and sit with what is present (feelings, thoughts, emotions, sensations, pain, and so on) for a moment.

Your mind may wander, which is totally normal; just observe your thoughts as if they were text moving across a television or computer screen. . . . Let them pass and fall away.

(Wait thirty seconds to a minute.)

Now, as you feel comfortable, I want you to consider a moving or powerful moment in your life, one that you consider inspiring, life changing, and emotional. Regardless of the type of experience you had (whether it was of happiness, sadness, anger, triumph, or fulfillment). Again, it doesn't matter if the judging part of your brain deems it "negative" or "bad." Try to revisit in your mind's eye as many details as possible (who was there, what was said, the feelings you felt). I'm going to let you sit with that for a moment before I continue.

(Wait one to two minutes.)

See if you can focus on some of the emotions you were feeling that day, both outside and inside of you. Continue to notice things that pop up. Distracting thoughts? Difficult emotions? A desire not to think about what I am asking you to think about? You may not feel anything at all. This is totally normal. There is no wrong way to do this exercise. Just observe whatever is there and gently bring your focus back to that event or moment.

(Wait one to two minutes.)

Now slowly return to the room. Continue to breathe. Maybe stretch a bit and ground yourself as you bring yourself back to the group.

Script for Experiential Exercise 2

Close your eyes or gently gaze at the floor.

Take a few normal breaths and sit with what is present (feelings, thoughts, emotions, sensations, pain, and so on) for a moment.

Your mind may wander, which is totally normal; just observe your thoughts as if they were text moving across a television or computer screen.

(Wait thirty seconds to a minute.)

This time I want you to think about a person you look up to or respect. Whether that person is a loved one, friend, ex-significant other—dead or alive—doesn't matter. Just choose someone who means a lot to you.

(Wait thirty seconds.)

I now want you to picture yourself writing a letter or e-mail to that person five years from now, updating him or her on how you are doing, including your current whereabouts, job, relationships, schooling, triumphs, successes, struggles, and so on. Your mind may wander or become distracted; remember to gently return it to the exercise—the letter you are writing and whom you are writing it to. Consider what you would want to tell this person about yourself. I'm going to let you sit with that for a moment before I continue.

(Wait one to two minutes.)

Now, for a moment I want you to picture this person reading the letter or e-mail. What does this person look like? What facial expression is this person wearing? What is the person feeling inside as he or she reads your letter? Again, your mind may wander or become distracted; remember to gently return it to the exercise and the image of the person reading your letter.

(Wait thirty seconds to one minute.)

Now slowly return to the room. Continue to breathe. Maybe stretch a bit and ground yourself as you bring yourself back to the group.

Value-Based Living: Ideas to Keep in Mind

(Facilitator Copy, page 1 of 2)

Important Points

1. Goals are the *destination*. Values help you choose and stay on the *path*.
Goals will not be accomplished every day of someone's life. However, valued decisions can be made every moment of every day. Even small decisions can enhance or impede someone's progress toward larger goals.
2. Values can be carried with you. Goals can be completed, accomplished, or finished.
This point is an extension of point 1. Again, you can always head in a valued direction, whether or not you ultimately reach your destination, that is, whether or not you achieve your goal. It is important to note and recognize that some goals may never be reached or accomplished, but one can always work toward them.
3. Values require *commitment* and *action*.
Living a value-based life can be difficult at times and requires us to feel emotions that are often labeled as "negative" or "uncomfortable." This includes doing things even when we don't feel like it. Therefore, if someone attempts to live a value-based life, it requires a deeper commitment, because she may encounter moments of struggle and doubt. Again, pose the question, *Am I willing to feel my emotions and continue moving forward, if it means I can live a more fulfilling life?*
4. Actions are based on *values* rather than on *feelings* or *emotions*.
Both inside and outside of treatment, from time to time you may encounter individuals who make statements such as "I just want to be happy." Although this is understandable and a normal human desire, one cannot be happy or content all the time. Life requires us to struggle and suffer at times, which is the idea behind this point. We cannot live a valued life without taking action. In contrast, the alternative of valuing only feeling states may result in an empty chase for feeling good most, if not all, the time.
5. Research has demonstrated that *self-chosen* life directions are the ones that work; they result in greater *life fulfillment*.
This point is to emphasize the importance of group members establishing their own values and goals, as opposed to taking on the values and goals of outside parties.

Value-Based Living: Ideas to Keep in Mind

(Facilitator Copy, page 2 of 2)

Qualities of Effective Values

Vitality

When someone is able to stay in contact with her values and goals, she tends to feel more alive. (Examples can be elicited and given by the facilitator.) An example that we often hear in our groups is when parents talk about how it feels to play with their children and spend quality time with loved ones.

Choice

Living in a value-consistent way allows a person to be flexible in responding to situations encountered on a daily basis, instead of just reacting in ways that are automatic, habitual, and impulsive. An example of reacting is when someone habitually expresses anger with verbal and physical aggression, or when someone reacts to substance cravings by “compulsive” use.

Present Focused

Present focus has two components. One is in regard to the destination the person is pursuing, while another has to do with the present in its own right. In other words, while values inform the path one takes, they also inform how one is in the here and now. For instance, one’s values may guide a person on being fair and compassionate to others whom she encounters in the here and now (not just in the future).

Willing Vulnerability

Again, living a value-based life may require individuals to be vulnerable from time to time. If a person is unwilling to feel her emotions, particularly the experience of vulnerability, she may continue to engage in behaviors that are avoidant and impulsive.

Valued Experiences

1. What was the moving moment in your life? Briefly describe it:

When you thought of that moment, what did it feel like inside? What emotions came up? What did your body feel like (your arms, stomach, shoulders, and so on)? What thoughts came up?

If someone saw you in that moment, how would the person describe you (facial expressions, body language)?

What are some things you noticed while participating in this exercise? For example, did you become distracted, have judgments, feel bored, have difficult feelings, and so on?

2. To whom did you write the letter or e-mail? Describe this person and why he or she is important to you:

If you were to write this person a letter or e-mail as if it were the future, what would it say? It may not be the life you are leading today; it may be what you are working toward. What are some of the things you would touch on in this letter?

What are some things you noticed while participating in this exercise? For example, did you become distracted, have judgments, feel bored, have difficult feelings, and so on?

What's Important Worksheet

What's important or personally meaningful to me?

Activities I am currently engaged in that are consistent with what's important and meaningful:

Activities I am currently engaged in that are inconsistent with what's important and meaningful:

Activities I might engage in that would be consistent with what's important and meaningful:

Examples of Values

<i>Achievement</i>	<i>Honesty</i>
<i>Adventure</i>	<i>Humor/Wit</i>
<i>Affection (Love and Caring)</i>	<i>Independence</i>
<i>Authenticity</i>	<i>Intimacy</i>
<i>Being productive</i>	<i>Involvement</i>
<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Knowledge</i>
<i>Change and variety</i>	<i>Leadership</i>
<i>Close relationships</i>	<i>Loyalty</i>
<i>Community</i>	<i>Peace</i>
<i>Competition</i>	<i>Personal growth</i>
<i>Cooperation</i>	<i>Pets</i>
<i>Creativity</i>	<i>Physically active</i>
<i>Curiosity</i>	<i>Pleasure/Fun</i>
<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Power and authority</i>
<i>Effectiveness</i>	<i>Privacy</i>
<i>Excitement</i>	<i>Recovery</i>
<i>Family</i>	<i>Reputation</i>
<i>Financial security</i>	<i>Security</i>
<i>Freedom</i>	<i>Self-Respect</i>
<i>Friends</i>	<i>Sophistication</i>
<i>Genuineness</i>	<i>Spirituality</i>
<i>Health</i>	<i>Stability</i>
<i>Helping others</i>	

Establishing Values and Goals

Domains

Community

Giving Back

Social

Education

Health

Spirituality

Family

Occupation/Work

Wellness

Friends

Religion

1. Domain: _____

Value: _____

Goal: _____

Goal: _____

2. Domain: _____

Value: _____

Goal: _____

Goal: _____

3. Domain: _____

Value: _____

Goal: _____

Goal: _____

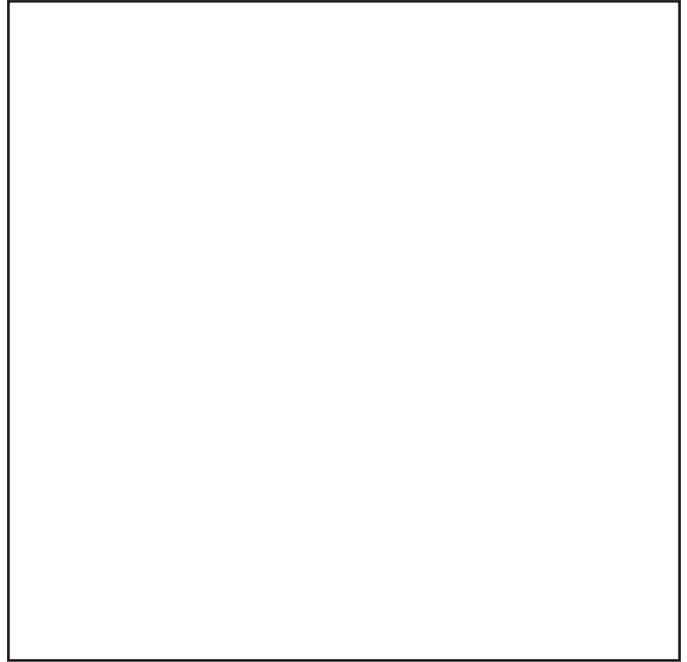
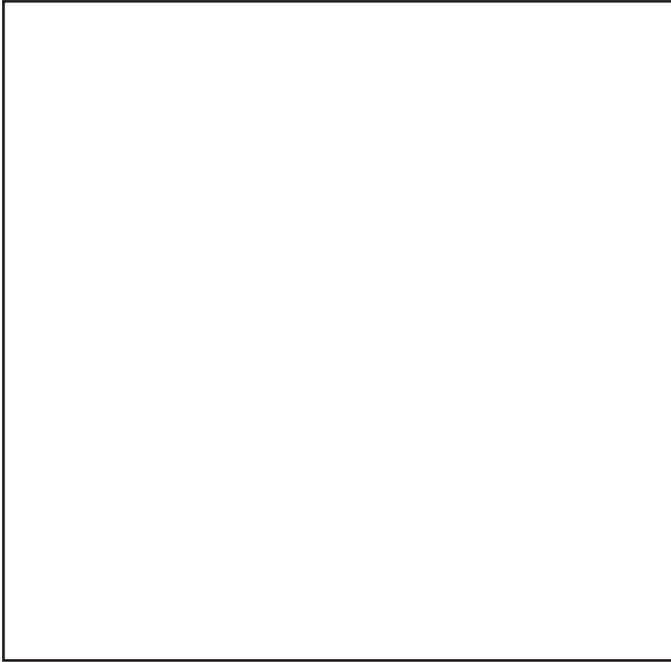
Defusing from the Addiction

Your name:

Addiction name:

Self-Portrait

Portrait of Your Addiction



Once upon a Relapse...

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, occupying the central portion of the page. It is intended for the user to write their response to the title 'Once upon a Relapse...'. The box is completely blank and takes up most of the page's vertical space.

Environments and Experiences Worksheet

List specific people, places, things, events, activities, and so forth.

Past	Present (potential)	Future (potential)

Situation Rating Scale and Action Plan

Name: _____

Date: _____

Risky Situation (describe): _____

How do you expect you might respond in this type of situation? _____

Situation Risk Rating

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Little or no risk								Very high risk	

Situation Value Rating (How important is it for you to be in this type of situation?)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Little or no importance								Very important	

Plan (check one):

_____ 1. Long-Term Avoidance (situation is high risk and of little-to-no value)

_____ 2. Short-Term Avoidance (situation is high risk and of moderate-to-high value)

_____ 3. No Avoidance (situation is low-to-moderate risk and of moderate-to-high value)

Avoidance Strategies (if you chose option 1 or 2 above):

Backup Coping Strategy (if the situation is unexpectedly encountered):

Coping Strategies (if you chose option 3 above):

Recovery Skills Self-Ratings 1

Rate your coping skills on each item below on a scale of 1 through 5, with 1 being poor or nonexistent and 5 being excellent.

- Scale:**
- 1 = poor or nonexistent
 - 2 = needs improvement
 - 3 = okay, average, normal
 - 4 = good to very good
 - 5 = excellent
 - DK = don't know

Quality of Life:

PRE POST

- ___/___ Ability to establish and maintain healthy diet
- ___/___ Ability to engage in physical activities or maintain a workout routine
- ___/___ Self-care: dental and other hygiene
- ___/___ Ability to balance finances
- ___/___ Ability to seek, obtain, or maintain employment
- ___/___ Ability to set, work toward, and achieve goals
- ___/___ Engage in and maintain valued relationships with others

Lapse and Relapse Prevention Planning:

PRE POST

- ___/___ Ability to identify risky (nonvalued) environments and situations
- ___/___ Ability to avoid risky (nonvalued) environments and situations
- ___/___ Ability to cope, take valued action, and maintain sobriety when in risky or intense situations
- ___/___ Alcohol or drug refusal skills
- ___/___ Identify decisions and behaviors that could lead to lapse/relapse (gradually or rapidly)
- ___/___ Lapse recovery coping skills

Recovery Skills Self-Ratings 2

Rate your coping skills for each item below on a scale of 1 through 5, with 1 being poor or nonexistent and 5 being excellent.

- Scale:**
- 1 = poor or nonexistent
 - 2 = needs improvement
 - 3 = okay, average, normal
 - 4 = good to very good
 - 5 = excellent
 - DK = don't know

Coping with Urges and Cravings:

_____ *Urge surfing*

Expansion and Mindfulness Strategies:

_____ *Understanding and practicing mindfulness*

_____ *Using coping imagery*

_____ *Using defusion skills with internal experiences (thoughts, memories, sensations, emotions, and so on) and taking valued/flexible action*

_____ *Ability to feel emotions without trying to control, change, or fix them*

_____ *Reframing*

Coping with Internal Experiences

Internal experiences: Anything that happens inside our minds and bodies (emotions, feelings, sensations, thoughts, urges, cravings, and so on).

Control strategies: Efforts people put forth in an attempt to avoid undesired internal experiences. This may occur through one's behavior or through one's thinking.

Behavioral control strategies may involve avoiding otherwise uncomfortable situations, such as declining social events or situations in which the person risks experiencing failure or rejection, or procrastinating.

Mental control strategies include processes that serve to avoid undesired internal experiences or decrease their intensity. Examples include daydreaming and mental distraction.

Despite our desire to control our internal experiences, our efforts to do so often increase our suffering in the long run. What we have control over is not the experiences themselves, but how we observe and respond to those experiences. Through accepting and opening up to whatever happens inside of our minds and bodies (as opposed to struggling with, fighting, and avoiding, which only provide temporary relief), we can allow ourselves to suffer less and experience a more fulfilling life. This idea relates to the concepts of mindfulness and "urge surfing," the latter being a mindfulness-based technique for coping with urges and cravings to act impulsively.

Internal experiences can be compared to an ocean wave, which will rise, peak, and eventually fall. Many people use strategies to cut off the wave (fighting, avoiding, distracting, giving in, and so on), which often works temporarily but strengthens the wave in the long term. An example of this would be someone who uses her drug of choice when experiencing urges and cravings. The urge or craving may be cut off after the initial use of the substance, but will inevitably return once the drug wears off (often growing stronger).

Many people get caught up in this cycle and often live their lives from distraction to distraction in service of not feeling or experiencing. Urge surfing is a strategy that encourages the person to slow things down, breathe, and relax into the craving or urge to act impulsively. Instead of using control strategies, a person eventually is able to learn that internal experiences are temporary and will come and go with little emotional and physical effort.

Urge Surfing: Take-Home Guide

When you are experiencing a craving or an urge to act impulsively:

- *Notice how the internal experience is like a wave: it rises, it peaks, and it falls. This pattern continues. Stay with the experience. Observe the waves. Even though you are not reacting, the cravings and urges fall; they subside. They may rise again and subside again. You are like a surfer riding the waves. You may enjoy the freedom of observing and not needing to react.*
- *You may notice thoughts, emotions, or physical sensations that come...and go.*
- *Experience what a craving or urge is while making the choice to be mindful rather than to react. Some cravings and urges are more intense than others. Some are like small waves, while others are more like ocean or tidal waves.*
- *Notice that you can be present and not react, that you can experience cravings and urges without reacting.*
- *(After a period of time, do the following.) Open your eyes if they were closed, and bring your attention back to the room.*

Rulers: Importance, Confidence, and Commitment

Please rate yourself on each in the following areas: importance, confidence, and commitment.

Importance

1. On a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being “not important at all” and 10 being “very highly important,” how important is it to you to make the change?

Your rating: _____

2. Why is it (your rating) and not 0? Please list all the reasons you can think of (you may use the back of the page if necessary):
-
-

Confidence

1. On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being “not confident at all” and 10 being “very highly confident,” how confident are you that you will make the change?

Your rating: _____

2. Why is it (your rating) and not 0? Please list all the reasons you can think of (you may use the back of the page if necessary):
-
-

Commitment

1. On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being “not committed at all” and 10 being “very highly committed,” how committed are you to making the change?

Your rating: _____

2. Why is it (your rating) and not 0? Please list all the reasons you can think of (you may use the back of the page if necessary):
-
-

Barriers to Change

What are some of the internal (inside of you) and external (outside of you) factors that hinder you from making changes in your life?

Label each "I" for internal or "E" for external:

Brainstorm small steps you can take in order to begin overcoming each of the barriers:

Miracle Question

If you were to wake up tomorrow with your life 100 percent on track with the way you want it to be and all barriers to change removed, what would it look like? Consider things such as relationships, work, school, fun, and family. Be as realistic as possible.

What is a small step that you are willing to take in the next twenty-four hours in order to move yourself or your life closer to the way you want it to be?

Re-Mindfulness Card (Front)

Re-Mindfulness Card (Back)

Re-Mindfulness Card

STOP

Aware Breathe Respond

Re-MINDFUL:

Re-New Commitment (reasons to commit to recovery):

Re-Mindful Resources

Sober Supports:

Healthy Activities/Support Meetings:

Re-Mindfulness Card (Front)

Re-Mindfulness Card (Back)

Re-Mindfulness Card

STOP

Aware Breathe Respond

Re-MINDFUL:

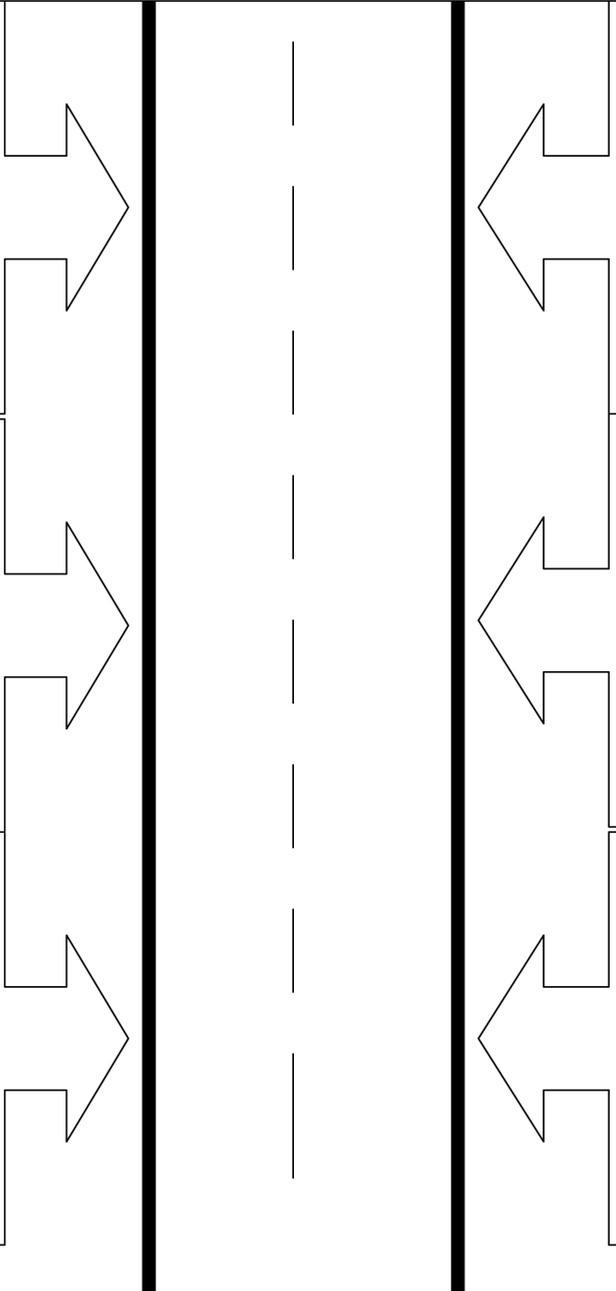
Re-New Commitment (reasons to commit to recovery):

Re-Mindful Resources

Sober Supports:

Healthy Activities/Support Meetings:

Relapse Road

Experience in Situation:	
Prelapse Behavior	
Prelapse Behavior	
Prelapse Behavior	

Important Points: Value-Based Living

Current Status:

Valued Status:

Ideas to Keep in Mind

1.

2.

3.

Value-Based Living

Life Area	Current Status	Valued Status
Financial		
Work		
Social/Friends		
Physical/Health		
Personal Development		
Family/Relationship		

Value-Based Living (cont.)

Life Area	Current Status	Valued Status
Living Environment		
Emotional		
Community/Volunteer		
Spiritual		
Additional Life Area:		
Additional Life Area:		

Moving Forward

Life Area	Steps I Can Take (that are specific and measurable, and practical and accomplishable, and that I am committed to)

Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down Answer Key (Facilitator Guide)

Note: Some quotes may be interpreted in multiple ways. Group members can repeat answers and have multiple answers in one box.

1. "You should really do that, because it worked for me. It will definitely help you. Trust me, I know best."

Answer. Advice giving (unhelpful; thumbs down)

2. "You have a month sober. That is great! You have been working really hard."

Answer. Affirmation (helpful; thumbs up)

3. "You should know better; you are an adult. Adults are supposed to be responsible and follow through with what they are asked to do. You need to grow up and start acting like a mature adult. When are you going to learn?"

Answer. Lecturing (unhelpful; thumbs down)

4. "Where were you last night? Why didn't you call? Why were you hanging out with those people again? I thought you said you were going to cut them off? Are you ever going to learn?"

Answer. Excessive questioning (unhelpful; thumbs down)

5. "I can understand where you are coming from. I would be hurt too if that happened to me."

Answer. Warmth, empathy, genuineness (helpful; thumbs up)

6. "I was in your situation last year. I was with Gary at the time, and we were hanging out at his apartment. It was winter, so the weather was awful; we were staying inside, because it was cold and we didn't want to go anywhere in the snow. We were eating pizza and got a phone call from Steve, and he had heard from Jen that there was..."

Answer. Storytelling (unhelpful; thumbs down)

7. "What was that like for you when you were going through those difficult times?"

Answer. Open-ended question (helpful; thumbs up)

8. "You always do this! You are never going to change! I have bailed you out so many times. Remember last year when..."

Answer. Bringing up the past (unhelpful; thumbs down)

9. "You are such a loser. All of our financial problems are your fault. I should just kick you out. You are a sorry excuse for a partner."

Answer. *Blaming and shaming (unhelpful; thumbs down)*

10. "You deserve a break. You have been working long hours, and that is draining. How can I help?"

Answer. *Validation/affirmation (helpful; thumbs up)*

11. "Oh! So you have been sober for a whole month. What is that—two days longer than last time? Good job. Psshhh."

Answer. *Sarcasm (unhelpful; thumbs down)*

12. "I get upset when things don't work out. I would like to come up with a plan for us to move forward with this situation."

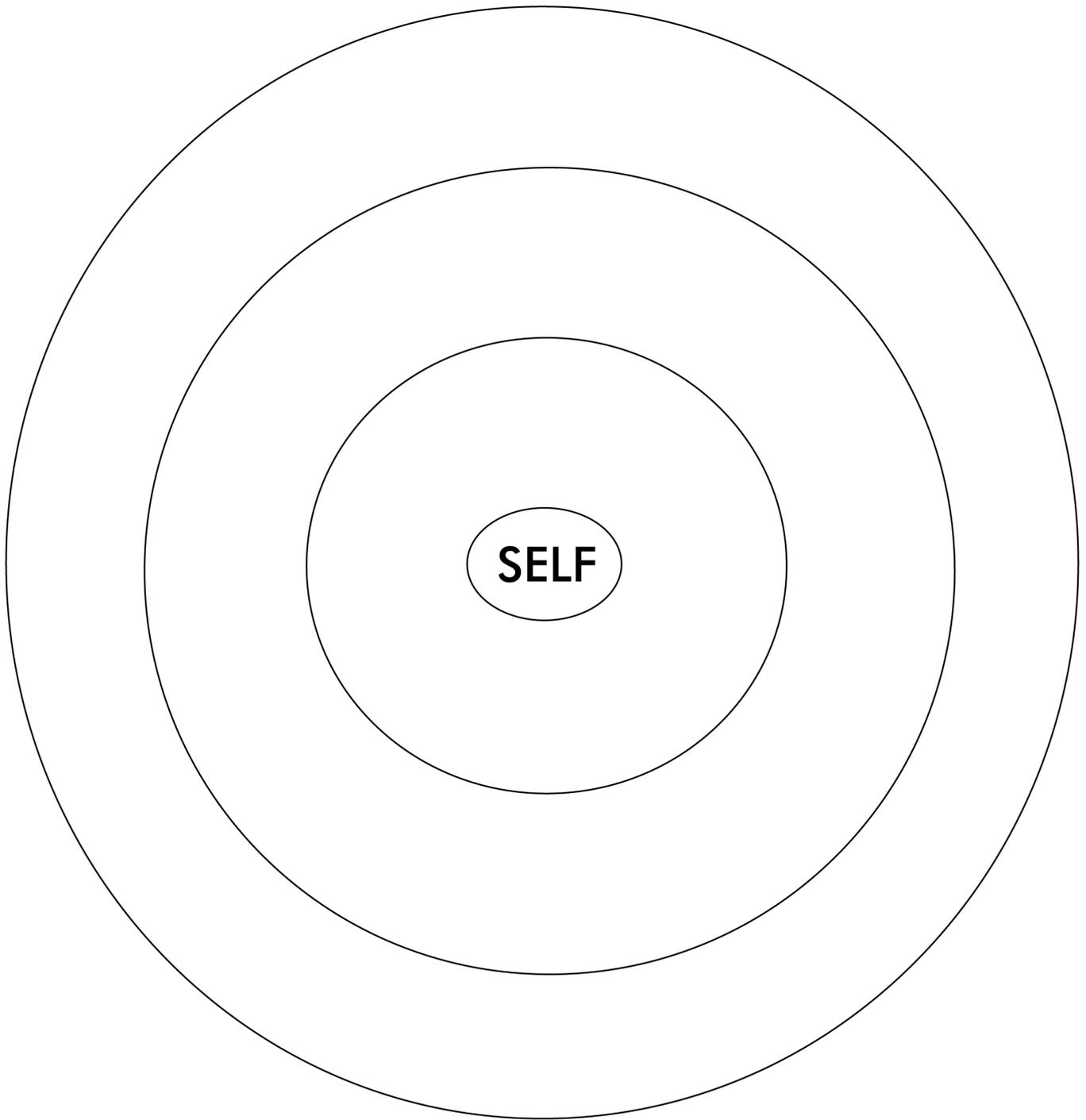
Answer. *"I" statements (helpful; thumbs up)*

13. "Okay, so what I heard you say was that you want me to be on time more often and to follow through with my responsibilities. You would also like to spend more time doing fun things with me, like going to the movies and out for dinner. Did I hear you right?"

Answer. *Listening (helpful; thumbs up)*

14. "I really enjoyed when you took time to talk to me about your day and then asked me about mine. It felt good."

Answer. *Positive reinforcement (helpful; thumbs up)*





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1.

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14.

14.

Relationships in Recovery

1. What types of relationships do you want to seek out? (This includes significant others, your children, parents, relatives, friends, neighbors, classmates, and all your other social contacts.)
2. How do you want to treat the people you are establishing relationships with (values within relationships)?
3. How do you want to be treated by those individuals (values and respect related to your sense of “self”)?
4. What sorts of activities do you want to engage in within these relationships?

Life Domain Exploration

Life Domain:

How was this area of your life affected by substance use?

What would need to change in this area in order for you to succeed outside of residential treatment?

How could you go about making those changes?

Plan (check one):

- _____ 1. Long-Term Avoidance (situation is high risk and of little-to-no value)
- _____ 2. Short-Term Avoidance (situation is high risk and of moderate-to-high value)
- _____ 3. No Avoidance (situation is low-to-moderate risk and of moderate-to-high value)

Avoidance Strategies (if you chose option 1 or 2 above):

Backup Coping Strategy (if the situation is unexpectedly encountered):

Coping Strategies (if you chose option 3 above):

Relapse Prevention Plan Worksheet

Client: _____ Date: _____

A. High-Risk Situations

High-Risk Situation	Likely Ways of Encountering	How to Avoid	Escape Strategies	Coping Strategies
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

B. Continuing Recovery Plans: Planning for Transition to Lower Level of Care (Co-Occurring Mental Health Problems; Peer Fellowships, such as AA, NA, and so on)

C. Positive Supports: Friends and Family

D. Quality of Life Enhancement: Occupy Time Doing Enjoyable, Healthy Things (such as Leisure, Exercise, Diet, Meditation)

Recovery Environment

Current Environment (Outside of Residential Treatment Setting)

People whom I tend to spend my time with:

Qualities of people that give me energy or strength:

Qualities of people that drain my energy or strength:

Places where I tend to spend my time:

Qualities of environments that give me energy or strength:

Qualities of environments that drain my energy or strength:

Activities and things in my life that I spend time with or engage in:

Qualities that give me energy or strength:

Qualities that drain my energy or strength:

Recovery Environment:

Qualities of people whom I would like to have in my life:

Qualities of the environments I would like to spend my time in:

Qualities of activities I would like to engage in:

Improving Recovery Environment

Where and how can I meet people I would like to have in my life?

Where do I want to spend my time (specific places)?

What do I want to spend my time doing?

Role-Play: Drug Refusal Skills

Today's Practice Skills:

1. _____

Notes:

2. _____

Notes:

3. _____

Notes:

4. _____

Notes:

5. _____

Notes:

6. _____

Notes:

Pretreatment Weekly Schedule

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Mon.			
Tue.			
Wed.			
Thur.			
Fri.			
Sat.			
Sun.			

Posttreatment Weekly Schedule

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Mon.			
Tue.			
Wed.			
Thur.			
Fri.			
Sat.			
Sun.			

Lapse/Relapse Trap: Decision Making

By living life in a mindful manner, you can make decisions from a point of clarity. However, when you make decisions on autopilot, you can take actions that may seem harmless at first but lead to negative consequences in the long run. Below, for each category, list decisions that you have made in the past or could make in the future that resulted in short-term benefits and long-term negative consequences.

	Decision	→	Short-Term Benefits	→	Long-Term Consequences
Financial					
Work					
Social					
Physical Health/Wellness					
Personal Development					
Emotional					
Spirituality					

Lapse/Relapse Trap: Identifying Common Thinking Patterns

When an individual is on autopilot and not being mindful, he or she may be more likely to fuse with and act on thoughts that will result in nonvalued behavior (for example, acting impulsively or without thinking). Furthermore, individuals who are on autopilot may forget that they have the choice to defuse from nonvalued thinking patterns and impulses such as rationalization, denial, justification, and positive expectation.

A defusion technique that may enhance one's ability to be mindful is "Naming Your Addiction." In the space below, provide names for and quotes from your addiction. Afterward, circle or write in the blank spaces the matching thinking patterns. *For example:* Name, "Mr. Addiction"; Quote, "I can have just one!"; circle "Rationalization" or "Denial"; a person can say, "Oh, there's Mr. Addiction again. He is so in denial. He loves those rationalizations."

Name	Quote	Thinking Pattern
		Rationalization Denial Justification Positive Expectation

Spirituality

Personal definition of spirituality:

Background and orientation:

My sense of spirituality comes from...

Goals:

1.

Importance:

Confidence:

Motivation:

2.

Importance:

Confidence:

Motivation:

3.

Importance:

Confidence:

Motivation:

Anticipated environmental and personal constraints or barriers:

Possible ways to overcome environmental and personal constraints or barriers:

Helpful tips for engaging in and maintaining a spiritual practice:

Coping with Cravings: Confidence Ruler

Name: _____

Date: _____

Please rate yourself on:

- *Alcohol or other drug (substance) craving level*
- *Confidence in coping with cravings without using*

If you are experiencing cravings for more than one substance, please rate for each substance.

Specify substance: _____

Craving Level

On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being "minimal craving" and 10 being "maximum craving," please rate your level of craving to use over the past three days.

Minimum Cravings										Maximum Cravings
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Confidence

On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being "not confident at all" and 10 being "very highly confident," how confident are you that you can cope with your cravings without using?

Minimum Confidence										Maximum Confidence
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Coping with Cravings Confidence Ruler: Optional Follow-Up Questions

Why are you at a rating of _____ (stated level of confidence) and not 0?

What has helped you to reach this level of confidence in coping without using?

What would it take for you to increase your confidence level?

Coping with Internal Experiences

Internal Experiences: Anything that happens inside our minds and bodies (emotions, feelings, sensations, thoughts, urges, cravings, and so on).

Control Strategies: Efforts people put forth to try to avoid undesired internal experiences. This may occur through one's behavior or through one's thinking.

Behavioral control strategies may involve avoiding uncomfortable situations, such as social events or situations in which the person risks experiencing failure or rejection, or procrastinating.

Mental control strategies include processes that allow us to avoid undesired internal experiences or decrease their intensity. Examples include daydreaming and mental distraction.

Despite our desire to control our internal experiences, our efforts to do so often increase our suffering in the long run. What we have control over is how we observe and respond to those experiences, not the experiences themselves. Through accepting and opening up to whatever happens inside of our minds and bodies (as opposed to struggling with, fighting, and avoiding them, which provide only temporary relief), we can allow ourselves to suffer less and experience a more fulfilling life. This idea relates to the concepts of mindfulness and "urge surfing," the latter being a mindfulness-based technique for coping with urges and cravings to act impulsively.

Internal experiences can be compared to an ocean wave, which will rise, peak, and eventually fall. Many individuals use strategies to cut off the wave (fighting, avoiding, distracting, giving in, and so on), which often work temporarily but strengthen the wave in the long term. An example of this would be someone who uses his drug of choice when experiencing urges and cravings. The urge or craving may be cut off after the initial use of the substance, but will inevitably return once the drug wears off (often it will grow stronger).

Many individuals get caught up in this cycle and often live their lives from distraction to distraction, in service of not feeling or experiencing. Urge surfing is a strategy that encourages the individual to slow things down, breathe, and relax into the craving or urge to act impulsively. Instead of using control strategies, one eventually is able to learn that internal experiences are temporary and will come and go with little emotional and physical effort.

Urge-Surfing Instructions

When you are experiencing a craving or an urge to act impulsively:

- *Notice how the internal experience is like a wave: it rises, it peaks, and it falls. This pattern continues. Stay with the experience. Observe the waves. Even though you are not reacting, the cravings and urges fall; they subside. They may rise again and subside again. You are like a surfer riding the waves. You may enjoy the freedom of observing and not needing to react.*
- *You may notice thoughts, emotions, or physical sensations that come...and go.*
- *Experience what a craving or urge is while making the choice to be mindful, rather than reacting. Some cravings and urges are more intense than others. Some are like small waves, while others are more like ocean or tidal waves.*
- *Notice that you can be present and not react, that you can experience cravings and urges without reacting.*
- *After the designated period of time, open your eyes, if they were closed, and bring your attention back into the room.*

Drug Refusal Skills – 2

Today's Practice Skills:

1. Keeping valued relationships:

2. Ending unwanted relationships:

Notes

Relapse Trap: Complacency and Procrastination

Things to consider:

- *Important Point 1: Motivation*
- *Important Point 2: Living vs. Existing*
- *Important Point 3: Coping-Skill Procrastination (using skills only when in a crisis or a high-risk situation)*

Important Point 1: Motivation

Another common trap that people may find themselves falling victim to is the “I will do it when I feel like it” trap. Motivation may or may not come to you initially, which requires you to take valued action first and let your feelings, thoughts, and sense of desire and fulfillment catch up to you.

Important Point 2: Living vs. Existing

Many individuals (both inside and out of recovery) do not take the time to define how they want their lives to be (values and goals) and take the actions to get there. In recovery, individuals who fall victim to this trap are often referred to as “dry drunks” or “dry users.” This type of outlook or lifestyle can be referred to as “basic existence.” If you are breathing—your heart is beating and your brain is working—you can exist while being totally dissatisfied and unfulfilled in life.

Living life requires us to take healthy risks and face fears in order to live in a way that is in line with our values and goals (for example, seeking relationships while facing rejection, seeking success and accomplishments while risking failure and embarrassment, and so on). The more we base our lives on avoidance, procrastination, and complacency, the more we risk living a very unfulfilling life (and in the case of addiction, experiencing lapse or relapse).

Important Point 3: Coping-Skill Procrastination (using skills only when in a crisis or a high-risk situation)

Like any skill in life, coping skills require repeated practice in order to determine what works and what does not. With that said, it is important to practice and use coping skills as needed and to be mindful of them on a daily or regular basis. If you wait to use them in a crisis or in high-risk situations, they are less likely to work or seem like viable options. This often results in the individual abandoning effective coping skills and losing self-esteem and worth due to feeling as if he or she has failed in some way.