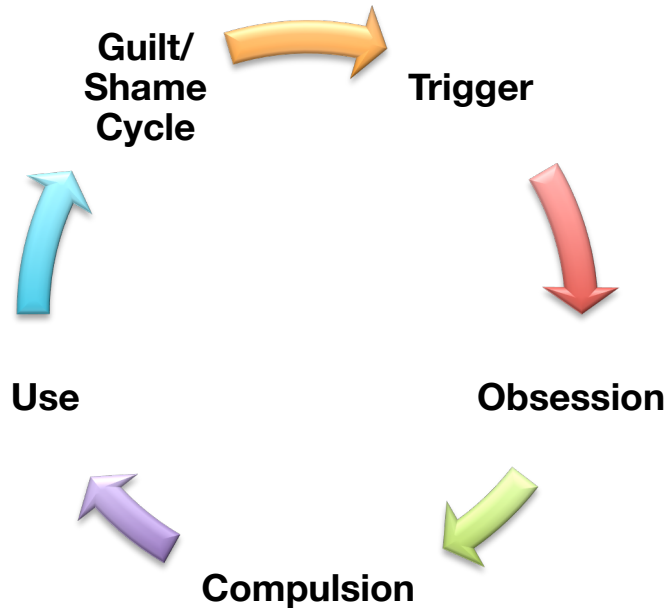


# CYCLE OF ADDICTION



## What is a Trigger?

Triggers come in many forms, but the basic definition is that a **trigger** is **anything that reminds an ex or current drug user of his or her addiction and evokes a desire to use again**. An example would be a street corner used for drug deals or an event like a birthday when friends and family drink heavily. They work on a fairly simplistic idea of "conditioning," where a stimulus is associated with a reward.

*What are my Triggers? List three triggers below:*

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Internal vs. External Triggers

Not all triggers come from the outside world, however. A drug-using friend might make a recovering user think about the times they did drugs together, but the more significant triggers are often the ones that come from within.

Extending the example, while the presence of a drug-using friend could be a superficial trigger, the deeper-seated issue of low self-esteem (which may lead the individual to take drugs to “fit in” or out of a belief it makes him or her more likeable) is likely to be a bigger problem that manifests itself in many different ways.

What are my Internal and External Triggers? List two of each below.

Internal Triggers:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

External Triggers:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

### What is an Obsession?

Addictive thinking begins with obsession. Obsession is a continuous thinking about the positive effects of using alcohol and drugs.

### What is a Compulsion?

Compulsion is an irrational urge or craving to use the drug to get the positive effect even though you know it will hurt you in the long run. This leads to **denial** and **rationalization** in order to allow continued use. Denial is the inability to recognize there is a problem. Rationalization is blaming other situations and people for problems rather than drug use.

### Loss of Control and Use of Drugs/Alcohol

The obsession and compulsion become so strong that you cannot think about anything else. Your feelings and emotions become distorted by the compulsion. You become stressed and uncomfortable until finally the urge to use is so strong that you cannot resist it.

### Guilt/Shame Cycle

The use of drugs or alcohol causes the person with an addiction to think, “I can’t believe I did this again!” This thought results in feelings of guilt and shame that trigger the individual to use again in hopes of eliminating the negative emotions. However, further use results in even greater feelings of guilt and shame, and the addicted person becomes trapped in the guilt/shame cycle.