



Creating a Cravings Plan

Opening Exercise – READ: For the upcoming exercise and worksheet, everyone is going to be working on making a **Cravings Plan for Substance Use (or other compulsive behaviors)**. Before getting started, the focus of the following exercise is to get the group thinking about **relapse triggers** and **coping skills for cravings**.

The chart below has two lists of titles for potential discussion topics. The list on the left (**Negative/Struggles**) are topics about how various triggers, cravings and negative situations can cause setbacks and relapse. The list on the right (**Positive/Strength Builders**) are topics about skills, supports, and inspirational situations that can help someone to succeed and pull through even when faced with a craving or relapse trigger.

So, with this in mind, the group leader should display these lists below so that everyone in the group can see them. As a group, go through the lists in any order and discuss personal stories about relapse prevention using the topics on the lists, selecting topics that apply personally based on experience. There are no right or wrong answers, rather as stated earlier the purpose of this discussion is to get everyone talking about strengths and weakness when it comes to **triggers and cravings**. *Two examples are provided here:*

- **“Toxic Relationship”** – *Whenever my cousin is in town, he calls me to get together and on the phone, he always says he isn’t using but sooner or later it seems like by the end of the night after he comes over, I find myself in some bar drunk late at night with the two of us calling dealers looking for cocaine.*
- **“Old Reliable”** – *“In an interesting way, my bicycle has been “Old Reliable” in my life. So many times, when I was feeling down or craving to get high, I went for a long ride on my bike, and it really took my mind off of things. I need to get back into biking now that the weather is nicer now that I am not using.*

<u>Negative/Struggles</u>	<u>Positive/Strength Builders</u>
My Achilles Heel (Area of Weakness)	What a Lifesaver!
My Favorite Mistake	Old Reliable
Just Too Hard to Say No...	A True Friend
Toxic Relationship	Instant Inspiration
Not Again! (Repetitive Situation)	There for Me When Needed
One Step Too Far (and then it’s too late)	A Lifeline in Times of Stress
Stubborn Habit	A Way Out
Motivation Killer	A True Source of Hope
My Constant (Negative) Crutch	Strength from Within
Lies I Tell Myself	An Anchor During the Storm
Fooled Yet Again	The Courage to Change
Stumbling Block	The Road to Survival
Self-Sabotage	A Pathway to Peace



Cravings Planning

Background – Coping with craving is an essential part of the change process when dealing with substance use issues or when coping with any potentially behavioral addictions as well (such as compulsive gambling, sex, shopping, etc.) Having a plan for managing cravings is critical to making positive progress. For this activity, you will develop your own cravings plan.

First, let's break down some of the basic aspects of developing a plan to cope effectively with cravings

1 – Identify: What is triggering the craving? (For more detailed information on triggers, see Taking the Escalator worksheet: "[External and Internal Setback Factors](#)")

Identify: Is the craving being triggered by something...

- External (Outside)
 - People
 - Places
 - Other things?
 - Events (Party, anniversary, holiday, a certain time of day/week or year, etc.)
- Internal (From within)
 - Thoughts ("I can quit tomorrow", "What's once more?" "What's the point, this is too hard")
 - Feelings
 - Conditions:
 - Mental (Depression, anxiety, etc.)
 - Physical (Pain, illness, exhaustion, discomfort, etc.)

2 – Avoid, Escape or Cope with the Trigger – If you know what is triggering cravings can you get away from it? If so, how? If it is something you cannot escape or if it is internal, then what will you do to cope?

3 – Follow Your Cravings Plan – On the next page you will develop a **Cravings Plan** that you can keep with you to use as a way to draw inspiration and continuously cope with cravings in times of need

How to use your cravings plan: Once you have completed your cravings plan on the following page, take a picture of it so you have it in your phone, ready to view whenever you need it. Read your cravings plan every time you are faced with a trigger. Don't trust yourself to just remember the plan. It is important to read the plan every single time you are faced with a challenge because cravings can seduce a person to think irrationally, and cravings and other desires can cloud judgement. Your cravings plan is like a message from yourself written at a time when your head is clear and motivated. You are now helping your future self when struggling with cravings to help pull through and use coping skills. **Read and reread your cravings plan several times per day**



My Cravings Plan:

These are the relapse triggers I need to stay mindful of and be prepared for (*List your top 3 to 5*)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Med Check – Ask: If I am on medications for cravings and/or mental health, am I taking properly?

What is my plan to avoid, escape or cope with triggers that I may encounter/experience? (In other words, when faced with the triggers you listed in the first box, what are you going to do?) MY PLAN:

For a more extensive list of these skills see an earlier Taking the Escalator Worksheet – [Coping with Cravings](#)

NOTE TO SELF – Read this to yourself whenever you experience a trigger or a craving:

The following thoughts are LIES (For example “I’ll quit tomorrow” or “Once more won’t hurt”) – *List yours:*

-
-
-

The TRUTH is about what I really want for myself is (List 3 motivational things that you want for your future)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write an INSPIRATIONAL MESSAGE to yourself that you can read when you are experiencing a craving:

Read and share your CRAVINGS PLAN with the group. Remember to take a picture of your Cravings Plan so that you have it in your phone to read and use to get through future cravings challenges