



SB Activity 1 (a & b) – External and Internal Setback Factors –

Setback Factor – A specific situation, circumstance, person or occurrence that tends to impair, diminish or slow down someone’s progress. (Similar to the concept of a trigger)

1a -External Setback Factors

- **External** - situated or being outside something; acting or coming from without: *external influences*.

External setback factors are much easier to identify because they are *outside* of you. They can be:

- **People**
- **Places**
- **Things**
- **Events**

Sometimes these factors can be directly related to substance abuse (such as a friend who is always getting high or a drug dealer or a bar, for example) or they can be indirectly related (for example: If your mother doesn’t get high herself but she stresses you out so much you feel like getting high after being around her)

1b-Internal Setback Factors

- **Internal** – located, acting, or effective within the mind or body

Internal setback factors can often be overlooked and they can be much harder to identify. There are several types:

- **Thoughts:** For example – “I am never going to be able to do this!” , “I’ll quit tomorrow” , “I can get away with it just once more” , “I just want to have fun now and worry about problems later”
- **Feelings:** Feelings that trigger setbacks can be –
 - *Negative:* stress, anger, sadness, disappointment, boredom, confusion, etc. or
 - *Positive:* excitement, joy, elation, energized, confident, etc.
- **Habits/Routines:** For example: Driving past an exit on the highway that you know leads to not so good places
- **Impulsivity:** Acting or speaking without thinking first. Making decisions without forethought
- **Conditions:** Conditions that can be associated with setbacks can be physical or psychological
 - **Physical/Medical** – such as physical pain or injury, surgery, recent diagnosis or unexpected return of symptoms of a chronic illness.
 - **Psychological** – Depression, anxiety, panic attacks, trauma, and mood swings, etc.



Activity – Setback Factor Change Analysis

After reviewing the different types of external and internal setback factors, try to identify three issues that stand out for you personally. For example:

“John the Builder”

Setback Factor 1 - Place: I am in construction and half of the guys on the work site have drugs on them which is a constant source of temptation for me

Setback Factor 2 - Feeling: I have a definite problem managing my anger and on occasion that leads me back to getting high

Setback Factor 3 - Condition: When my chronic back pain flares up, I start thinking about who I can call to get me something to dull the pain

**Come up with three of your own personal setback factors.
If possible try to include at one internal setback factor:**

Setback Factor 1 –

Setback Factor 2 –

Setback Factor 3 -

- **Discuss your answers in the above box with the group**

A Change Analysis is all about finding out what you are ready, willing and able to change, and start there

“Change people, places and things” is often one of the first pieces of advice given at support groups and treatment programs. In reality, that may not always be that easy to put into practice because:

- You may not be **ready** to change some things right now (For example, your family member may be a negative setback factor but you cannot afford to just get up and move out tomorrow)
- You may not be **willing** to change some things right now (For example your friend still gets high quite often but you’ve known her since you were kids and it is hard for you to just cut her off like that)
- You may not be **able** to change some things right now (For example, if you have a chronic incurable medical problem that is a factor for you, that may be something you cannot change)



There are three ways to view the prospect of change:

- **The Actual** – What are you are actually doing right now in your life. Where you are at today
- **The Ideal** – What do you think is commonly considered as the ideal situation or best case scenario?
- **The Real** – In reality, what are you really ready, willing and able to do about this?

In order to understand this better, again consider John the Builder's example:

John identified the following setback factor 1: *“Place: I am in construction and half of the guys on the work site have drugs on them which is a constant source of temptation for me”*

The Actual – What are you are actually doing right now in your life. Where you are at today?

- *I have been in construction for 20 years and I have a ton of bills to pay so I have to try to keep my job even though there are drugs on the job site*

The Ideal – What do you think is commonly considered as the ideal situation or best case scenario?

- *In an ideal situation I would change my career or try to start my own business and only hire people who don't use drugs, but I realize at this point in my life that's a long shot at least for now*

The Real – In reality, what are you *ready, willing and able* to do about this?

- *Even though I can't quit my job right now I can try to better choose who I associate with at work and after work. For instance I have been carpooling with Ronnie and he always wants to stop at the bar after work or smoke some weed in the car. I am going to work on getting a new ride to work and while I am at work I am going to try to socialize less with the guys who pop pain pills all day.*

(Once again, this may not be the best solution but at least it is something that John is ready, willing and able to start working on which is much better than identifying a lofty goal he is never going to do anything about.)

“An ounce of something real set in motion is better than a pound of ideals that are standing still”



Now complete a Change Analysis on your three identified setback factors you identified:

Setback Factor 1 -

- **The Actual** – What are you actually doing right now in your life. Where you are at today?
- **The Ideal** – What do you think is commonly considered as the ideal situation or best case scenario?

- **The Real** – In reality, what are you ready, willing and able to do about this?

Setback Factor 2 -

- **The Actual** –
- **The Ideal** –

- **The Real** –

Setback Factor 3 -

- **The Actual** –
- **The Ideal** –

- **The Real** –

Final Discussion – Review your change analysis with the group.

Then, when group is done, hang up this last page and put it on the wall in the group room. In future group check ins, the group leader, counselor, or other members can try to check on you to see how you are doing with the changes you said that you were going to work on.

WRITE YOUR FIRST NAME HERE: _____