



Deflating the Cushion from the Inside – Worksheet

Read the following attitudes and other factors below that are often associated with experiencing setbacks. Place an X in the line next to those items that may apply in your situation at times:

_____ *Apathy* – aka “I don’t care” thinking – People can sometimes convince themselves that the consequences will not be that bad and it is actually worth the risk to give in and take unnecessary risks. It is important not to forget how bad you actually will really feel later if you get caught going down the wrong path. It is essential to keep on caring and never allow that sense of “who cares, I’ll deal with it later” to take over your sense of reason now.

_____ *Impulsivity* – In basic terms, impulsivity is acting without thinking. Impulsivity can be a product of developing bad habits of poor self-control or impulsivity can be a symptom of another coexisting mental health issue such as ADHD or Bipolar Disorder. Either way, there is no room for impulsivity when there are potential consequences of your behavior. Learning to slow down, stop and think things through before acting is a lifesaving skill that cannot be neglected.

Some other examples of attitudes often associated with setbacks:

- _____ *“The Promiser”*– The Promiser often has good insight and motivation when they make a promise to make changes but over time they may give in and experience setbacks in progress because they believe that they can just promise their self and everyone else that they will just try harder next time if they mess up again today.
- _____ *“Tomorrow Trapper”* –Similar to the Promiser, the person in the tomorrow trap usually has less insight as he repeatedly convinces himself “I’ll quit tomorrow” but it just never seems to work that way for too long.
- _____ *“The Talker”*– “All Talk, No Action”, we all know that phrase. We all have heard that “talk is cheap” and that tough decisions are “easier said, than done”. This person can talk a good game about consequences but internally there is still that belief that they can get away without experiencing them.
- _____ *“Giving Yourself Permission” to have a setback* – This may be difficult to detect before it’s too late. Sometimes consciously or even unconsciously people may simply allow themselves to give up or give in after a period of progress by giving their self-permission to use for a variety of reasons or excuses.

Share your answers and thoughts of the above with the group. Be honest about situations that you need to watch out for in your own experience.



Taking Action: There are four main things that can help reduce the sense that there is a *cushion* between yourself and the consequences of your actions (aka deflating the cushion) -

- ★ Whenever possible, increase self-awareness about our own thoughts, urges and behaviors and thereby learn to stop “allowing” preventable setbacks to happen.
- ★ Learn to let go of the negative thoughts and feelings that contribute to a sense that there is still room for an occasional setback now and then.
- ★ Develop an increased sense of *urgency* and then use that feeling of urgency to positively influence all of our decisions moving forward.
- ★ Learn to *stop compromising* when it comes to doing what we need to do in order to be successful in avoiding setbacks on a long term basis.

The following is a list of specific tools for increasing a sense of urgency to stay on the right path and avoid future setbacks. Come up with a specific plan for yourself using these tools:

Tighten Up the Structure – How can you increase structure in your life to help overcome setbacks? How can you add to or improve daily routines and good habits? – If this is an area that you really need to work on, try to come up with a specific plan that you believe in and that you are willing to follow through with. List below:

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Don't Neglect the Physical – What can you do in order to improve the physical aspects of your life and your change process? (Exercise, health and physical activity) List:

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Don't forget about COI's – Do you have coexisting issues in addition to substance use/abuse? If so, is there a chance you are not taking care of them and this is contributing to you not being as fully motivated as you can be? List below some things you may need to start doing in order to take care of your COI's so that these issues do not weigh you down. What do you need to do in order to better take care of your mental health? Brainstorm ideas:

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Get Your Emotions Flowing – Who or what is most important to you right now? How can your feelings for those important aspects of your life serve as inspiration to kick start your motivation and help you to overcome setbacks for good? (You may need to think about how your setbacks can affect these people and important life areas that you care most about) List your ideas for getting inspired below:

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Find Motivational People – Who can you turn to or recruit to help you to increase your motivation, dedication, inspiration and hope? Is there anyone that you know that could be influential in helping you to make better choices that you have not been fully taking advantage of? List below:

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Insight Building –Can you learn more about yourself in order to overcome setbacks? Answer the following to questions as honestly and openly as possible

1. What do you think you need to overcome setbacks for good?

2. What do others say you need?

3. What strengths do you already have that you just need to take more advantage of in order to overcome setbacks?

4. What areas of weakness that have not already been addressed do you need to increase your focus on?

5. Is there a secret about yourself or your life that you may be holding on to that is preventing you from making the progress that you should be making? Who could you talk to about it in order to start dealing with the issue better?

Contracting with yourself – If setbacks are re-occurring and it seems that you keep on giving yourself permission for setbacks; can you set limits on yourself to stop this from happening? What consequences can you place on yourself?

The next time I have a setback, I will: Brainstorm some possible ideas below:

> (Ex – “The next time I have a setback I will start giving my paycheck to my mother to hold on too”)

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Now choose the best one by circling it above



Turn up the Heat – Fan the Flames – What can you do to put more pressure on yourself? Is there someone that you need to “come clean to” about what is really going on that could help you stay on the right path from now on?

➤ Some further suggestions: (Come up with examples for each below) -

Avoid Discouragement - It is easy to stop caring when you feel discouraged. How can you avoid and decrease discouragement?

Set Goals - Goals remind you to stay focused, motivated and dedicated to doing the right thing. What goals can help you stay motivated?

Motivate Yourself - Can you make a video on your phone (or if you don't have a phone write a letter to yourself) encouraging yourself to stay focused and dedicated and asking yourself not to give up? What else can you do now to motivate yourself that you can use later when things may not be going so well?

Environment – What extra steps can you take to make your environment even more conducive to avoiding setbacks and staying on the right path? If you believe that your environment is safe you may still need to think outside the box and consider things that may be indirectly affecting your ability to make progress and stay away from substances



In the midst of winter I found,
there was, within me,
an invincible summer

- Albert Camus