



***"Do not be misled, bad associations spoil useful habits..."**

For Thought and Discussion: What does this phrase mean?

- 1. What is an association?** - A connection of persons, things, or ideas by some common factor. A person can be associated with certain people, attitudes, behaviors, places, groups, activities, ideas, lifestyles, etc.
- 2. What is meant by a "bad" association?** – Being connected with something or someone that is not good for you
- 3. How can bad associations spoil useful habits?** – In other words, how can who and what you associate with mess up what good you may be doing in your life?
- 4. How can this be "misleading"** – People often are misled to believe that this basic rule will not be true in their case. They are the exception. "I can associate with negative people and places and not get in trouble" or "It doesn't matter who I hang out with or where I go, it does not affect me"
- 5. How does this apply to drugs and alcohol?** (Think about how a bad association can spoil the "useful habit" of staying clean. How can the surroundings you choose effect your ability to stay away from drugs and alcohol.)
- 6. How can a person change their associations?** – This can be a huge challenge – Discuss what may be involved. What skills may be needed to do so effectively? (For example learning assertiveness and how to say no to peer pressure) The next part of this activity will help you think about how to go about changing your associations for the better.



Analyze Your Associations: Complete the following: **My Associations:**

Inner Circle – Describe your inner circle of friends (people you know well and trust) Do you have a large group of close friends, or just a few? What is your close group into? What do you and your friends like to do?

Family – Describe your family (Big, small, close, dysfunctional, rich, poor, loving, fighting, etc.)

Attitudes/Behaviors – How do people view you? – Angry, troublemaker, joker, fighter, loner, quiet, obnoxious, etc. for example

Hobbies/Interests/Entertainment – What do you do with your time? (sports, video games, music, using, dealing)

Outer Circle – Are you associated with a clique or a certain group of people with common interests?

Relationships – Do you have a steady partner or do you try to avoid them? How do others that you have had relationships with view you? What kind of relationships do you find yourself getting into?

Beliefs – What do you feel strongly about and feel willing to stand up for? (Causes, Viewpoints, Spirituality, etc.)



>**Now go back and rate your associations** – Go back through your list and mark which associations are good for you and then mark which associations are not so good for you.

+ = Positive

▪ = Negative

N = Neutral (neither good or bad)

Increasing the positive – Consider your positive associations that you listed and come up with as many ways as possible that you could increase your contact with them. Consider some of the following points in this area:

- In an *ideal* situation, what associations would be best for you? List below the people, places, hobbies, etc. that you know that would be helpful if you could just increase your involvement. (For example – “going to the gym”, “spending more time with my uncle who has been sober for 10 years”, “spending weekends with my parents instead of in my old neighborhood”, etc. – List ideas that you know would be good for you, even if you are not yet willing to do anything about them just yet) –

1.

2.

3.

4.

- Now based on your list above but this time being *realistic*, consider what you would be *willing* to do in order increase your positive associations. For example, based on the above example about spending time with parents on the weekends, a realistic goal may be – “I would be willing to spend one weekend per month at my parents’ house” List below some ideas that are reasonable that you would be willing to commit to in order to change for the better –

1.

2.

3.

4.



Decreasing the negative – Now consider your negative associations that you listed and come up with as many ways as possible that you can and would be willing to decrease your involvement with them. Consider some of the following points in this area:

- Just like in the above section, brainstorm the *ideal* first and list some things that you could do in order to avoid negative associations, regardless of whether or not you are willing to do anything about it right now- (For example, “Ideally I should stop hanging around with my friend Tom because he drinks so much”)

1.

2.

3.

- Now based on your list above but again being *realistic*, consider what you would be *willing* to do in order decrease your positive associations. For example, based on the above example about spending time with Tom a realistic goal may be – “I would not be willing to stop associating with my friend Tom but I am willing to limit my association with him to just playing golf on the weekends without going to the bar with him any more” List what you would actually be willing to do in order to decrease negative associations below –

1.

2.

3.