



Decreasing the Negative and Increasing the Positive

(Aka learning to “Love the Good and Hate the Bad”)

Opening Questions for Thought and Discussion:

How can someone increase in their desire to want what is good for them and decrease in their desire for what is not so good? (Aka – learning to “love” what is good for you and “hate” what is bad for you)

- A simple example that many people can identify with is the person who goes from being someone who sits on the couch all day eating and watching TV who transforms themselves into the person who loves healthy food, exercising outdoors and going to the gym. It is not an easy process but it happens; *how do you think that comes about?*

Do you know someone who used to love getting high who now loves being clean? (Maybe a family member or a friend, or maybe even someone you used to get high with) –

- If so, what do you think they would say that they love now in their life about being clean?
- What do you think that this person would say they hate about drugs or alcohol?

Part I – Considering what is good for us and learning to appreciate those positive things:

Whether or not you want to change right now, using your imagination and what you know about the change process, what things would you have to learn to like if you were to change?

Check any of the examples that may apply:

I would need to learn to find and then learn to like drug and alcohol free hobbies

I would need to learn to like hanging around with sober people

I would need to find other things to do on weekends

I would have to find another way to feel that good feeling where I am relaxed and carefree

I would have to find another way to relieve anger and stress

I would need to learn new ways to have fun

I might have to find some new people to hang out with sometimes

I would have to find a job that is more important to me than getting high

I would have to learn to like living a less exciting but less chaotic lifestyle



List any more things you may have to learn to like that you can think of on your own below:

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Honestly speaking, you may not feel like actually doing any of these things right now. They may seem too difficult, or you simply might not want to do any of the things you listed above. That is completely understandable if there is limited desire to change. Once again though, using your imagination, based on the above ideas you selected or came up with on your own, think about what you could start doing in the near future to actually make some of these things happen.

Consider some common examples that may apply by brainstorming your own ideas:

___ **I could try to start actually** _____ (Pick an activity – music, painting, etc.)

___ **I could reach out to** _____ **and try to get together** (Pick a positive person, friend or family member)

___ **One of these weekends, maybe I will go and** _____ (Select positive activity instead of substance use)

___ **I could try to get a new job doing** _____

___ **I could try to go to a 12 Step or other recovery meeting**

___ **I could join some kind of club or hobby group like:** _____

___ **I could look into learning more about** _____ (Interesting positive subject)

___ **I used to be into** _____ **I could try getting back into that again**

List any more ideas that you can think of below:

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Part II – Considering what is not necessarily good for us and learning to move away from those things.

This part can be much more difficult. “Hating the bad” so to speak is often much more of a challenge than “loving the good” as we just did in Part I. Whatever your personal situation is, when it comes to identifying what is not so good about your behavior just requires a little bit of honesty and some imagination. Consider the following:

How do you currently think and feel about your current behavior? Try to come up with a statement that defines that for you.

For example:

- >I love smoking marijuana and I wish everyone would just leave me be and let me get high*
- >I realize that opiates are a problem for me and I want to stop but don't take my weed away from me because I still enjoy smoking very much*
- >I realize drinking is bad for me but I don't want to stop yet*
- >I am pretty sure that I am addicted to drugs but I just don't want to stop until I have too*
- >I love getting wasted and my dream is to find a way to just keep it to the weekends and stay out of trouble the rest of the week*

Write your own honest personal statement below:

You may have done this in other activities but this is a question worth repeating: What things are not so good about your current behavior. You may have to expand your mind and be honest. *A few common examples are provided below = Check all that may apply, even if just a little:*

- I spend a good amount of money on using**
- I don't like having to hide my behavior from others (parents, work, school, spouse)**
- I don't like the thought that I could be drug tested at any time and I risk being positive**
- I don't like the risk of arrest**
- I need to deal drugs in order to afford keeping my own daily supply but that brings risks**
- I don't like how I feel when the substance wears off (for example “burnt” or sick)**

Now list your own ideas and honest statements about what is not so good about your substance use:

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This last step really takes some even deeper honesty. Looking into the future as best you can, answer the following questions about negative things about your current behavior that could possibly arise over time:

1 -If you continue using the way that you are, what do you think your tolerance level will be like over time? (For example, “If I keep drinking, eventually it’s going to take me 30 beers to get drunk” or “At some point I will have to smoke an ounce of weed just to get high”)

2- What concerns might arise with you as you gain responsibility or maturity in life? (For example, “I am going to have to get a career where there is no drug testing”, or “One day when I have kids I will have to worry about them finding out that I use drugs”)

3- Even if you feel positive that nothing bad is going to result from your current behavior what are some things that others have warned you could happen (Some examples are provided below – Remember check the ones you have been warned about by others even if you don’t think it will happen to you)

I have been told I could be arrested (for the first time or even again)

People have warned me I might move on to stronger drugs at some point

People have warned me that eventually my family will be upset

I may be doing brain damage which I may notice more over time

I may eventually get bored of getting high

I may lose focus on the more important things in life

I may get to the point where I can’t live without the substance at all

I may end up regretting all the time and money I spend on getting high

I may develop some health problems associated with long term use

Sooner or later my brain is going to be shot if I keep going like this

Now list some of your own thoughts about things others have warned you about-

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Process and Wrap Up:

Take a few minutes to look over all the work that you just did - What stood out the most to you from Parts I and II of this exercise the most in terms of actual situations that could motivate you to re-evaluate your substance use? Maybe you are not ready to change now but summarize below any of the areas that you may have identified in the above exercises that could help you to start to want the “good” things about change (loving the good) as well as things you identified that you don’t like about your substance use that could inspire you to eventually want to change (hate the bad).

Some reasons I identified that could inspire me to want to start to change:

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