

Addiction and Recovery: Act Now to Combat Drug Cravings

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

In the initial stages of addiction recovery, experiencing cravings is a common phenomenon. However, the presence of cravings does not indicate a failure in one's recovery journey. With sustained abstinence, cravings tend to diminish in both intensity and duration, potentially disappearing altogether over time. To effectively manage alcohol or drug cravings, it is crucial to identify triggers early on, considering factors such as timing, company, location, activities, thoughts, and emotions. Once identified, these triggers can be avoided or managed through various coping techniques:

- **Exit Unsafe Situations Promptly:** Leave environments that are not conducive to continuing recovery without hesitation.
- **Utilize Distraction:** Engage in alternative activities to divert attention away from cravings.
- **Explore Harmless Substitutes:** Use non-chemical substitutes like candy or gum as temporary distractions. Find an enjoyable non-alcoholic beverage to drink routinely.
- **Seek Support:** Reach out to supportive individuals or groups, such as AA/NA or accountability partners. Get and use a sponsor. Call people when thinking about drinking, using drugs, or approaching slippery people, places, or things.
- **Reflect on Reasons for Quitting:** Maintain lists of reasons for choosing sobriety. Post your lists where you can see them--in your home, car, or phone.

- **Cultivate Gratitude:** Keep gratitude lists to reinforce the positive benefits of sobriety.
- **Challenge Negative Self-Talk:** Replace self-pity with affirmations of positive choices. Remember that you are a work in progress and worthy of recovery.
- **Consider Consequences:** Visualize the adverse outcomes of relapse before succumbing to cravings. Think past the positive expectations into the predictable negative consequences.
- **Use Prayer or Meditation:** Utilize spiritual practices to resist cravings.
- **Identify Healthy Alternatives:** Replace former roles of substances with healthier activities.
- **Communicate with Loved Ones:** Write letters explaining your commitment to sobriety.
- **Practice Thought Stopping:** Employ techniques like visualizing stop signs to interrupt compulsive thoughts.
- **Recognize Cross-Addiction:** Acknowledge that seeking alternative substances leads to the same outcome.
- **Physical Reminders as Support:** Keep tokens like desire or sobriety chips on your person as tangible reminders of your commitment to recovery.
- **Engage in Recovery Activities:** Read literature or attend meetings to reinforce sobriety.
- **Manage Cravings One Day at a Time:** Combat cravings as they come up, reminding yourself that you are not succumbing to the craving today, this hour, or this minute.

Remind yourself that cravings are transient and will be overcome by choosing not to use substances. Focus on staying sober in the present moment, accumulating moments of sobriety that lead to lasting recovery.

Note: This article has been revised and edited from its original version, which was previously published in 2009 on this site. The content has been updated for contemporary language, clarity and accuracy.



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