

STEPS FOR JOURNALING ABOUT IMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR

1 IDENTIFY YOUR BEHAVIOR AND TRIGGERS

Start by identifying the behavior or urge that you would like to address. Next, brainstorm triggers that lead you to the behavior. Triggers may include: people, places, situations, smells, events and times just to name a few. Take some time to journal and list your major triggers that prompt you to act impulsively.

2 REDUCE YOUR VULNERABILITIES

Although there are various types of vulnerabilities that lay the groundwork for problematic behaviors, the basic vulnerability factors are being hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. A helpful acronym to remember these four states is HALT. You can use HALT to remind you to take proactive steps towards decreasing or eliminating these vulnerability factors.

3 LIST THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

List both the positive consequences that reinforce the behavior and the negative consequences of the problematic behavior.

4 SKILLS USED AND REQUIRED

Journal the skills you have already used and the additional skills that would be important for you to develop to help you utilize alternative strategies to the problematic behavior. Some skills include: mindfulness, emotion regulation skills, distress tolerance skills, thought regulation, interpersonal effectiveness skills, relaxation techniques, self-esteem development, assertiveness skills, etc.

5 BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

This is the last and most important step. It is recommended you give yourself 20-30 minutes to do this exercise so you can really become conscientiously aware of all the details involved in your behavioral cycle.

To begin, choose a specific and recent example in which the problematic behavior occurred. On a piece of paper write the problematic behavior at the top of the page and then draw a line vertically down the middle of the page (example on the following page).

On the left side of the page, you will write down in chronological order (the order in which they happened) every **(T)hought, (F)eeling, (E)vent, (BS) Body Sensations** and **(B)ehaviors** leading up to the problematic behavior, during the problematic behavior and post-behavior. You want this play-by-play to be as detailed as possible so you truly get a full snapshot of all the internal and external aspects that are involved in your impulsive behavior.

After you have completed the actual chain of events on the left hand side of the page, you will then write on the right hand side alternative thoughts, skills, tools, coping mechanisms, and effective behaviors you could incorporate the next time some of these similar thoughts, feelings, body sensations, behaviors and events occur.

For example, if you tend to have problems with anger your behavior analysis may look something like this...

PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIOR: Anger

(E) I woke up late	Practice Time Management Skills
(B) I was rushing	Take time to relax and meditate 5 min.
(BS) My heart was racing	Breathing exercise
(BS) Shortness of breath	
(T) "I am so irresponsible"	"I am learning & will plan better."
(E) mad, irritable, anxious	Image a happy or calm place in my mind
(B) don't eat breakfast and leave	Prepare a healthy snack the night before
(BS) tension in my shoulders	
(E) stuck in traffic	
(BS) tight fists	Progressive muscle relaxation
(T) "People are so rude"	State the facts to become objective
(E) rage, anger	Opposite emotion exercise
(B) Yell explosively as someone	Journal about what is upsetting me