

## Ideas for dealing with Cravings

Every now and again, even when you are trying really hard, you will probably get the urge to drink or use. These cravings can be very scary. It is important to remember that cravings and urges are normal. As our use of alcohol/drugs has been a large part of our life for some time, it would be unreasonable to expect them to vanish completely. The good news is that, as we progress through our recovery journey, we will experience cravings and urges less often, and by learning some techniques we be better able to cope with them.

***How you view your cravings will influence how much power they have over you.*** These are some things it may be helpful to remember:

- A craving is a warning sign to stay on your toes and be diligent to avoid relapse.
- Be mindful that having a craving is not a reason to use drugs or drink. Instead, think of it as a reminder that alcohol/drugs had a chronic effect on your mind/body/life.
- Take comfort in knowing that it is like any other feeling, it will pass.

### Other things which can help:

#### 1. Dispute Expectancies (argue with your thoughts)

Expectancies we have when craving can be:

*Anticipatory*, "I'll be Mr. Wonderful after one line."

*Relief Oriented*, "I won't have to worry about it if I drink this bottle of wine."

*Facilitative or Permissive*, "I've worked hard all week, I'm entitled to it."

Since we rarely think about longer-term consequences when craving, bring them to mind deliberately and remind yourself of why you don't want to drink/use drugs.

Use the DiSARM tool (*Destructive Self-talk Awareness and Refusal Method*) to help you develop a more rational new belief or a counter statement to help you attack your (irrational) urges and cravings.

#### DiSARM

*Destructive self-talk* That little voice in your head is not you, it's your "Enemy." Challenge it.

*Awareness*: Learn to recognise the craving or urge, as soon as possible. Discover your earliest red flag signals.

*Refuse*: Immediately and firmly refuse.



**2. Use other helpful reminders (e.g 5 D's or ACE)**

**5 D's** (Decide, de-stress, de-catastrophise, delay, distract)

- A – void                      Early stages
- C – ontrol                    Abstinent for a period of time
- E – scape                    Planning ahead

**3. Distract**

Some urges are so relentless that talking back to them isn't enough. You still can't get your mind off your habit. Good old -fashioned distraction can help. Distraction can be cognitive, in the form of some mental exercises, or behavioural, in the form of activity. Certainly, what you choose will depend on your interests, but the key is to make it something that will be easy, interesting and fun to do.



**4. Keep a cravings diary or urges log.**

**5. Talk to someone.**



**6. Challenge other unhelpful thinking patterns leading to cravings (e.g. self-criticism, 'shoulds' and 'musts', catastrophising, comparing yourself with others).**