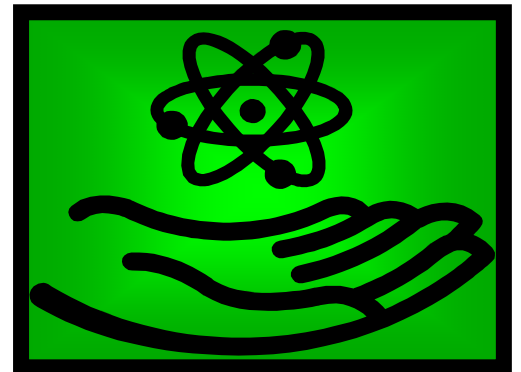


# Coping with Emotional and Physical High-Risk Factors

- Negative Feelings
- **Cravings**
- Feeling Good
- Physical Discomfort and Illness



Adapted for JRA from  
*Coping with Emotional and Physical High-Risk Factors* (Pamphlet  
and Workbook)

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**About this pamphlet and workbook.** If you have ever wanted to avoid or recover from relapse but did not know how, this pamphlet can help. Filled with vivid examples and helpful advice, it discusses the coping skills you need to deal with pleasant and negative feelings, cravings, and physical discomfort and illness that can lead you back to using. Despite the common wisdom, you can learn to avoid or recover from relapse to alcohol or other drug use. In a nonpreachy, practical way, this workbook shows you how. Its positive, concrete exercises and useful information and suggestions will put you firmly on the path of contented sobriety.

## CRAVINGS



**Sam's story.** Sam had recently been released from JR where he completed substance abuse treatment. His drugs of choice were alcohol and weed. Before treatment, he would go with his homies to parties. He enjoyed being with his homies but what he liked even more was the beer and the bud. When he went to the same parties with his homies after finishing treatment, he found that his craving for beer and weed was overpowering. He knew he was in danger of relapsing. How could he get out of this situation without going to the parties? Perhaps, he thought, he could tell his homies that he had to see his parole officer. But that excuse would work for only so long. He didn't know what to do.



**What you need to know about cravings.** A craving occurs when there are external triggers or environmental cues. For example: A recovering alcoholic comes across a bottle of liquor. A recovering prescription-drug addict comes across a bottle of narcotic pain pills. A craving can also take place when you are exposed to a song, a smell, or a place that reminds you of your drug of choice. Cravings need to be triggered. Rarely will they come out of the blue.

The first time Sam had a beer, he didn't crave it ahead of time; later, he realized he liked the taste of beer. From then on, when he thought about or saw a beer, his mouth watered. The places where he partied had a number of cues that brought on a craving as well.

Cravings are powerful because they are automatic. Cocaine and heroin users often find that drug paraphernalia, such as needles, in addition to smells and certain music will trigger cravings.

Cravings don't last forever. There are many ways to weaken them, such as avoidance and counterconditioning. *Avoidance* helps you stay away from cues to your craving. It only works, however, as long as you stay away. If you take a drink or another drug when you're exposed to a cue, your craving will become stronger. That is why slips are never good. Each time you slip, your craving grows.

Some recovering alcoholics go to treatment centers where they undergo *counterconditioning*. They are given Emetine, a drug that causes vomiting. Then they are given a drink. When they drink, they vomit. This is repeated multiple times. The goal of these programs is that when a person leaves, even the idea of a drink will cause severe nausea.

It takes a long time for a craving to be extinguished. Your response to cravings, however, is within your control even before they become extinguished. Cravings are normal after a person quits drinking or using other drugs and will continue until they are eliminated. Although you can't suppress a craving, you can allow it to occur without acting on it.

A common misbelief about cravings is that they will grow in intensity until you go crazy or something even worse. You may think you need to relieve the craving with a drink or a drug. This is not true. In fact, if you give in to the craving and indulge, it will increase in intensity and increase the possibility that it will reoccur even stronger than ever. If left alone, cravings will increase in intensity, peak, and then fade like a wave. They will do so faster if you get away from the cues.

In *Relapse Prevention*, Marlatt and Gordon discuss the following points about cravings:

- (1) *Cravings are triggered by external factors such as drug cues, related stimuli, or involvement in high-risk situations.* These factors can be controlled and eliminated.
- (2) *Cravings are not triggered by internal sources out of your control.* They do not represent a physical need for alcohol or other drugs. Cravings are not like thirst. You will die *without* water, which your thirst is telling you, you need. Yet you will die *with* alcohol and drugs, which your cravings tell you, you need.
- (3) *Having an urge to use does not mean your treatment or support groups have failed.* Urges are common. Even people who have been recovering for some time will occasionally experience an urge. Attending support groups after your treatment can lessen the impact of many environmental cues.
- (4) *Your craving will always fade in time.*
- (5) *Cravings brought on by high-stress situations provide you with feedback that something is wrong.* Instead of stopping the cravings by using, you can use positive coping skills to deal with stress-filled situations.
- (6) *Your behavior will not change overnight.* It took a long time to discover you had a problem with alcohol or other drugs. It will take a long time to learn new behaviors. Each day you resist cravings and remain abstinent, you will become much better at dealing with cravings.



**Craving techniques.** The techniques to deal with cravings fall into six areas: (1) *Detaching from the craving.* Most recovering individuals believe that when they crave a drink or drug, they want it. This thinking is not true and makes it much more difficult to resist the temptation to give in. The craving is caused by an environmental cue. You need to detach yourself from the craving. Here are some ways of doing so:

- **Urge Surfing.** An urge is like an ocean wave. It intensifies, peaks, and subsides. You do not want to fight a wave when it is peaking because it will only grow. You do not want to give in to an urge because it will only grow. The next time an urge takes place, imagine riding a wave. First, the wave is small. You keep your balance on the surfboard while the wave crests, and you try not to be wiped out when the wave breaks. When you've ridden the wave to shore you feel great satisfaction.
- **Samurai warrior.** See your urge as a fiery dragon. When you recognize it, behead it with the sword of awareness. Some cravings, such as a can of beer in the refrigerator, are easy to kill, but some are more deceiving. They disguise themselves as an inner voice ("I could use a drink").
- **Build Mastery.** It's overwhelming to imagine not doing alcohol or other drugs for the rest of your life. When cravings begin, tell yourself you are going to abstain for the next four hours or two hours or one hour. Tell yourself the cravings will fade. When the time you've set aside is up, ask if you can hold out for the same time period again. Take your sobriety in chunks. Eventually the craving will lose its strength as you build mastery by being successful at each progressively longer time period.

(2) *Developing an aversion.* Recalling negative consequences can help you develop an aversion to the alcohol or other drugs. Use the following techniques developed by Dr. Arnold Ludwig:

- *Play the script out or "Think through the drink."* Keep the mental picture rolling—to all that happens: You keep drinking and you get home sloppy drunk. You

remember the lies you tell to your family, missing work, going into rages, and vomiting blood in the bathroom. You remember it all.

- *Recalling aversive consequences.* Associate drinking or drugging with some of your worst memories from your drinking and using days. Don't leave out any gory details. When cravings begin, use **If then thinking ahead** and pair some of the worst experiences with if I use then insert the memory as the possible outcome.



**List your three worst times or experiences with alcohol or other drugs in detail.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

(3) *Distraction.* Cravings are present but you can get your mind off them by doing something else. Dr. Ludwig suggests the following:

- *Switching channels.* The craving is just a moment-to-moment desire with no connection to who you really are. It is something irritating. Don't make the mistake of seeing it as powerful. Whenever you tune in to your craving thought channel, switch it. Get up and do something else. Use **Wise Mind ACCEPTS**. Your mind will keep switching back, but every time you switch channels, even if for a few seconds, you've won a victory. Eventually your mind will get the message.
- *Reframing - Substituting more suitable images.* When you imagine that cold glass of beer, let it become a cold glass of soda and imagine how refreshing that would be. The picture of that friendly neighborhood bar can become a comfortable living room where you're sharing laughter with good friends.
- *Use the **Activities** part of **Wise Mind ACCEPTS** as alternative activities.* To stop obsessing about a craving, go do something else—something physical, social, or intellectual. Frequent AA or NA meetings can keep you busy and focused on sobriety. Do something with your free time that is easy and available on a regular basis. Alternative activities that involve your hands are best because you can't use them to hold a drink or another drug.



**List five alternative activities you have used successfully to combat cravings OR List five you think you could use successfully.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

(4) *Extinction*. The longer we do not respond to cues associated with alcohol and other drugs (television, movies, and billboards), the weaker our cravings will become. This is **Avoiding and Eliminating the Cue** or in some cases **Burning Your Bridges**. Eventually, these cues will not make us crave at all. During the first few months of sobriety, you are better off staying away from parties where there is drinking. In time, your confidence in your own sobriety will build. This is called **Building a Life Worth Living**.

(5) ***Avoiding and Eliminating environmental cues***. Avoid exposure to cues. Drinkers need to remove all liquor and beer from their home. Drug users need to rid themselves of all drugs and paraphernalia. Avoid places and things that remind you of your alcohol or other drug use such as concerts, bars, and certain music. Again, this also involves **Burning your Bridges**.

Here's a list Sam wrote of environmental cues along with strategies to avoid them, and some substitute activities.

**Cue**—Old places where I partied

**Strategy**—Tell homies I have to see my PO so I *don't* have to go *there*.

**Cue**—Cigarette smoke

**Strategy**—Avoid smokers.

**Cue**—French fries, salty foods

**Strategy**—Eat fruits *and* vegetables instead.

**Substitute Activities**—Play ball with friends, *do* something with family, make *an airplane model*, take up hiking, help my brother with his chores.



**List five of your strongest environmental cues with strategies to avoid them.**

1. **Cue:**  
**Strategy:**
  
2. **Cue:**  
**Strategy:**
  
3. **Cue:**  
**Strategy:**
  
4. **Cue:**  
**Strategy:**
  
5. **Cue:**  
**Strategy:**



**List five alternative activities you could do in place of using alcohol or other drugs.**

- 1.
  
- 2.
  
- 3.
  
- 4.
  
- 5.

(6) **Cheerleading** and **Rewarding yourself**. Every time you go without a drink or a drug for a period of time, such as twenty-four hours or a week, reward yourself. Watch a movie or a play, or try a new sport. Don't forget to be your own cheerleader.

When you are ready, decide that alcohol and other drugs are no longer an option for you. Tell yourself you will never be a social drinker or a recreational drug user. If you decide nothing can make it okay to drink or use other drugs again, your cravings will eventually leave you alone. Stay alert, however.



**Monitoring your cravings.** It is common for recovering individuals to be Unaware of their cravings and environmental cues. This makes it easier to give in to their cravings. For the next week, monitor your cravings by using the Daily Monitoring of My Cravings/ Temptations form and at the end of the week fill-out the questions at the end. It is important to do this for at least a week because some days present more environmental cues than others. (Before using the form, photocopy it enough times so you can use a separate form each day of the week.) For instance, weekends may be a challenge if you are in an environment with many people drinking or using. On the other hand, if you work in a restaurant that serves alcohol, weekends away from work may be easy whereas having easy access to alcohol at work may trigger a strong craving.

Here is how Sam filled out his monitoring form and answered a group of questions after he filled out the daily forms for a week.

#### **Daily Monitoring of My Cravings/Temptations\***

**Name:** Sam

**Date:** Friday

**Substance desired:** Beer

**When the worst craving/temptation occurred...**

**Where were you?** At my friend's house.

**What were you doing?** Hanging out, eating some chips.

**Who were you with?** Friends.

**What were your thoughts and feelings?** Felt happy, relaxed.

**What did you do to try to cope?** Used urge surfing.

**Did you use?**  No  Yes

**(1) On what days did you crave more? What days are high-risk for you?**  
Weekends.

**(2) At what places did you begin craving more?**  
My friend's house, the ballpark, and my bedroom.

**(3) Who were you with most often when the craving occurred?**  
I was with my homies.

**(4) What activities were associated with craving?**  
I was always eating or relaxing. One time followed sex.

**(5) What thoughts were associated with craving?**  
I must please others to be worthy. I have to drink with them to be part of the crowd.

**(6) What feelings were associated with the craving?**  
I was feeling good, relaxed.

\*Developed by Helen M. Annis and J. Martin Graham, Addictions Research Foundation, 33 Russell Street, Toronto, Canada M5S 2S1.

**(7) How did you cope successfully?**

By urge surfing and remembering aversive consequences with If then thinking ahead.

**(8) What did you learn from this assignment?**

Weekends are my high-risk times. Also, I have a problem with marijuana. I can avoid the bar. If I can't handle ball games, I can take Antabuse or not go. I need to find new ways to have fun. Urge surfing and recalling aversive consequences as part of If then thinking ahead help me not to crave.

**Daily Monitoring of My Cravings/Temptations\***

*At the end of each day over the course of a week, answer the following*

**DAY #1**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Substance desired:** \_\_\_\_\_

**When the worst craving/temptation occurred...**

**Where were you?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What were you doing?**

**Who were you with?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What were your thoughts and feelings?**

**What did you do to try to cope?**

**Did you use?**      No                      Yes

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**Daily Monitoring of My Cravings/Temptations\***  
*At the end of each day over the course of a week, answer the following*

**DAY #2**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Substance desired:** \_\_\_\_\_

**When the worst craving/temptation occurred...**

**Where were you?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What were you doing?**

**Who were you with?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What were your thoughts and feelings?**

**What did you do to try to cope?**

**Did you use?**      No                      Yes

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**Daily Monitoring of My Cravings/Temptations\***  
*At the end of each day over the course of a week, answer the following*

**DAY #3**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Substance desired:** \_\_\_\_\_

**When the worst craving/temptation occurred...**

**Where were you?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What were you doing?**

**Who were you with?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What were your thoughts and feelings?**

**What did you do to try to cope?**

**Did you use?**      No                      Yes

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**Daily Monitoring of My Cravings/Temptations\***  
*At the end of each day over the course of a week, answer the following*

**DAY #4**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Substance desired:** \_\_\_\_\_

**When the worst craving/temptation occurred...**

**Where were you?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What were you doing?**

**Who were you with?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What were your thoughts and feelings?**

**What did you do to try to cope?**

**Did you use?**      No                      Yes

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**Daily Monitoring of My Cravings/Temptations\***  
*At the end of each day over the course of a week, answer the following*

**DAY #5**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Substance desired:** \_\_\_\_\_

**When the worst craving/temptation occurred...**

**Where were you?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What were you doing?**

**Who were you with?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What were your thoughts and feelings?**

**What did you do to try to cope?**

**Did you use?**      No                      Yes

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**Daily Monitoring of My Cravings/Temptations\***  
*At the end of each day over the course of a week, answer the following*

**DAY #6**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Substance desired:** \_\_\_\_\_

**When the worst craving/temptation occurred...**

**Where were you?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What were you doing?**

**Who were you with?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What were your thoughts and feelings?**

**What did you do to try to cope?**

**Did you use?**      No                      Yes

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**Daily Monitoring of My Cravings/Temptations\***  
*At the end of each day over the course of a week, answer the following*

**DAY #7**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Substance desired:** \_\_\_\_\_

**When the worst craving/temptation occurred...**

**Where were you?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What were you doing?**

**Who were you with?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What were your thoughts and feelings?**

**What did you do to try to cope?**

**Did you use?**      No                      Yes

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 **After completing the Daily Monitoring of My Cravings/ Temptations form each day over the course of a week, please answer the following question.**

**(1)** *On what days did you crave more? What days are a high risk for you?*

**(2)** *At what places did you begin craving more?*

**(3)** *Who were you with most often when the cravings occurred?*

**(4)** *What activities were associated with craving?*

**(5)** *What thoughts were associated with craving?*

**(6)** *What feelings were associated with craving?*

**(7)** *How did you cope successfully?*

**(8)** *What did you learn from this assignment?*

Below is a partial sample of a weekly plan Sam filled out. Using his example will help you develop and fill out your own plan. In this plan you'll be asked to describe three alcohol- or other drug-craving cues that you're likely to face in the coming week. You'll pick strategies to cope with the situations, including urge surfing, switching channels, postponement, recalling aversive consequences, and avoiding environmental cues.

## Anticipating Cravings/Making a Coping Plan *Weekly Plan\**

<p>Describe three alcohol- or other drug-craving cues that are likely to arise over the coming week. For each, indicate <i>when, where, who will be present, and what you will be doing, thinking, and feeling.</i></p>	<p>Describe several coping strategies for each that you will be prepared to use. Remember, you may want to <i>avoid the drug/alcohol use setting, avoid drug-using friends, seek support from reliable friend(s), family member(s), or your spouse, or plan other ways of coping as described in this pamphlet.</i></p>
<p>1. <i>My boss's going-away party.</i></p>	<p><i>I will go to the party with my AA sponsor. I will only stay an hour. I will drink cola and avoid salty or fried foods that cause me to crave. If I do crave I will use "playing the script out" and "recalling aversive consequences."</i></p>

Sam followed his plan, did not drink, and the party went well.




**Anticipating your cravings and creating your own coping plan.** In the following chart, write down three alcohol or other drug-craving cues that are likely to arise over the next week. In your plan include the following information about cravings: when they will take place, where they will take place, who will be present, and what you will be doing, thinking, and feeling. In column two of the weekly plan describe your strategy for each of your potential high-risk situations (for example, postponement, playing the script out, urge surfing, switching channels, etc.—as described above).

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<p>1.</p>	
<p>2.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	

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 **Creating your coping plan.** You can practice your coping plan and build confidence. For example, if you are going to attend a gathering you think might cause you problems, take the following steps:

- (1) *Be sure you are picking a plan of no more than medium difficulty.*
- (2) *Use your support system so that a spouse, friend, or sponsor who is sober is there with you.*
- (3) *Have an escape plan.* If your craving gets out of hand, leave.





**Outcome Report.** At the end of the week, create an Outcome Report\* on a separate sheet of paper to determine which coping skills worked for you and what you would like to do differently. Remember not to expose yourself unnecessarily to craving cues. **Ask yourself:**

- Did I attempt this assignment?
  
- Was I successful?
  
- Add additional comments.
  
- Did I use? If yes, how much?
  
- What, if anything, might I try doing differently next time?

How confident do you feel that you will not drink or use other drugs in response to a craving? Put a check above one of the following numbers, 1 equaling "not at all confident" and 10 equaling "very confident."

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

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