

A DIFFERENT APPROACH

GOALS OF THIS EXERCISE

1. Maintain a program of recovery free from impulsive behavior and addiction.
2. Learn to stop, think, and plan before acting.
3. Learn self-observation skills to identify patterns of impulsive behavior.

ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS FOR WHICH THIS EXERCISE MAY BE USEFUL

- Attention Deficit Disorder, Inattentive Type (ADD)
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Suicidal Ideation

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESSING THIS EXERCISE WITH CLIENT

The “A Different Approach” activity is designed for clients who would benefit from observing their own behavior, assessing it, and developing and implementing new behavioral approaches. It may be useful to work through a few of the exercises together in session and have the client practice alternative coping methods outside the session and record the results. You may or may not want to give the example provided until the client has worked through one successfully on his/her own. If a client gets stuck, you may show video clips of people acting impulsively (e.g., from TV programs or popular films) and walk through the steps with him/her regarding the characters in the clips. Many times the outcome of impulsive behavior is positive in the short-term, but the long-term consequences are negative. The goal is to get the client to improve his/her insight regarding achieving desired outcomes with fewer negative returns.

Impulsivity means having difficulty resisting urges or delaying behavior. Some people think of it as being impatient or not thinking things through. Acting impulsively can cause social, legal, academic, relationship, work-related, and other types of problems. It can lead to physical fights, addictive behavior, and alienation from others. Acting and reacting less impulsively is a skill that can be learned and used to avoid these painful consequences and to get the outcomes you desire. Acting less impulsively involves two components: First, it requires being able to observe your own behavior. Second, it involves developing self-management skills. This exercise will help you work through the steps of self-observation and find ways to get what you want without the painful consequences that often accompany acting without thinking first.

1. Choose a situation, recently or some time ago, in which you acted impulsively. You may want to select an event related to your addiction, since this is often connected with acting impulsively. Describe that event in the following format:

a. What happened first?

b. Then what?

c. What next?

d. Next, and so on to its conclusion?

2. Now assess your motivation for your behavior by asking yourself, "What did I want to have happen? What was the purpose of this behavior?"

3. Third, finish analyzing the consequences by asking yourself, "What were the out-comes or

results of this behavior?" and "Were they what I wanted to happen?"

4. Assess alternatives. Ask yourself, "What else could I have done to get what I wanted?" List as many other options as you can think of.

5. Last, pick one alternative and identify five actions you will take to practice this alternative.

Be sure to bring this worksheet back to your next therapy session, and be prepared to discuss any questions you may have and to talk over your thoughts and feelings about this activity.