



## Learning to Trust that there are Alternatives

*“If I stopped getting high, what would I do instead?”*

The above statement may be a common thought for someone faced with the prospect of stopping use of substances. It is a legitimate concern because eventually there may be a need to fill the void left if substance use is no longer there as an option.

### Discuss:

- **Have you ever asked yourself that question?**
  
- **Be as honest as possible and check all that apply to the way you use(d) substances:**

- It is a form of recreation for me
- It's one of my favorite ways to have fun
- It adds excitement to my life
- It has become a part of my regular routine
- It is a part of my social life
- It is what I look forward to
- It is how I wind down at the end of a tough day
- It is a way to relieve boredom
- At this point it is a habit for me
- It helps make other activities more enjoyable
- Other? (List your own idea) \_\_\_\_\_

**Which ones stood out for you the most when it comes to your substance use (and why)?**

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If using substances serves a purpose for you when it comes to your social life, avoiding boredom, or if it has become a regular part of your routine, then finding alternative activities that do not involve substance use can be a challenge, but it is not impossible. Complete the following activity and see if you can come up with some ideas for alternative ways to keep life interesting without getting high:



### Activity – Keeping Things Interesting

**Directions** – Go through the following list of potentially interesting and/or exciting substance- free life activities and pick the one or two that you could see yourself doing if you had the resources to make it happen. If in a group, put the name of a group member for the rest of the items on the list that you did not pick for yourself based on who you think best fits based on their personality and abilities. (If doing this individually ask your counselor or someone else for their opinion)

<b><u>Substance Free Goal</u></b>	<b><u>Name</u></b> <i>(You or Group Member)</i>
Learn a musical instrument	
Start a business	
Establish a career helping others	
Travel	
Learn a new language	
Get into amazing physical shape (perfect weight/body etc.)	
Run a marathon or complete a triathlon	
Participate in a sport or adventure (rafting, hang gliding, etc.)	
Become a leader or organizer (Start your own league or group)	
Climb a mountain	
Write a book	
Produce/direct a movie	
Publish your own website	
Join or start a band	
Act in a play, movie or show	
Get a degree	
Learn a trade	
Develop a useful skill (like cooking, landscaping, etc.)	
Do public speaking in front of a huge crowd	
Get a complete makeover	
Live in a different country for a least a few months	
Build something	
Become an expert at something	
Perform in front of a crowd	
Come up with an idea that is new and different	
Other idea? _____	



## Process and Discuss -

1. **Start with yourself- Which items on the list could you see yourself doing if you had the time, money and other needed resources to make it happen? (Elaborate, provide some detail and be more specific about it if you can)**
  
2. **Get Feedback – What did other people think were good ideas for you?**
  - **When you are done getting feedback: Did other people tend to agree with you or did others come up with ideas for you that you were not expecting?**

## Back to Reality:

Of course most people usually cannot simply drop everything and just go and climb a mountain, go skydiving, act in movie, etc. If it was that easy to find fulfilling and exiting things to do in life without getting high, perhaps fewer people would use substances.

Often there may be obstacles to getting started with new activities for example:

- Being probation or parole can temporarily limit your freedom of choice
- Childcare issues or other family obligations can present a challenge
- Financial issues (lack of funds) can often be a factor
- Not having enough free time may be a concern
- Transportation issues may be challenging for some individuals
- Health or physical limitations may get in the way

Still that does not mean that you cannot start *trying to start* to move toward some of these goals:

## **Final Discussion:**

**What can you start to do today (even if it's just a little) in order to get involved with something new and interesting in your life? Consider some examples:**

- If you can't start a new career just yet, can you start volunteering in a related field?
- If you want to travel, but can't yet, can you start to do research on where you eventually want to go?
- If you can't get the degree you want just yet, can you take a course at a community college?

**Action: Hopefully you get the idea: What small steps are you willing to try in order to start exploring new ways to keep life interesting without getting high? Discuss:**