



SB Activity 9 - Overcoming Setbacks: COMMITMENT

Sticking with our physical, emotional, spiritual goals and renewing our commitment to the change process:

Background:

- **Commitment**, n. –the state of being committed or pledged
- **Pledge** – a formal or solemn promise or agreement, especially to do or refrain from doing something

Based on the above definitions, when we are talking about commitment what we are really talking about is keeping a promise to ourselves to stay away from something (which in this case would be staying away from abusing substances). A promise or a pledge is only as good as our ability to keep it. Therefore when it comes to overcoming setbacks, the issue involved here is less about just making the promises (which is easy) but more about *keeping* our promises.

Learning to Overcome Commitment Issues in Order to Overcome Setbacks:

Similar to the work done in other areas, a good way to overcome commitment issues is to dig deeper and understand the “issues behind the issues” as we have been doing. Consider below some common excuses people may tell themselves that can represent commitment issues. On the line next to each issue, write your score with regard to how true each issue is for you based on the following scale:

- 0** – This is not at all true for me
- 1** – This is slightly true for me for me once in a while
- 2** – This is somewhat or sometimes true for me
- 3** – This seems to be true for me
- 4** – This is absolutely an issue for me

Issues Commonly behind Commitment Issues in The Change Process: - Rate all of the following using the above scale:

___ The thought of “forever” is disturbing or scary for me

___ I am just not ready to let go

___ After a while I find life in without my old behaviors boring

___ I start losing hope that I am going to have a good life without getting high

___ I start to reason, “it wasn’t that bad when I was using”

___ I start to look back at the “good old days” of using

___ It feels like too much work to stay clean long term

___ I usually start substituting other compulsive or addictive behaviors

___ I eventually stop taking care of my coexisting issues (For example, mental health issues, medical issues, etc.)

___ I start to think again that I am in control and can use again once in a while but it does not end up working out that way



Take note of the areas you scored highest in and consider the corresponding information:

“The thought of “forever” is disturbing or scary for me”

Discuss the following as a group:

- Why can it a waste of time to worry about “forever”?
- What is a better and more realistic way to view this thought? (The quotes that follow may help)
 - “One Day at a Time” – Alcoholics Anonymous
 - “So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today” – Mathew 6:34
 - “Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow, it only saps today of its joy.” – Leo F. Buscaglia
 - “The greatest mistake you can make in life is to be continually fearing you will make one” – Elbert Hubbard
- Going forward then, what is your plan to deal with these kinds of negative thoughts?

“I am just not ready to let go”

Discuss as a Group:

- What exactly is it that you are not ready to let go of? In other words, what are you still trying to hold on to or go back too?
- Being honest, in your situation why might it be a bad idea to keep on holding on? (The following quotes may help) –
 - “A year from now you may wish you had started today.” – Karen Lamb
 - “Procrastination is like a credit card; it's a lot of fun until you get the bill” – Christopher Parker
 - “Holding on is believing that there's only a past; letting go is knowing that there's a future.” – Daphne Rose Kingma
- Going forward, what is your plan to deal with this negative thought?



“After a while I find life without my old behaviors boring”

Discuss:

- If something is more fun or exciting, does that mean it is better? (The examples below may help) –
 - Staying home from work to go shopping may be less boring but is it better?
 - Taking the rent money and going on a vacation may be less boring but is it better?
 - Eating ice cream for breakfast may be more fun but is it better?

- It is important to make time for fun in life, but what kinds of things often need to be more of a priority than having fun?

- Instead of looking backward when you feel bored, what can you start to do today instead to keep moving forward and learn to appreciate and enjoy your new life?
 - (If boredom is a serious issue, consider doing the “Boredom Buster” activity)

“I start losing hope that I am going to have a good life without getting high”

Discuss:

- Why is hope so important? What is the harm in allowing yourself to lose hope? (Consider the following quote)
 - Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear hardship today.’ – Thich Nhat Hanh

- If you feel like you are losing hope of having a better life in the future, how can developing the following qualities help you?
 - Patience
 - Perseverance
 - Persistence

- Sometimes the best way to keep hope strong is to take notice of small improvements and build from there. In that case, what can you do each day in order to change, even if just a little, in order to increase your level of hope for the future without substance abuse?



I start to reason, “it wasn’t that bad when I was using”

Discuss:

- Is it really true that it “wasn’t that bad” or is there a possibility you may be forgetting how bad it was?

- When you think about it, are there any factors in your life right now that may be influencing you to start to reason that using “wasn’t that bad”? If so, how can that be a trap? Consider a few examples –
 - Are friends, co-workers, or other associates around you in your life still getting high which may be triggering thoughts in you about going back to that lifestyle because they seem to be having a good time?
 - Has there been a decrease in external pressure for you to stay clean which may have you thinking about considering going back to your old lifestyle? (Such as your family trusts you again, probation is coming to an end, you now have excess money to spend again, etc.)

- In Alcoholics Anonymous, you may often hear the phrase “Keep Your Memory Green”. What does that mean and how can it help? (*Green = Fresh*)

“I start to look back at the “good old days” of using”

Discuss:

- Have you ever heard of *Euphoric Recall*? It is very common when it comes to substance abuse. How might this be involved?
 - **Euphoric recall** is a psychological term for the tendency of people to remember past experiences in a positive light, while overlooking negative experiences associated with that event(s) – Wikipedia
 - “The good old days weren’t always good” – Billy Joel. What negative parts about the “good old days” might you be overlooking or minimizing?
 - Have you ever left something because it was a bad situation (like a bad job or a bad relationship) but then you decided to go back. Most of the time when you go back to something bad, what ends up happening?

- “*If the grass is greener on the other side of the fence, maybe you should water your own grass*”. What do you think that you might need to focus on in your own life now in order to prevent yourself from looking backward or in other directions?



“It feels like too much work to stay clean long term”

Discuss:

- Yes it is true that dealing with a substance abuse, addiction or mental health issue involves a lot of hard work, but is that necessarily a bad thing? (Consider the following quotes)
 - The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand. -Vince Lombardi
 - There is no substitute for hard work. -Thomas A. Edison
 - “In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.” – Albert Einstein
 - Dig deeper: What specifically is making it feel like too much work to stay clean for you? (For example cravings, stress, peer pressure, etc.)
 - Get back to motivation: Why is it worth it to keep putting in the hard work and not give up now?
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“I usually start substituting other compulsive or addictive behaviors”

Discuss:

- Some substances and behaviors are clearly more harmful than others, so from a harm reduction perspective, in some cases changing to a less harmful substance can be a step in the right direction. However, quite often substituting may not work, especially as a long term solution. Consider and discuss some things that could go wrong:
 - Sometimes the substance may change but the negative behaviors may not (Lying, losing control, avoiding reality, negative associations, consequences, etc.)
 - In some cases, efforts to substitute fail because quite often people eventually return to their “favorite” high. (To illustrate: Would it be easier for someone who is quitting eating chocolate ice cream to switch to vanilla or to just quit eating ice cream altogether? – If switching to vanilla, sooner or later the craving to go back for a taste of the favorite chocolate might be too much to handle)
 - What are some other ways substituting can block someone’s progress?
 - Keeping an open mind, without arguing or debating, why might it be a better idea to consider abstinence?
 - What are some of the advantages of abstinence?
 - How many times does someone need to fail at trying substituting before they consider abstinence?
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“First, I usually stop taking care of my coexisting issues”

Discuss:

- What is meant by “coexisting issues” in this case is having more than one issue or problem at the same time you are dealing with substance use issues. Quite often, for many individuals that coexisting issue may be a mental health condition such as depression, anxiety, or Bipolar disorder. Also, things such as unemployment, homelessness, medical conditions, and other life stressors can be considered to be “coexisting issues”. *What (if any) coexisting issues affect your ability to cope with substance use issues?*
 - Specifically in your case, what may you be neglecting when it comes to taking care of your coexisting issues? (Some examples – “I stop taking my medication”, “I stopped going to physical therapy for my back injury” or “Since I got fired I haven’t really been looking for a new job”)

- What is self-medication? Is there a chance that you may be returning to abuse substances to self-medicate another issue in your life? (For example: “I keep going back to dope because I can’t cope with my anxiety”)
 - Specifically in your situation, what do you think you might need to do in order to stop self-medicating coexisting issues? What are some things that may have worked for you in the past or other things you have not tried but others have suggested? (For example, trying therapy or seeing a psychiatrist)
 - Are there any lifestyle changes that you may need to implement in order to improve your situation with coexisting issues? (For example: Exercise and eat better, Get out of stressful life situation such as a bad job or a hurtful relationship, Learn to get priorities in order and reorganize your life for the better, Learn to relax, Anger management, etc.)

“I start to think again that I am in control and can use again once in a while but it ends up not working out that way”

Discuss:

- What evidence might there be in your situation that you cannot control your substance use?
 - Even if you think you are still in control, what might your relatives and friends who know you best say?
 - If you are experiencing repeated setbacks after trying to control your use, is it time to try abstinence?

- What specifically do you think that you need right now in order to try to commit to abstinence at least for now in your effort to prevent any more future setbacks?
 - What extra steps and precautions do you think that you will need to make at this time to increase your effort and overall commitment in this area?



FINAL SUMMARY AND PLAN:

At the completion of this exercise, what specifically is your plan to overcome future setbacks and increase your overall level of commitment to changing for the better and making progress?

**MISTAKES
ARE
INEVITABLE**

**THE CHOICE IS YOURS:
GIVE UP AND BE
DEVoured?...OR:**

**FIGHT ON & BE
EMPOWERED!**



