

# Impulse Control

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One of the hardest things we learn in recovery is impulse control. Let's face it, we are impulsive people. When we want to connect with someone we care about, it sometimes we feel as if our head is going to explode if we do not act on our impulse.

Before my recovery, I had no impulse control to speak of. I was very stubborn, and when I wanted to do something I just did it. This is why I had so many addictions by the time I was thirty two years old. It did not help that my mother never set boundaries with me.

I began resisting my impulses the day I went to my first twelve-step meeting. I was able to stay in my chair when all I wanted to do was run out of the room and go back to my addiction, which was to connect with a man I loved named Barry. Ironically, it was Barry who suggested I go to A.A. in the first place. So I learned my first lesson. In the beginning you can give things a try for someone else. This is especially true when you have no self-esteem. Eventually, however, you have to do things out of love for yourself—or your Higher Power.

What can we do about impulse control? It is a process. Here are some suggestions and techniques to help you.

- Recognize when you do something you don't want to do. Dwell on this for as long as you need to. Continued awareness is the beginning of impulse control.
- Identify and make a list of alternative behaviors.

- Substitute a good habit for a bad one.
- Give yourself encouragement. Use affirmations.
- Seek advice and help from others.
- Join a support group.
- Make a commitment to a friend or support group; verbalization can really help.
- Avoid companions who don't support you.
- Find role models who exhibit the changes you want to make and observe them for as long as you need to.
- Remember: Action leads to motivation leads to more action.
- Be patient with yourself.
- Avoid negative attitudes that inhibit change. The glass is half full not half empty.
- Visualize the results; become goal oriented.
- Work on building your self-esteem.
- If you are a spiritual or religious person and believe in grace, divine intervention, or the power of prayer, then by all means pray for the energy and willingness to take action.

Don't give up, even if impulse control is slow in coming. If you continue to incorporate these techniques into your life, they will help you control yourself.