

Monitoring Your Cravings

Objective: To help you understand your cravings and how they affect your behavior.

By definition, your cravings make you uncomfortable and your mind and body start to react as if you can only feel better when your desires are satisfied. Your cravings may start to take over your thoughts and even your behaviors. The nature of any addiction is that it makes you do things that you know are hurtful to yourself or others, but your cravings cannot be denied. When your cravings are strongest, you may feel that there is simply nothing more important in the world than satisfying your cravings. Of course, when you engage in your addiction, your cravings temporarily go away, and at least for a short time, you feel fine again. Then the cycle repeats.

But if you should also keep in mind that if you *don't* satisfy your cravings, they will eventually subside, and you can concentrate on the things in your life that are more healthful and more meaningful. *You don't have to feed your cravings to feel better.* When you learn to control your cravings, you can make choices that make you feel happy and content while also feeling that you have control over your life.

The first step in understanding your cravings is learning to monitor them. There are four different aspects to cravings. First, there is the frequency, how often the cravings occur. Next are the situations that trigger your cravings. While sometimes cravings come “out of the blue,” most of the time there are specific situations that trigger your cravings. Then there is the intensity of the cravings, which you can rate on a 10-point scale, with 0 = the craving is hardly noticeable and 10=the craving cannot be denied and it is hard to think of anything else. Finally, there is the duration of the craving or how long it lasts, which could be measured in minutes or hours.

Use this worksheet on the next page to monitor your cravings. It will help you understand that cravings are not constant, but rather they come and go. When you have used this worksheet for at least a week, you should be able to see that your cravings are usually predictable experiences and therefore are under your control.

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Date(s) of Worksheet

From _____ to _____

Use this chart for a period of at least one week. Make copies of this page if your cravings occur frequently.

What do you crave?	Situation	Day & Time	Duration (hours/minutes)	Intensity (0-10)

