



# Coping Skills for Addiction Related Issues

## Diversions

Cravings are ruthless. They grow and grow, eating away at your willpower, seemingly forcing that you relapse. In the middle of a craving, it might seem as if there's no escape but to use again. However, if you resist, the craving starts to fade. Eventually, it disappears. Most cravings end within one hour of starting.

The goal of diversions is to buy yourself time during a craving. If you can shift your focus for just *one hour*, you will have a much better chance of avoiding relapse. Come up with a list of activities you genuinely enjoy that will keep you at a distance from your temptation.

### Diversion Ideas

go for a walk	read a book	play a sport	listen to music
watch a movie	practice a hobby	go for a run	clean or organize
do yard work	draw or paint	do a craft	cook or bake
play a game	go for a bicycle ride	write or journal	take a long bath
play an instrument	call a friend	lift weights	go swimming
go hiking in nature	take photographs	play with a pet	rearrange a room

List three diversion ideas you will utilize. They can be listed above or ones you came up with.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## Building New Habits

Most addictions require *a lot* of time; whether you are healing from it or in the middle of a high. Thinking about, acquiring, and indulging an addiction can fill most of a day. When you quit, one of your greatest new resources is time. However, if your newfound time isn't filled with healthy activities, it will create a risk for falling back into relapse and old habits.

**Building new habits** is different from diversion because of the focus on *long-term* or *permanent* life changes.

This isn't about riding out a craving—this is about building a better life for yourself.

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| <b>Foster New Relationships</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Join a group or attend a meetup related to your interests</li> <li>· Join a recreational sports league.</li> <li>· Get involved in your community by volunteering or supporting a cause you care about.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Develop New Professional Skills</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Find a full-time job, update your resume, or seek a new career that you enjoy.</li> <li>· Return to school to pursue a subject you are interested in.</li> <li>· Build new skills on your own using free online resources such as YouTube.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Refocus on Existing Relationships</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Build a routine around visiting and spending time with friends and family. For example, have weekly dinners with family and/or evening walks with a friend.</li> <li>· Be proactive, take the first step. Don't wait for others to reach out to you.</li> <li>· Challenge yourself to say "yes" to <i>every</i> social invitation that will not put you at risk of relapse.</li> </ul> |

## Social Support

There are few things as powerful and influential as having a healthy and supportive person in your corner. Knowing that friends, family, fellow group members or sponsors are rooting for you can make a big difference.

### *Daily Social Support*

There's more to social support than having someone to call during moments of crisis. People who have strong relationships are more resilient when facing life's obstacles, and more likely to beat addiction. Make a point to strengthen your relationships, attend support groups, and build new friendships.

### *Crisis Social Support*

When in crisis, it's helpful to have a person you can count on for support—someone who you can call, who will help to talk you through the situation. Make a list of people who you can contact during these situations, and how you can reach them.



## Managing Emotions / Relaxation

Most addictions serve as an escape from uncomfortable emotions such as stress, anxiety, and anger. When the crutch of addiction is taken away, you may need to re-learn how to manage your emotions. If you don't learn how to relax, tension will build and build, until it leads to relapse. These techniques, when practiced regularly, will help you manage your emotions in a healthy way.

### Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is a simple tool that can be great for managing emotions. Not only is deep breathing effective, it's also *discreet* and easy to use at any time or place. The toughest part about deep breathing is the commitment to it in the moment.

#### *537 (Breathing Exercise)*

Sit comfortably and place one hand on your abdomen. Breathe in deeply enough that your hand begins to rise and fall. Imagine you are trying to completely fill your lungs with air. Time the inhalation (5s), pause (3s), and exhalation (7s) during *every* breath. Practice for 3 to 5 minutes at a time.

Inhale for FIVE seconds → Hold for THREE seconds → exhale for SEVEN seconds

### Imagery

Your brain has the power to turn thoughts into real emotions, and physical responses. Think about it: Your mouth waters at the thought of your favorite food, and a happy memory can make you laugh. With the imagery technique, you will use this power to your advantage.

Take a moment to think of a relaxing location or situation. This could be a memory, or something entirely made up. Maybe you're on a warm beach, alone at the top of a mountain, or at dinner with close friends.

Next, imagine this scene through each of your senses. Don't just think about each detail for a second and move on—really imagine them.

What do you see?    What sounds do you hear?    What do you feel?    What smells are around you?

Use imagery for at least 5 minutes whenever you need a quick escape.

### Journaling

Writing about personal experiences gives your brain the opportunity to process information and organize it into manageable chunks. Some of the many benefits of journaling include improved mental wellbeing, and the reduction of uncomfortable emotions. As you journal, be sure to describe your feelings alongside the facts of your experiences.

Feel free to journal however you like. However, if you feel stuck, try these prompts:

- **Daily Log:** Jot a few notes about each day. Whatever comes to mind is fine.
- **Letter:** Write a letter to someone with whom you would like to tell something. Remember to describe your feelings. *Do not send the letter!*
- **Gratitude:** Describe three good things from your day, no matter how minor they seem. Also take a look at the gratitude exercises sheet listed on my website, [www.crystalcanyoncounseling.com](http://www.crystalcanyoncounseling.com)