

# Visit 13 - Triggers

# What Are My Triggers?

Recognize two types of "triggers"

An urge to drink can be set off by **external** triggers in the environment and **internal** ones within yourself.

<https://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/tools/worksheets-more/how-stop-alcohol-cravings>

# Triggers Continued.....

## External Triggers

People, places, things, or times of day that offer drinking opportunities or remind you of drinking. These "high-risk situations" are more obvious, predictable, and avoidable than internal triggers.

<https://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/tools/worksheets-more/how-stop-alcohol-cravings>

# Triggers Continued.....

## Internal Triggers

These can be puzzling because the urge to drink just seems to "pop up." But if you pause to think about it when it happens, you'll find that the urge may have been set off by a fleeting thought, a positive emotion such as excitement, a negative emotion such as frustration, or a physical sensation such as a headache, tension, or nervousness.

<https://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/tools/worksheets-more/how-stop-alcohol-cravings>

# Triggers Continued.....

## Avoid High-Risk Situations

In many cases, your best strategy will be to avoid taking the chance that you'll have an urge, then slip and drink. At home, keep little or no alcohol. Socially, avoid activities involving drinking. If you feel guilty about turning down an invitation, remind yourself that you are not necessarily talking about "forever."

When the urges subside or become more manageable, you may decide to ease gradually into some situations you now choose to avoid. In the meantime, you can stay connected with friends by suggesting alternate activities that don't involve drinking.

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# Coping With Triggers You Can't Avoid

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# Coping With Triggers Continued....

- **Remind yourself** of your reasons for making a change. Carry your top reasons on a wallet card or in an electronic message that you can access easily, such as a mobile phone notepad entry or a saved email.
- **Talk it through** with someone you trust. Have a trusted friend on standby for a phone call or bring one along to high-risk situations.

# Coping With Triggers Continued....

- **Distract yourself** with a healthy, alternative activity. For different situations, come up with engaging short, mid-range, and longer options, like texting or calling someone, watching short online videos, lifting weights to music, showering, meditating, taking a walk, or doing a hobby.
- **Challenge the thought that drives the urge.** Stop it, analyze the error in it, and replace it. Example: "It couldn't hurt to have one little drink. WAIT a minute –what am I thinking? One *could* hurt, as I've seen 'just one' lead to lots more. I am sticking with my choice not to drink."

# Coping With Triggers Continued....

- **Ride it out** without giving in. Instead of fighting an urge, accept it as normal and temporary. As you ride it out, keep in mind that it will soon crest like an ocean wave and pass.
- **Leave** high-risk situations quickly and gracefully. It helps to plan your escape in advance.



# Today's Interactive Session:

## Coping With Triggers

It's not possible to avoid all high-risk situations. For each trigger, it is good to have a coping strategy to handle urges to drink.

TRIGGER		TACTIC
Social situations or dates	→	Meet at a park or alcohol-free venue instead of a bar or pub
The end of a working day or week	→	Change your routine by doing other things you enjoy instead, like reading
The sight and smell of alcohol	→	At home, keep alcohol out of sight. When out, avoid places that sell it
Feeling stressed	→	Try yoga, meditation or other coping strategies
Preparing and having your evening meal	→	Set a drink limit and stick to it

Visit this website to learn more about common ways to cope with triggers

<https://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/tools/worksheets-more/how-stop-alcohol-cravings>



# Today's Writing Assignment:

Place today's date in our notebook.

Create the table below in your notebook: 1 column for "Triggers" and 1 column for "Strategies." Read the content below and then list 3-5 triggers and 3-5 coping strategies you could/should/have used

## Plan Your Strategies

List the different things that trigger your urges to drink in the table below, along with strategies you plan to use the next time one happens. A word of caution: summoning details about urge experiences can itself trigger an urge. If you feel unsure about doing this on your own, do the activity with a therapist, a doctor, or someone else you trust. You can print it when you are done.

<b>Situation or trigger</b> <i>People ... places ... times of day ... thoughts ... emotions ... physical sensations</i>	<b>Strategies</b> <i>Avoid ... Review reasons for change ... Talk it through ... Distract myself ... Challenge the thought ... Ride it out... Leave ... Other ideas?</i>
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Once you are done a staff member will come check on you and go over your written material with you.