



**Urge Surfing** is another strategy. With this technique, you don't fight the craving.

**Step 1:** Begin by noticing where you feel the craving (e.g. in your mouth, chest or stomach). Name it. Say to yourself "this is a craving, and it will pass."

**Step 2:** Next, take some deep breaths

**Step 3:** Now think of your craving as a wave at the beach, starting off small and building to a peak, then eventually breaking and flowing away.

**Step 4:** Imagine yourself surfing these waves the way a surfer would successfully ride a wave at the beach.

**Step 5:** Continue to picture this until the intensity of the craving passes.

## OTHER COMMON CAUSES OF CRAVINGS

**HALT** and ask yourself if you feel..

**HUNGRY/THIRSTY?**

**ANGRY?**

**LONELY?**

**TIRED?**

Try and minimise being in any of these states as much as possible.

## MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is a strategy that has been found to help with cravings by redirecting attention and memory away from the sensation. It is a way of helping your mind to focus on the present.

If you would like to find out more about mindfulness, speak to a counsellor, join a group or download an app.



## REMEMBER...

Cravings are a normal part of changing substance use. Like a muscle, each time you try and use a new skill, you will gain more strength and confidence.

Remember to ask yourself each time. "What did I learn from coping with that craving that will help me in the future?"

Find ways to remind yourself of the reasons why you made the change in the first place (e.g. photos, screensavers, messages, mantras),

Finally, remember to celebrate your achievements. This could be anything from reconnecting with family or friends, saying no or using less, cooking a meal, exercising - nothing is too small!

# COPING WITH CRAVINGS

TIPS TO HELP YOU STAY ON COURSE



Clients have provided feedback on this publication.



## WHAT IS A CRAVING?

A craving is a strong desire or urge to use a substance. This might be an unpleasant physical sensation, such as a taste in your mouth, tight chest or stomach tension. It could also be a strong emotion, such as anxious or racing thoughts or feelings of panic.

You want to avoid cues and triggers for your substance use as much as possible. These might include people, places, situations, events etc...

The 3 D's can help you deal with the cravings you can't avoid.

### 3 D'S

**DELAY:** if you can delay the decision to use for 5 minutes, or half an hour, a craving can eventually pass on its own.

**DISTRACT:** it is easier to delay the decision if you are doing something to distract yourself (e.g. playing game on your phone, eat, go for walk, listen to music, watch T.V.)

**DEEP BREATHING:** breathing and other relaxation techniques can help you to stay calm during a craving.

Here are some suggestions from people who have changed their substance use:

## CRAVINGS ARE NORMAL

It is very common for people to experience cravings. They tend to be more intense in the early stages of cutting down or quitting.

### Do something physical

walking, gym, regular exercise

### Do something meaningful

hobby, community groups, study, work

### Do something regularly

create a routine, daily schedule

### Find supports

get counselling, find people/family who understand, be kind to self

### Get help with other things

medical assistance, mental health care, rehab



## THERE IS GOOD NEWS!

Cravings are not constant – **they will pass.**

They lose their power over time – just like a stray cat, they stop coming back when you don't feed them.