

Distraction Techniques - I

Why?

- Sometimes we get caught up in paying too much attention to our internal symptoms.
- We focus on the physical discomfort we feel and this can make the symptoms worse.
- We also focus on how bad this makes us feel emotionally, and have thoughts about the feelings never going away.

Distraction Techniques - II

How?

- Mental Distraction
 - Counting backwards from 100 in 7s
 - Recalling names (people, bands, animals) beginning with A, B, C etc
 - Recalling names of characters in favourite TV shows or films
 - Describing in detail something in your immediate environment as if to someone on the phone.

Distraction Techniques - III

- Behavioural Techniques
 - Re-arranging the furniture, going for a walk, having a bath, doing the washing up, listening to music
 - Playing a pocket computer game, or a game on your mobile
 - Calling someone
 - Having something to eat or drink [non-alcoholic!]

Flashcards - I

Why?

- Flashcards offer us a way of triggering access to parts of our brain which are blocked when we are preoccupied with cravings or negative thoughts.

Flashcards - II

How?

- Write positive statements on small credit-card size pieces of paper or card:
 - “I can cope”
 - “These feelings will pass”
 - “Things are so much better now I am not using”
- Keep them with you and remember to look at them

Challenging Automatic Thoughts - I

Why?

- We know that a lot of our feelings are driven by our thoughts and beliefs.
- Often our beliefs are not backed up by the evidence, they are sometimes more about “wishful thinking”.
- Our information processing can be biased due to past influences or because we are not attending to the whole picture, or because of unfounded assumptions.

Challenging Automatic Thoughts - II

How?

- Particular thoughts to be aware of are
 - Anticipatory/Expectations
 - Where is the evidence that using will bring good consequences?
 - Are there likely to be negative consequences too?
 - Will using help you reach your goals?
 - Permission-giving
 - Is using really going to be a reward?
 - Is it true you can use just once and then stop?
 - Are you sure no-one else will find out or be affected?

Relaxation Training - I

Why?

- A lot of the symptoms of cravings are due to being in a highly aroused state. It is a mixture of agitation, anxiety and excitement.
- Your body cannot be aroused and relaxed at the same time
- Learning to relax helps you to reduce the symptoms of high arousal, makes you feel calmer and more in control, and helps to combat fatigue

Relaxation Training - II

How?

- There are many self-help books and DVDs that will help you learn the techniques.
- Learning to relax your shoulders, hands and arms is a good start. Sit or stand in a relaxed way.
- Breathing is important!! Try to breathe with your diaphragm – using your tummy rather than your chest.
- Keep breathing in a slow and steady rhythm, using all of your lungs' capacity.
- Focus your mind on relaxing thoughts and images – floating, feeling warm and safe, by the sea or a river, in a garden or meadow, by an open fire etc.

Activity Scheduling - I

Why?

- Empty time to fill, a day without purpose or structure, time to think – these are opportunities for drug-related thoughts to take root and lead to the development of cravings

Activity Scheduling - II

How?

- Have a timetable for each week and book in things to do. This shows you where there may be “danger points” of empty time
- Schedule a good mix of things you have to do and things that will give you pleasure
- Select tasks and activities that will help you up the ladder towards your goals
- Have a routine that allows for proper sleep, diet, exercise and relaxation

Imagery Techniques – I

Why?

- “A picture is worth a thousand words”
- Imagery techniques are used successfully by sports stars and other performers
- You have to imagine success in order to achieve success – no boxer enters the ring imagining being knocked out in the opening round

Imagery Techniques – II

How?

- To help with Distraction
 - Use an image such as a wall or STOP sign to disrupt the flow of drug-related thoughts
 - Use distraction techniques as described earlier
- To help when your thoughts are about the good aspects of using
 - Create an image that brings alive the negative aspects of using – feeling ill the next day, losing money, letting yourself down, disappointing others.

Imagery Techniques – III

- To use when your thoughts are about missing out by not using, feeling fed up, other worries and problems in your life
 - Create images that illustrate all the positive results of not using – what you have achieved or hope to achieve by remaining drug-free
- To use when you have a difficult situation to deal with
 - Create images about being successful in the situation, refusing offers of drugs, keeping in control

Imagery Techniques – IV

- To use when you feel that that the drugs are stronger than you
 - Imagine yourself as someone you see as heroic, from real life or fiction (Superman, Wonder Woman, Batman), giving you the special powers and strength to fight the cravings successfully.