



SESSION 11: TIPS FOR BREAKING THE HABIT (2)

Breaking addiction habits can be a challenging and complex journey, but with the right strategies and mindset, it is absolutely possible. In this lesson, we will explore a series of tips to help you break free from your addiction habits and cultivate a healthier lifestyle. From surrounding yourself with positive influences to allowing room for mistakes and implementing effective habit substitution techniques, these tips are designed to empower you on your path to recovery. By incorporating these strategies into your daily life, you will be better equipped to overcome obstacles, embrace personal growth, and create lasting change.

Surround Yourself with Positive Influences

Identify Negative Influences

We all have those friends or acquaintances that seem to bring out the worst in us. They encourage our bad habits or simply drain our energy with their negativity. It's important to identify these negative influences in your life and take steps to minimize their impact on your journey to breaking addiction habits. It may mean distancing yourself from certain people you used to hang out with, drink with or drug with and setting boundaries with them.

Seek Supportive and Encouraging Individuals

On the flip side, surrounding yourself with positive influences can make a world of difference. Seek out friends, family members, or support groups or join a local church who will understand and support your efforts to break free from addiction habits. People in these circles can provide encouragement, accountability, and a fresh perspective when you need it most.

Accept Room for Mistakes and Imperfection

Embrace the Learning Process

Breaking addiction habits is not an overnight process. It is essential to embrace the fact that you may stumble along the way. Instead of beating yourself up for slip-ups, view them as opportunities to learn

and grow. Recognise that breaking free from addiction is a journey of ups and downs, and each setback can ultimately strengthen your determination to succeed. The key here will be to never allow yourself to make the very same mistake again.

Overcome Guilt and Self-Criticism

Guilt and self-criticism are common emotions when trying to break addiction habits. However, dwelling on these negative feelings can hinder your progress. Learn to practice self-compassion and forgiveness. Treat yourself with kindness and understanding, just as you would a close friend. Remember, you are only human, and it is okay to make mistakes along the way.

Focus on Replacing Habits, Not Eliminating Them

Understand the Power of Habit Substitution

The process of breaking addiction habits can be overwhelming if you focus solely on eliminating them. Instead, shift your perspective and embrace the power of habit substitution. Identify positive habits that can take the place of your addiction habits. By redirecting your energy towards healthier alternatives, you give yourself a better chance of success. Examples of replacing a bad habit that will help, is to find a sport, a new hobby, or to enroll in a new field of studies.

Identify Positive Habits to Replace Negative Ones

Take some time to identify positive habits that align with your goals and values. For example, if you are trying to quit drinking, you could replace the habit of reaching for the bottle with going for a walk or practicing deep breathing exercises. The key is to find activities that provide similar benefits or fulfill similar needs while promoting your overall well-being.

Develop Effective Strategies for Breaking Addiction Habits

Set Clear and Realistic Goals

Breaking addiction habits requires setting clear and realistic goals. Define what you want to achieve and break it down into manageable steps. Make sure your goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). Having a clear roadmap will help you stay motivated and focused on your journey. (See the SMART session under group sessions).

Create a Structured Routine

Establishing a structured routine can be incredibly helpful when breaking addiction habits. By incorporating new activities and behaviours into your daily schedule, you create a stable and supportive environment for change. Plan your day, and include positive habits and healthy distractions, to minimize idle time that could trigger old habits to resurface. Remember as an addict/alcoholic in recovery boredom is your enemy.

Utilize Productive Distractions

Breaking addiction habits can be challenging when cravings or triggers arise. Having productive distractions at hand can be a game-changer. Engage in activities that captivate your attention and keep your mind occupied, such as reading, exercising, or pursuing a hobby. These distractions provide an outlet for your energy and redirect your focus away from your addiction habits. Make a list of positive distractions and have available to choose and activity from as cravings or triggers arise.

Substitute Negative Habits with Positive Ones

Find Healthy Alternatives

When trying to break an addiction habit, it is not enough to simply eliminate the negative behavior. You also need to replace it with something positive. Think of it as a "switch" for your brain. Instead of focusing on what you can't do anymore, focus on finding healthy alternatives that can fulfill the same need.

For example, if you are trying to quit drugging or drinking, and a craving comes to pass, it might be helpful to replace the habit with a cold shower, putting on your running shoes, go for a jog etc. Not only will this distract you from the craving, but it will also help rewire your brain to associate the need for stress relief with a positive activity instead of a harmful one.

Practice Mindfulness and Self-Reflection

Breaking an addiction habit requires more than just finding substitute activities. It also involves understanding why you developed the habit in the first place. This is where mindfulness and self-reflection come into play.

Take some time to reflect on the underlying triggers and emotions that led you to engage in the negative habit. Are you using the habit as a coping mechanism for stress or boredom? Are there certain situations or people that influence your behavior? By uncovering these root causes, you can address them head-on and develop healthier coping mechanisms.

Practicing mindfulness, such as meditation or deep breathing exercises, can also help you become more aware of your thoughts and cravings. It allows you to observe the urge to engage in the negative habit without acting on it impulsively. This awareness gives you the power to choose a healthier alternative instead.

Remember, breaking an addiction habit is a journey, and it is okay to make mistakes along the way, but do not leave that back door open that you are now given permission for relapse. We are talking about genuine mistakes, not pre-meditated relapses.

Remember, breaking addiction habits requires dedication, perseverance, and a supportive environment. By surrounding yourself with positive influences, accepting room for mistakes, focusing on habit substitution, and developing effective strategies, you can overcome your addiction and create a healthier, happier life. Change takes time, so be patient with yourself and celebrate every small victory along the way. With determination and the right tools, you have the power to break free from addiction and embrace a brighter future.