Reasons Not to Use

Objective

To keep focused on your main reasons for wanting to stop using substances by creating a handy visual reminder.

You Should Know

Now that you're beginning to take charge of your life in a healthier way, it can sometimes feel overwhelming to make so many changes at once. One simple activity that helps people in early recovery is to identify their specific reasons for not using and to keep that list (or another visual reminder) front and center at all times.

What to Do

First, make a list of all the reasons why you are choosing to work on your substance use right now.

Examples:

- "My kids need me around."
- "I don't want to lose my marriage."
- "I want to regain my parents' trust."
- "I want to feel better about myself."
- "I don't want to die."

Here are a few general categories to start you thinking:

- Better physical health
- Better mental health (less depression, anxiety, and so on)
- Saving money
- Improving job or school performance
- Better relationship with spouse or significant other
- Better relationship with your children
- Better relationship with your parents and other family members
- Better relationships with friends and colleagues

• Your "wants" and vision for the future

Your list:

Next, narrow your list down to your top six:	
1	4
2	5
3	6

Now comes the fun part! Take your list and create an attractive, easily accessible way to look at it whenever you feel your motivation is down. You might want to write your list on an index card or colorful piece of paper and keep it in your wallet or purse. Or you can enter your list directly onto your smartphone's note function. Or, instead of a list, you can download positive images onto your phone or computer—photos of loved ones or other inspiring graphics to remind you of your main reasons not to use. Be creative!

Look at your list or your images as often as you need to—and feel free to edit or change your reasons as needed. As you begin to identify your internal and external triggers and tune in to when you have an urge or craving, you'll get better at noticing those thoughts and feelings and remembering to use this exercise as a strategy for relapse prevention.

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____ (1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

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