

Managing Urges Using the 3-P Approach

Objective

To reduce unhealthy urges and become less reactive by practicing the 3-P approach.

What to Know

The 3-P Approach includes three simple steps: Pause, Process, and Postpone. It is a helpful strategy for managing overwhelming urges and unhealthy, impulsive behaviors. It can empower you to take control of your reactions and postpone impulsive or harmful actions.

This valuable tool can help you manage overwhelming emotions and impulsive reactions. By practicing this technique, you can gain greater control over your responses and make more informed decisions about how to cope with challenging situations. Remember that self-awareness and consistency are key to successfully applying the 3-P Approach. This worksheet is designed to guide you through the 3-P Approach and provides an exercise to practice the techniques.

What to Do

Follow the steps in this exercise.

I. **Pause** and recognize overwhelm.

Identify situations or triggers that often lead to impulsive reactions or strong urges.

Write down specific instances when you felt overwhelmed recently.

Use a grounding technique. Practice exercises like deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or mindfulness to bring your focus to the present moment when you start feeling overwhelmed. What will you do?

Describe how these grounding exercises make you feel more centered and in control.

Write down the physical and emotional signals that indicate you need to pause and take a step back.

What are the warning signs that you may give in to an urge?

II. Process while reflecting on your feelings.

Pause and explore how you feel. Label and name the feelings you are experiencing. Is it anger, anxiety, sadness, or something else? Be as descriptive as possible.

What may have triggered these emotions and how they manifested in your body?

Describe the situation that triggered you.

Write about any insights, alternative perspectives, or solutions that come to mind during this reflection.

Reach out to a trusted friend, family member, or your therapist to discuss your experience.

III. Postpone by delaying impulsive actions or urges.

List impulsive or unhealthy actions you have taken in the past when overwhelmed. These could include lashing out, substance use, or self-destructive behaviors.

Identify alternative, healthier ways to cope when you experience strong urges.

Commit to delaying impulsive actions. Decide that you will pause and process your emotions before giving in to strong, unhealthy urges. Write down your commitment and keep it in a visible place as a reminder. Take a picture and save it on your phone or post your commitment somewhere you will see it.

Occasionally review your progress in implementing the 3-P Approach when you have strong urges. Reflect on moments when you successfully paused, processed, and postponed actions.

If you encounter challenges, consider adjusting your strategy.

Reflections on This Exercise

What was challenging about this exercise? Be specific.

Did anything surprise you about this activity? Explain.

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

What did you learn from this exercise?
