

Managing Ambivalence

Objective

To help you explore the pros and cons of making a change versus staying the same.

What to Know

Ambivalence is common when considering significant life changes, and understanding the advantages and disadvantages of each option can provide more precise direction and insight into your values and desires.

Ambivalence occurs when you feel two opposite emotions about the same thing at the same time. For example, you may be both excited and scared about starting a new job or feel both love and frustration toward someone close to you. This mix of feelings can make deciding what to do next challenging, especially when you face big changes.

It is common to feel this way about starting therapy or counseling. You might be hopeful about all the good things that can come from talking to a therapist—like feeling better or learning how to deal with difficult situations. But at the same time, you might worry about what it will be like to explore your emotions, or you might feel embarrassed to need help.

Ambivalence is common when you consider making any big change in your life. The idea of change can be exciting because it promises something better. But it can also be scary because you are stepping into the unknown and leaving behind what is familiar—even if it is imperfect.

This worksheet can help you sort through your mixed feelings. You will review the good and not-so-good sides of making a change and staying the same. By laying it all out, you can better understand what is important to you, which can help you make the right decisions—whether you are just starting counseling or making other significant changes in your life.

What to Do

Consider a specific change you are considering in your life. It could be related to your career, relationships, health, or any other area where you feel uncertain. Write down this change in the space provided below

Briefly describe the potential consequences of this change in your life.

Next, list the pros and cons of making this change and staying the same. Use the tables below to list the pros and cons of making the change and the pros and cons of not making the change.

Pros and Cons of Making the Change

Pros of Changing	Cons of Changing

Pros and Cons of Staying the Same

Pros of Staying the Same	Cons of Staying the Same

What insights have you gained by comparing these pros and cons? Reflect on how the pros and cons align with your values, goals, and long-term satisfaction. Be as specific and honest as possible.

Based on your reflections, what are your next steps? Are you more inclined to make the change or stay the same? Why?

What actions will you take to address this decision?

Ambivalence is a normal part of decision-making, especially when significant changes are involved. By evaluating the pros and cons, you can make a more informed choice that aligns with your personal values and long-term objectives. Remember, it is okay to revisit this worksheet anytime you face new or persisting ambivalences.

Reflections on This Exercise

What will help you continue to manage ambivalence moving forward?

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

What did you learn from this exercise?
