How I Can Help Myself Abstain from Substances*: Outplaying the Hand I Have Been Dealt

Many memories of the positive experience of substance use

Fact.

Nothing to do but accept.

Few memories of the experience of negative consequences of substance use

Fact.

Nothing to do but accept.

<mark>Autonomy</mark> vs. automaticity

Use of skills can effectively overpower automaticity.

- Attention management
- Emotion regulation
- Thought-sorting
- Outmaneuvering or avoiding environmental cues

Deprivation effect ↑: Feelings of panic or rage

I must find what I can, and add what I can, to have enough experiences enough of the time to help my life feel enriched enough, not impoverished by scarcity. Experience of substances and substance use outcompetes life

I must honor my preferences and collect an adequate number of ways which, enough of the time, together, have more value than the value offered by substances. (synergy = whole greater than sum of parts)

Deprivation effect ↓: Feelings of hopeless despair

I have to find what I can, and add what I can, to have enough experiences enough of the time which help me feel reassured and encouraged enough. Abstinence anhedonia

Fact. BUT research suggests I can have a direct impact on anhedonia and apathy by deliberating discovering and "dosing" myself with multiple, small, anticipation-reward experiences.

Experience of substances outcompetes relief of inner experience

I must keep experimenting with other ways to experience relief and increase my ability to tolerate distress.

Mysterious brain changes

Fact.

Nothing to do but accept.

"Substance" is defined as any substance with which use or overuse can cause negative health consequences. Problematic substances may include nicotine, caffeine, alcohol, marijuana, methamphetamine, opioids, other drugs, and food. Cards are displayed as ordered and equal in size but order and magnitude of factors may vary. Individual factors may stack the deck as well. *This content is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical or professional advice. Consult a qualified health care professional for personalized medical and professional advice. Anne Giles, M.A., M.S., L.P.C. • www.annegiles.com • Last revised 10/23/19*