

Checklists to Assess Needs, Wants, Strengths and Preferences

Needs and Wants Served by Substances and Substance Use

In answer to the question, "Why do people take drugs?" NIDA answers, "to feel good," "to feel better," "to do better," and "curiosity and social pressure." How about you? What do you think substances—and the use of substances—do/did for you? Please check all that apply and add others in your own words. Then rank order the top three, or more if you choose, by placing a "1" by the most important, a "2" by the next most important, etc.

√	Purpose	Rank Order
	Relief from craving/longing	
	Enjoyment, pleasure, reward	
	Relief from emotional pain	
	Relief from physical pain	
	Relief from existential despair, i.e. a helpless, hopeless feeling from not knowing if my life has meaning or if anything matters	
	Relief from strong feeling states: anger, frustration, sorrow, agitation	
	Relief from worry	
	Relief from social anxiety	
	Relief from anxiety	
	Relief from depression	
	Relief from racing or disturbing thoughts	
	Relief from bad memories: trauma, neglect, abuse, witnessing violations against others	
	Relief from grief and loss	
	Relief from feeling tired	
	Relief from feeling overwhelmed	
	Relief from boredom	
	Relief from a sense of numbness	
	Release from isolation and loneliness	
	Help with concentration	
	Sense of drive and motivation – to "get things done"	
	Sense of absence or escape	
	Sense of protection	
	Sense of belonging, being a part of, fitting in, or being accepted	

	Sense of love and comfort	
	Sense of identity: "This is who I am and this is what I do."	
	Other: _____	
	Other: _____	
	Other: _____	

To summarize, what are/were the top three needs and wants met by substances and/or substance use for you?

1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____

During the sometimes strenuous process of getting to know yourself a bit better, what sentences might be helpful for you say to yourself to soothe, reassure, and strengthen yourself?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Making Discoveries Helpful to You

Based on what you've discovered about what substances and substance use did for you, what are three things you think might be helpful for you to try this week?

1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____

What is the smallest, gentlest step you might be able to take on your own to help make trying one of these things possible? Please complete the sentence:

A small step I might be able to take this week is:

Question for thought and/or discussion:

If you care to share, what insights have you gained from doing this exercise?

Needs Assessment: What Would Help Meet Your Needs?

"Remission of substance use and even full recovery can now be achieved if evidence based care is provided for adequate periods of time, by properly trained health care professionals, and augmented by supportive monitoring, RSS [recovery support services], and social services."

- *Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General’s Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health*, 2016, page 1-19.

After medical care, with what do you most need help in terms of maintaining abstinence or harm reduction*? Please check off the needs you already filled for yourself in the left-hand column under “Have This.” In the right-hand column under “Need This,” rank order your needs. Put a “1” by your greatest need, a “2” by your second greatest need, and so on. Feel free to rank order all the possible needs or rank only the ones important to you.

Have This	Service	Need This
	Housing	
	Rent or mortgage payment	
	Transportation	
	Employment	
	Help with accessing job interview and/or employment readiness clothing, shoes, equipment, etc.	
	Legal assistance (Please circle: criminal justice system, child custody, _____)	
	Help with probation and/or parole	
	Health insurance	
	Help with accessing dental care	
	Help with accessing vision care and/or glasses	
	Help with accessing help with hearing care and/or hearing aids	
	Accessing social services for help with money for rent, utilities, food, clothing, etc.	
	Help with applying for Social Security disability benefits	
	Child care/dependent care	
	Pet care and/or help with accessing veterinary services	
	Technology (Please circle: phone, desktop computer/laptop/tablet, Internet connection, _____)	

	Financial and/or debt and/or budget counseling/consulting	
	Education/ job training/re-training	
	Consulting services for starting a business	
	Help with meeting requirements for monitoring programs (example: Health Practitioners' Monitoring Program, HPMP)	
	Help with sleep	
	Help with quitting smoking or other tobacco products	
	Help with monitoring, reducing or eliminating caffeine intake	
	Nutrition counseling	
	Movement or exercise (Please circle: exercise buddy, gym membership, personal coach, _____)	
	Help with relationships: with partner, spouse, children, family, employers, employees, etc.	
	Discussions with informed and/or interested others about purpose and meaning	
	Spiritual or religious counseling	
	Daily contact via text or phone with someone who cares about your recovery	
	Instruction in mindfulness and/or meditation	
	Support groups – AA, NA, SMART Recovery, Celebrate Recovery, others	
	Substance-free community and/or public activities and events	
	Social support/community membership/feeling of connection and/or belonging	
	Other:	
	Other:	

Please write a brief answer to the questions below in the blanks provided.

What were your top 3 priorities from the chart?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What topics or issues that trouble you were not listed in the chart that you think might interfere with your abstinence or maintenance of harm reduction?

1. _____
2. _____

From the information you compiled above, if you could select the top unmet need that might most interfere with your ability to stay abstinent or maintain harm reduction today, what would that issue be?

What do you do on your own that you find of overall help in supporting your abstinence or maintenance of harm reduction?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What is one small step you think you might be able to take on your own—to assist with what you're currently doing—that might make a small improvement in that issue and possibly increase the likelihood of staying abstinent or maintaining harm reduction?

With what issue might you be open to asking someone for help?

Question for thought: In what specific ways might what you learned from completing this exercise be helpful to you?

*"Harm reduction" is defined as using medications to assist with abstinence from problematic substances, and/or using lesser amounts of problematic substances, using them less often, and/or replacing highly problematic substances with less problematic substances.

Strengths

People with substance use issues may not feel very good, or may not feel very good about themselves. Instead of thinking of ourselves as either good or bad, let's suspend judgment for a moment. Let's look inside ourselves with objectivity and compassion. If you see some traits you don't like, for now, simply shift your attention away from them and look at your strengths. If you've continued reading this, even if you don't want to, that's the strength of discernment. Discernment

includes the strength of telling the difference between what's helpful and what's not helpful.

What other strengths do you have? Circle the ones that apply to you. Please add others.

Courage	Creativity	Kindness	Generosity	Problem-solving
Determination	Perseverance	Honesty	Fairness	Leadership
Love of learning	Forgiveness	Humor	Teamwork	Appreciation of beauty
Empathy	Awareness			

What are your top 3 strengths?

- 1) _____ 2) _____
 3) _____

Preferences and Interests

What are three activities that you like doing, or used to like doing?

Where are three places you like to be with people, or don't mind being with people?

Become curious about your preferences, starting with discovering what sensory experiences might engage you. Focus your attention on something you see, a sound you hear, the texture of an object you can touch, a scent in the room, a motion you can observe, or the taste of something available.

Discovering Your Sensory Preferences

As you become increasingly aware of the moments when longings to use substances arise, or when opportunities to use them appear, you may be able to strong-arm your attention *away* from your longing and *toward* the subject or object of your choice. In doing so, you may be able to increase your chances of not returning to unintended use. Sensory experiences have power to draw attention. Consider spending some time becoming curious about your senses and discovering your sensory preferences.

<p>What delights you through these senses?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. See: 2. Hear: 3. Taste: 4. Touch: 5. Smell: 6. Awareness of motion: 	<p>What soothes you through these senses?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. See: 2. Hear: 3. Taste: 4. Touch: 5. Smell: 6. Awareness of motion:
<p>If you take a "sensory tour" of your kitchen, what do you notice of interest using these senses?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. See: 2. Hear: 3. Taste: 4. Touch: 5. Smell: 6. Awareness of motion: 	<p>If you sit in your favorite chair and take a "sensory tour" of your surroundings, what do you notice of interest using these senses?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. See: 2. Hear: 3. Taste: 4. Touch: 5. Smell: 6. Awareness of motion:
<p>If time, space, and money were no object, what would you most love to experience through these senses?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. See: 2. Hear: 3. Taste: 4. Touch: 5. Smell: 6. Observe in motion: 	<p>If you had \$6 to spend at a dollar store, what 6 items might you buy to engage your senses?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.
<p>If you were designing an imaginary world, what sensory experiences would you create for its inhabitants?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. See: 	<p>If you were in a room by yourself and needed to turn your attention to an imagined list of sensory preferences, what</p>

2. Hear: 3. Taste: 4. Touch: 5. Smell: 6. Observe in motion:	would be on the list and in what rank order? 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.
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Putting It All Together

Given a new awareness of your needs, wants, strengths and preferences, what do you think, even minimally, might serve to meet the needs and wants also met by substances or substance use?

Normal, human, understandable needs and wants	Other than substances, what else might help might serve this purpose?
Enjoyment, pleasure, reward	
Relief from emotional pain	
Relief from physical pain	
Relief from existential despair	
Relief from strong feeling states	
Relief from worry	
Relief from social anxiety	
Relief from anxiety	
Relief from depression	
Relief from racing or disturbing thoughts	
Relief from bad memories	
Relief from grief and loss	
Relief from boredom	
Release from isolation and loneliness	
Sense of absence or escape	
Sense of protection	
Sense of belonging	
Sense of love and comfort	

Taking helpful action

Using your strengths, plus your awareness of your strengths and preferences, what might be three things helpful for you to try in the next day or so?

1) _____ 2) _____ 3)

What is the smallest, gentlest step you might be able to take on your own to help make trying one of these things possible?

Please complete the sentences below:

A small step I might be able to take this week is:

I think it would be helpful me to take this small step by this time and date:

I think it would be helpful to check in with this safe, trusted person about my progress in taking this small step:

A self-strengthening sentence I might say to myself as I make this attempt is:

"It's my life. Don't you forget."
– "Talk, Talk," The Music Machine

Excerpted and adapted from *Help That Helps: A Kind, Research-Informed, Field-Tested Guide for People with Substance Use Concerns*, by Anne Giles, M.A., M.S., L.P.C. and Sanjay Kishore, M.D. (2019).

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