

RISK-REWARD ANALYSIS

FOR ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

To drink or not to drink. To use or not to use. What will break the log-jam of conflicting thoughts? Let's start by getting the pro's and con's of quitting down on paper. All the things that terrorize us about stopping are **Risks of quitting**. While the **Risks of using** are the reality of problems that probably have come up. These two categories involve the more immediate aspects of the situation.

I couldn't cope without my dope vs What in the hell have I done now?

Also there must have been **Rewards for using** or we wouldn't have kept it up so long. Then to complete the picture there are surely to be **Rewards for quitting**. These latter two categories involve the longer perspective.

In SMART Recovery® we want you to act reasonably and responsibly about your future involvement with intoxicants any bad habit. First there are a few ground rules to consider. You are a normal human being. You got started in this by seeking pleasure or relaxation, and also perhaps to avoid some perceived distress. That was OK thinking. You are not defective! It's just that certain substances or behaviors can lose their luster and eventually become a real problem for some people.

This Risk-Reward Analysis is a powerful instrument that enables you to see what you are doing to yourself and others, and importantly to give you a glimpse ahead of yourself after you have won the race. One great effort in **SMART Recovery®** is guiding you to balance long-term satisfactions against short-term satisfactions. Comparing them may help motivate you to change your life-style and habits.

This exercise is an important stage in the contemplation of quitting. But it will also have value as you become master over the addiction you are quitting. There may also

be urges to deal with later and going back to this material will be an anchor for you to refresh your memory on your reasons for quitting. Picture this diagram:

the Risks of using vs. the Rewards of using

the Risks of quitting vs. the Rewards of quitting

Anyone can begin with a blank paper and use this form to record and organize a better understanding of their own personal situation. On the following pages there are a few examples from having explored this exercise in group settings. There were many more entries that there is not space for here. But there will be enough of them to prompt your thinking and get you started on your own document.

We believe this is where the real work starts, and that you're worth it!

Risks of using Here's a partial list of what people thought were important.

DUI or multiple DUI's,

Trouble with the law,

Problems with employment,

Financial difficulties,

Relationship problems,

Loss of self-respect and from others,

Health considerations,

Loss of ambition,

Fear of the future,

Fear of AIDS

Loss of custody of a child or children

Like the others in this series, these are things that people have brought up in group meetings. This is the area that people are the most aware of. Perhaps there has been some critical

event or accumulation of circumstances currently that brings these items into a dramatic focus. You will have some things to highlight or add to this for your own inventory. Be as honest as you can, you can keep this to yourself. Although there may be dramatic events presently that compel you to quit, if you stop there, you only partially deal with the real problem. Look into the bigger picture and try to truly understand what addiction is, how *you* got that way, and be prepared with a strategy when you are tempted in the future.

A good definition of addiction is the condition of finding yourself continuing in a behavior *when you know it is against your better judgment*. You find that you have been "hooked" so to speak. That's probably why you let things get to this stage. In **SMART Recovery®** we are interested first in having a clear picture of the problem. This page is a very good place to start!

Risks of Quitting Once again a partial list that people have expressed.

No more getting stoned,

People will think I'm different.

People will think I can't handle it,

Won't be able to resist temptation

I'll be on unfamiliar turf,

I'll lose my secret best friend

I'll get the shakes (fear of withdrawal)

I won't have the "liquid courage"

I'll begin to see my real self I'll have to be a goody-goody

If I fail, I'll be worse off than before.

I'll have an empty place inside and nothing to fill it

I'll have to stay away from usual friends and contacts

I'll have to face the uncomfortable things that *cause* me to drink

Can't think of how and where to find anything else better to do.

. . . . Once again highlight and add things to make this personal.

These examples are enough to get an idea of things to think about or worry about when you consider quitting. It is important to make your list as fair as you can and face the issues, rather than avoid them. Otherwise they will come back

and bite you in the ass later. Also remember that many of these fears are based on faulty thinking that you may have been using to justify your behavior. And some of them are from your notorious "addictive voice" that wants you to keep using.

(That's something else to learn about.)

Rewards of Using more things that have been brought up in groups.

Getting stoned,

Feeling a rush, feeling a buzz,

Weight management or loss.

Social aspect, "let the good times roll"

Like the taste of it.

Relaxation

Mask guilt feelings

Drowning sorrow

Loss of inhibition

Escape from problems, reality, people

And especiallyavoiding withdrawal.

You have to think about this one.

It is often the strongest "pull" to go for a drink or a hit! As your addiction to the substance progresses, once you think of "something" and sense an urge, it flashes through your mind that *not* to have it would be painful. Right?

So note that some of the "rewards" are actually of a reverse nature. Drowning sorrow or avoiding the discomfort of withdrawal might be thought of as *reasons* or *excuses* to use or drink. But they belong in this group because when we look into the rewards of quitting next, we will compare things that are likely to be greatly preferred. We emphasize again that to seek pleasure and to avoid pain are healthy, normal, even smart things to do. It is when the use of the substance or behavior *takes over your better judgment*, that you need to reassess the pro's and con's of continuing what has gone from being a habit to becoming a harmful habit.

If you want to *end the addiction*, there are modern scientific ways to change your life-style with the least complications and best prospects. Establishing new alternative rewards is an important objective in SMART Recovery®. This project is a very graphic step in putting those things in perspective.

Rewards of quitting are valuable assets and long lasting benefits.

Better physical and mental health

Custody of child or children

More control over myself

No more fear of a DUI

Keep the judge happy

Increased self awareness

Peace of mind

Better job security

Improved relationships

New friends and interests

Feel optimistic

Feel self growing up inside

Not feel guilty all the time

Once again these advantages were suggested in a group. Highlight ones that may apply to you and add any others of your own. They all have to do with a healthy and positive life-style, which is a major goal here in **SMART Recovery®**. How attractive are these things? This is the time to clearly see the fork in the road. It's what you decide. Can there be any question in your mind about which list in this series is most desirable for your life.

If this comparison of pro's and con's helps you see that, it is a useful and effective promoter of change. Make it yours personally, think about it privately, see what's best for you, keep it and then believe it, it's what you really think! Now put it somewhere that you remember. Someday you are going to be tempted to forget the bad stuff and think about lapsing. This will remind you about the advantages of long term satisfactions over short term satisfactions!

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