

HABIT 10: ADDRESS ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS

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Goal: Address now your addictive behavior.

A healthy lifestyle involves using moderation in certain behaviors, like eating, buying, internet use, gambling, and [alcohol](#) and [caffeine intake](#). There are safe, tolerable levels for these types of behaviors.

Tobacco is an exception, in that there are no minimal levels of tobacco use that are considered safe. The only safe alternative for those who use tobacco is to stop completely. For other behaviors, do you know what is “moderate” and safe for you? As individuals, we need to recognize and be mindful of our current behaviors and know when we're in excess. In other words, “self-assess your excess” to identify when you've lost control or you continue a behavior despite the harm it causes you or your loved ones. You can then move into a stage of addressing your addictive behaviors.

Assess your excess: Self-assessment tools are available to help you better understand your habits and whether you may benefit from seeking help. One example would be the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's [Rethinking Drinking webpage](#), or the Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity's [Yale Food Addiction Scale](#). Or, you might review the [symptoms of drug addiction](#). Consider how you could ask these same questions for other behaviors, like spending, texting, internet use, or gaming to identify whether your behavior has reached an excessive and unhealthy level. Think

about where your behavior lies and whether it is addictive. Ask friends or family if they are concerned about your behavior.

Consider your triggers: Behavioral addictions typically involve the failure to resist an impulse that is harmful to you or others. Increase your understanding of your behavior patterns to identify triggers, which can be internal or external. Research shows that our energy and tension levels impact our negative cycles, like overeating, inactivity, and substance use. Consider whether this may be a factor for you.

Address it: Depending on the problem severity, it may be appropriate to seek a professional assessment from your primary physician or a licensed mental health provider. They can guide the best treatment approach for you, which may include counseling, a treatment program or self-help groups. For some people, addictive behaviors reflect poor or overwhelmed coping mechanisms. Professional help may strengthen healthy coping and curb the addictive behaviors.

Understand the Consequences: People who struggle with behavioral addictions are often in denial of the negative consequences and do not seek treatment. Addiction impacts your personal health, safety, job performance, and personal finances. It can also impact others through strained relationships or a change in mood. Understand that by addressing the behavior, you're helping yourself and others.