

Coping Skills versus Bad Habits

What is a Bad Habit? (*Is your behavior aligned with your values?*)



When does playing a video game, checking social media, or watching TV become a bad habit? How many hours define a “workaholic”? Is an occasional glass of wine or edible a bad habit? Where do you draw the line before hobbies, electronics, shopping, clutter, gambling, partying, and even exercise or eating become bad habits? When does a relationship become unhealthy, a poor role model or even an

addiction?

The *consequences* of an activity or relationship determine whether it is harmful. **Activities and relationships become bad habits when they are excessive, illegal, cause damage, create chaos in your life or have other harmful effects on your mental, physical health or your dignity.**

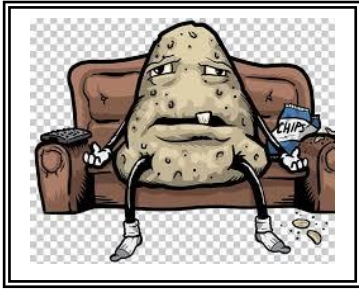
Do you have a bad habit?

Determine if your Activity/Relationship (A/R) has crossed the line into a bad habit. **Answer each question by circling Yes or No.** (If you are not sure, ask someone you respect to check over your answers)

- Yes No** 1. Does your A/R negatively impact your ability to meet your basic financial responsibilities?
- Yes No** 2. Does your A/R cause you to feel embarrassed, anxious, sad, remorseful, or defensive?
- Yes No** 3. Are loved ones complaining about the amount of time or money you invest in your A/R?
- Yes No** 4. Has your A/R been the focus of arguments or fights with people who you respect?
- Yes No** 5. Does your A/R result in physical harm to your body or damage to your overall health and well-being?
- Yes No** 6. Do you find yourself hiding or minimizing the amount of time, energy or money spent on your A/R?
- Yes No** 7. Does your A/R interfere with your responsibilities at work?
- Yes No** 8. Does your A/R interfere with your responsibilities at home?
- Yes No** 9. Has your A/R negatively affected your self-esteem or self-respect?
- Yes No** 10. Does your A/R conflict with your life goals, professional standards, spiritual beliefs, or personal values?

Scoring: Answering “yes” may indicate that your activity or relationship has crossed the line into a bad habit or addiction. Continue inventorying your bad habits on the next page.

Bad Habit Inventory- 20 questions



Bad habits begin with making the decision to do a questionable behavior then continuing to repeat that behavior over and over until the behavior becomes habitual, damaging, or destructive.

Observe and Listen: Place a check mark next to each sentence that is *currently* true for you. *Be honest with yourself. Your answers are private. Observe your physiological response as you answer each question.*

- 1. I eat to fill emotional emptiness, loneliness, boredom, or anxiety. I blame my un-healthy weight on my genetics, my environment, my stress level, or other factors out of my control.*
- 2. I use caffeine to stay awake. Lots of caffeine. I drink more than 250 mg a day.* (8 oz of coffee = 65 to 110 mg of caffeine, soda = 34-70 mg of caffeine.)
- 3. I *abuse* alcohol, nicotine, cannabis, medications, or other mood-altering substances.*
- 4. My sexual behaviors or interests create moral, physical, or legal problems.*
- 5. I use my rage to let off steam. I tantrum, yell, throw things, swear, or threaten.*
- 6. I procrastinate. I avoid acting on tasks that seem overwhelming or boring.*
- 7. I drive aggressively. I drive as if I own the road. I feel entitled to my anger and blame other drivers for my rage.*
- 8. I don't even want to know how much gambling has cost me. I'm out of control.*
- 9. I am often shopping, spending, or buying stuff to feel good. I spend too much.*
- 10. I am never happy with what I have. I am always looking for something else "out there" to fix what feels empty "in me." *
- 11. I must clean, wash, organize, order, or count things to feel in control.*
- 12. I fuel my bad habits with thoughts of guilt, shame and poor body image. If I *am not good enough*, I am able to justify and continue my bad habits.*
- 13. I surround myself with stress and chaos so that I never "have time" to relax, listen to my own thoughts or take responsibility for growth or change.
- 14. I give my power away to others then I blame them for taking it.
- 15. I avoid healing my fear of being alone by making sure that I am never alone.



- 16. I avoid conflict. When a conflict arises, I shut down, give in, blame, run or hide.
- 17. I live in the past. I have not accepted the present nor envisioned my future.
- 18. I am never satisfied with myself. I must always “do more.” I stay busy to outrun my self-loathing and my fear of not being good enough.
- 19. I play the victim. I have an excuse for everything.
- 20. I use denial regularly. I pretend I do not see it so maybe it will just go away.
(And I don't have any of the bad habits on this list. I don't need this stupid test!).

_____ **Total number of items checked.**

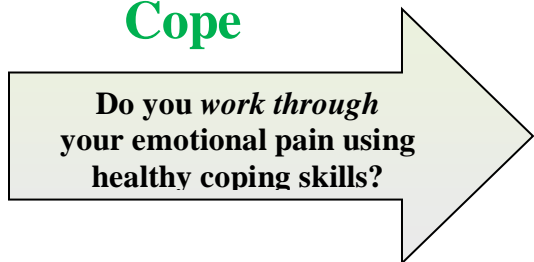
Scoring: A perfect score is (0). Each checked item reflects an opportunity to improve alignment of your thoughts and your actions with your values.

Application

1. Discuss checked items #1 through #12 with your therapist or physician.
2. Continuing bad habits and addictions creates self-loathing.

You decide when to stop your self-defeating cycle. **You always have a choice.**

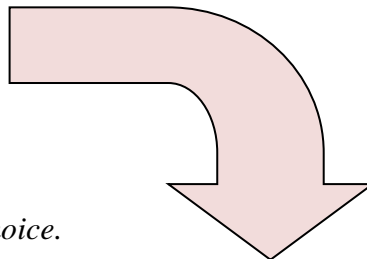
Cope



If yes, see the next page for coping skills

OR Cop Out

Do you deny, avoid and escape difficult emotional work by using bad habits?



Each day brings an opportunity to make a better choice.

Replace Your Bad Habits with Healthy Coping Skills

*“When we are no longer able to change a situation—
we are challenged to change ourselves.”* Viktor E. Frankl

Coping skills → healthy habits, behaviors, thoughts, resources, or tools to assist you in the process of working through painful emotions.

Place a check in the box of each coping skill you currently practice. Circle the strategies you intend to begin using. Set alarms in your phone to remind you or download an app.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relax with herbal tea | <input type="checkbox"/> Finish that craft or project | <input type="checkbox"/> Visit a library or museum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk out feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> Draw, paint or create | <input type="checkbox"/> Practice a sport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy a bath or shower | <input type="checkbox"/> Plan & make healthy meals | <input type="checkbox"/> Walk, hike, jog, run |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write | <input type="checkbox"/> Make a budget, pay bills | <input type="checkbox"/> Bike, ski, skate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> *Meditate or pray | <input type="checkbox"/> Rekindle a hobby | <input type="checkbox"/> Use exercise equipment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have a “good” cry | <input type="checkbox"/> Connect with loved ones | <input type="checkbox"/> Stretch, yoga, cardio |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practice self-compassion | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean, de-clutter, organize | <input type="checkbox"/> Swim, float, canoe, boat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> View inspirational stuff | <input type="checkbox"/> Attend social event | <input type="checkbox"/> Care for animals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to inspirational stuff | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer, join something | <input type="checkbox"/> Do home improvements |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sing, dance | <input type="checkbox"/> Tutor, mentor, or coach | <input type="checkbox"/> Plan your calendar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educate yourself | <input type="checkbox"/> Seek a support group | <input type="checkbox"/> Rake, mow, weed, garden |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read | <input type="checkbox"/> Help someone | <input type="checkbox"/> Create a bucket list |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Polish your nails | <input type="checkbox"/> Appreciate nature, explore | <input type="checkbox"/> Play |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a nap or rest | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to or make music | <input type="checkbox"/> Recycle & donate |

*Meditation questions:

1. What motivates you to use the coping strategies you marked in the columns above?
2. What triggers you to slip away from using your best coping skills?
3. How would you like to maintain your healthy coping skills? (Check all that apply):
 - Support.** Surround yourself with people who have similar goals and successful intention.
 - Prioritize.** Schedule time for the most important goals, including relaxation and fun.
 - Accountability.** Document, record or discuss progress with yourself and with others
 - Routines.** Practice maintaining healthy habits (Check to see if there is an app for that!)
 - Embrace** → your emotions and experiences with self-compassion and curiosity.