

URGE SURFING

Method Workbook

A simple way to notice an urge, breathe through the wave, and choose your next healthy action.



Two-Part Workbook

Part One: Learn the Urge Surfing Method

Part Two: Practice With Fillable Worksheets

Personal editing copy

WELCOME

How to Use This Workbook

This workbook is designed to help a person practice urge surfing in a calm, direct, and repeatable way. Urges can feel urgent, powerful, and convincing. The goal is not to argue with the urge or shame the person for having it. The goal is to notice it, breathe through it, and make a safer choice while the intensity rises and falls.

Urge surfing can be used for cravings, anger, self-defeating habits, anxiety behaviors, impulsive texting, avoidance, emotional eating, and other moments when the body says, “Do something right now.” The method works best when it is practiced before a crisis, then used during harder moments.

This workbook does not replace therapy, medical care, crisis care, or emergency services. If there is immediate danger, risk of self-harm, risk of harming someone else, overdose risk, psychosis, or inability to stay safe, call 988, call 911, go to the nearest emergency department, or contact local crisis services.

Core idea

An urge is like a wave. It builds, peaks, and eventually falls. The person practicing urge surfing learns to ride the wave without being pulled under by it.

A simple practice agreement

- I will notice the urge without judging myself for having it.
- I will breathe and observe before I act.
- I will remember that an urge can be uncomfortable without being an emergency.
- I will ask for help when safety is at risk.

The Urge Surfing Method Explained Simply

Urge surfing is a mindfulness-based skill. It teaches a person to pause, observe, and stay present while an urge moves through the body. The person is not trying to force the urge away. The person is learning to stop obeying it automatically.

Most urges feel permanent when they are intense. They are not permanent. They usually shift when the person stops feeding them with panic, shame, bargaining, or immediate action. The wave may still be uncomfortable, but discomfort is not the same as danger.

The skill is simple, but it takes practice. The first win is not perfection. The first win is creating a small space between the urge and the action.

#	Step	What to do
1	Pause	Stop for a moment and say, "I am having an urge." This creates distance between you and the urge.
2	Name it	Identify what the urge wants you to do. Be honest and specific without judging yourself.
3	Rate it	Give the urge a number from 0 to 10. This helps you track movement instead of assuming it will stay the same.
4	Find it in the body	Notice where the urge shows up. It may feel like pressure, heat, tightness, restlessness, heaviness, or buzzing.
5	Breathe with it	Take slow breaths and imagine you are making room around the feeling rather than fighting it.
6	Watch the wave	Observe what changes. Notice if the urge rises, peaks, dips, shifts location, or changes shape.
7	Choose the next right action	When the urge lowers enough, choose one healthy action that supports your safety and values.

Important reminder

You are not trying to prove that the urge is fake. You are proving that you do not have to obey every message your body sends when it is stressed, triggered, lonely, angry, tired, or afraid.

What the Wave Feels Like

Urges often come with a story. The story might say, “I need this now,” “I cannot stand this,” “This will make me feel better,” or “It does not matter anyway.” The body may feel activated before the mind can explain why.

Urge surfing slows the process down. Instead of reacting to the story, the person pays attention to the physical wave. This turns the urge into something observable rather than something that must be obeyed.

Common urge signals

☐ Tight chest	☐ Fast thoughts	☐ Hot face
☐ Restless legs	☐ Clenched jaw	☐ Stomach drop
☐ Racing heart	☐ Shaky hands	☐ Pressure in head
☐ Numbness	☐ Sweating	☐ Tunnel vision

My personal urge pattern

My urge usually starts when...	Write here...
My body usually feels...	Write here...
My mind usually says...	Write here...
The action I usually want to take is...	Write here...
One safer action I can practice is...	Write here...

The 90-second doorway

Many emotional waves shift when a person can pause long enough to stop adding fuel. Some waves last longer, especially when the person keeps replaying the trigger. The goal is not to count perfectly. The goal is to practice staying present long enough to regain choice.

PART ONE

A Guided Urge Surfing Script

Read this slowly during an urge

1. Notice	"I am having an urge. This is a wave. I do not have to act right now."
2. Name	"The urge wants me to _____."
3. Rate	"Right now the urge is a ____ out of 10."
4. Locate	"I feel it most in my _____."
5. Breathe	"I will breathe slowly and make room around this feeling."
6. Observe	"The feeling is rising, falling, shifting, or staying the same."
7. Choose	"The next safe thing I can do is _____."

One-minute version

Name it: "This is an urge."
Rate it: "It is a ____ out of 10."
Breathe with it: "I can stay with this for one minute."
Choose: "I will do one safe thing next."

When urge surfing is not enough

If the urge involves immediate danger, self-harm, violence, overdose, withdrawal risk, or loss of control, use a safety plan and contact support. Skills are powerful, but safety comes first.

PART TWO

Fillable Worksheet Section

Use these pages during or after an urge. The goal is not to write a perfect answer. The goal is to slow the moment down enough to see what is happening and choose the next safe step.

These worksheets can be copied for repeated use. They can also be typed into directly in Word or printed and completed by hand.

Worksheet 1: Before I Surf the Urge

Date and time	Write here...
What triggered the urge?	Write here...
What does the urge want me to do?	Write here...
What emotion is strongest?	Write here...
Current urge rating	___ / 10
Safety check	Am I safe right now? ☐ Yes ☐ No If no, who can I contact immediately? Write here...
My reason to pause	Write here...

Worksheet 2: Name the Wave

The urge says...	Write here...
The fear underneath it might be...	Write here...
The need underneath it might be...	Write here...
The value I want to protect is...	Write here...

PART TWO

Worksheet 3: Ride the Wave for 10 Minutes

Set a timer for 10 minutes if it is safe to do so. Each minute, rate the urge and write one short observation. The goal is not to make the urge vanish. The goal is to watch it move.

10 Minute Urge Surfing Log

Minute	Urge 0 to 10	Body sensation	Helpful response
0	___ / 10	Write here...	Write here...
1	___ / 10	Write here...	Write here...
2	___ / 10	Write here...	Write here...
3	___ / 10	Write here...	Write here...
4	___ / 10	Write here...	Write here...
5	___ / 10	Write here...	Write here...
6	___ / 10	Write here...	Write here...
7	___ / 10	Write here...	Write here...
8	___ / 10	Write here...	Write here...
9	___ / 10	Write here...	Write here...
10	___ / 10	Write here...	Write here...

After the 10 minutes

Highest urge rating	___ / 10
Lowest urge rating	___ / 10
What changed in my body?	Write here...
What helped me stay with it?	Write here...
What is my next safe action?	Write here...

PART TWO

Worksheet 4: Body, Breath, and Attention

Where do I feel the urge?

☐ Head	☐ Face	☐ Jaw
☐ Neck	☐ Shoulders	☐ Chest
☐ Stomach	☐ Back	☐ Hands
☐ Legs	☐ Feet	☐ Whole body

Describe the body sensation

Temperature	☐ Hot ☐ Cold ☐ Warm ☐ Neutral ☐ Other: _____
Movement	☐ Tight ☐ Buzzing ☐ Heavy ☐ Shaky ☐ Numb ☐ Other: _____
Shape or image	If this feeling had a shape, color, or texture, it would be...
Breathing practice	I will breathe in for ____ counts and out for ____ counts.
Attention anchor	I will place my attention on... ☐ Breath ☐ Feet ☐ Hands ☐ Sounds ☐ Safe object

Grounding option

Name five things you can see.

Name four things you can feel.

Name three things you can hear.

Name two things you can smell.

Name one thing you can taste or one thing you are grateful for.

Worksheet 5: Thoughts Are Not Commands

During an urge, thoughts can sound like instructions. A thought may be loud, but it is still a thought. Use this page to separate the urge story from the facts and from your values.

Urge thought	Fact or reality check	Value-based response
Write here...	Write here...	Write here...
Write here...	Write here...	Write here...
Write here...	Write here...	Write here...
Write here...	Write here...	Write here...
Write here...	Write here...	Write here...

Helpful self-talk

A kind sentence I can say to myself is...	Write here...
A firm sentence I can say to myself is...	Write here...
A sentence that reminds me I have choice is...	Write here...

PART TWO

Worksheet 6: Choose the Next Healthy Action

Healthy actions I can try after surfing the urge

☐ Drink water	☐ Take a walk	☐ Call support
☐ Text support	☐ Journal	☐ Shower
☐ Eat a balanced snack	☐ Use 988 if needed	☐ Step outside
☐ Stretch	☐ Clean one small area	☐ Return to task

My next step plan

The urge is now	___ / 10
The safest next action is	Write here...
The person or place that can support me is	Write here...
One thing I will avoid for the next hour is	Write here...
One thing I will do for the next hour is	Write here...
I will review this again at	Write here...

Progress counts

Success does not only mean the urge disappeared. Success can mean you paused, breathed, asked for help, delayed the action, reduced harm, or learned something about your pattern.

Worksheet 7: Reflection and Repetition

After-action reflection

What happened before the urge?	Write here...
What did I notice in my body?	Write here...
What did I do that helped?	Write here...
What made it harder?	Write here...
What will I practice next time?	Write here...
What support do I need?	Write here...

Weekly Practice Tracker

Day	Practiced?	Trigger or urge	What helped?	Next step
Monday	☐ Yes ☐ No	Write here...	Write here...	Write here...
Tuesday	☐ Yes ☐ No	Write here...	Write here...	Write here...
Wednesday	☐ Yes ☐ No	Write here...	Write here...	Write here...
Thursday	☐ Yes ☐ No	Write here...	Write here...	Write here...
Friday	☐ Yes ☐ No	Write here...	Write here...	Write here...
Saturday	☐ Yes ☐ No	Write here...	Write here...	Write here...
Sunday	☐ Yes ☐ No	Write here...	Write here...	Write here...

SAFETY

Support Plan for High-Risk Urges

Use this page when an urge feels dangerous or when the person is not sure they can stay safe. Urge surfing is a skill, but support is part of the method when safety is at risk.

If there is immediate danger, call 911. If there is suicidal crisis, emotional crisis, or concern about self-harm, call or text 988 in the United States. Local crisis services, emergency departments, trusted supports, and treatment providers can also be used.

My high-risk support plan

Warning signs that I need help now	Write here...
My first support person	Name and number...
My second support person	Name and number...
Professional support	Therapist, doctor, crisis line, clinic, or other support...
Safe place I can go	Write here...
Things I will remove or avoid for safety	Write here...
Words I can say when asking for help	"I am having a strong urge and I need support staying safe." Add your own words here...

Closing reminder

An urge is not a failure.

A feeling is not a command.

A pause is a victory.

Every wave gives you another chance to practice choice.