

Urge Surfing

Learning to ride out urges without acting on them

Urges, cravings, and impulses can feel intense and hard to ignore. The good news is that they are not permanent. Urges often change over time and may come in more than one wave. Urge surfing is a mindfulness-based skill that helps you notice an urge, stay with it safely, and allow it to pass without automatically acting on it.

An urge changes over time. It may rise, peak and fall in one or several waves.



HOW TO PRACTISE URGE SURFING

1



Notice the urge

Name what is happening: craving, impulse, urge, or pull.

2



Pause and breathe

Take a slow breath and make a little space before acting.

3



Observe the wave

Notice where you feel the urge in your body and what the sensations are like. Notice how strong it feels right now, remembering that this will change.

4



Ride it

Let the urge be present without acting on it or struggling to make it disappear. Keep noticing as it changes.

5



Choose your next step

As the urge changes or becomes more manageable, choose an action linked to your values, coping plan or safety plan.

HELPFUL THINGS TO SAY AND DO

Helpful self-talk

-  This is an urge, not an order.
-  I can feel this without acting on it.
-  If I wait, this wave will change.
-  I can choose what I do next.

Helpful actions

-  Slow your breathing and notice the urge in your body.
-  Ground through your feet or senses.
-  Use brief distraction to help you get through the most intense part of the urge—for example, music, walking, a shower, a puzzle or a simple task.
-  Contact someone or follow your safety plan if needed.

REMEMBER

- ✓ Urges are uncomfortable, but temporary.
- ✓ Struggling with or trying to suppress an urge can sometimes make it feel bigger.
- ✓ The goal is not perfection; it is creating a pause and more choice.
- ✓ If acting on the urge could cause immediate harm, prioritise safety and use your agreed coping or safety plan.



TAKEAWAY: *Urges come and go. Each time you ride one out, you strengthen your ability to choose your next move.*

References

● Bowen, S., & Marlatt, A. (2009). Surfing the urge: Brief mindfulness-based intervention for college student smokers. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 23(4), 666–671.

● Grant, S., Colaiaco, B., Motala, A., Shanman, R., Booth, M., Sorbero, M., & Hempel, S. (2017). Mindfulness-based relapse prevention for substance use disorders: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Addiction Medicine*, 11(5), 386–396.