

# Managing Problematic Substance Use Thoughts

## PURPOSE

This worksheet can be used to help the counsellor and client identify and manage thoughts that lead to problematic substance use and then generate alternate thoughts. The client should practice thinking about these alternative thoughts in their own time. The counsellor and client should collaborate to generate thoughts that support refusal of problematic substance use patterns.

## INSTRUCTIONS

Identify the triggering thoughts that lead to cravings and urges to use. Develop alternative thoughts that would be helpful to think about the situation. The thoughts can be used as coping statements when the trigger thought comes to mind.

## Tips for Identifying Problematic Substance Use Thoughts

- Read the statements below and see if the client relates.
- Ask the client to think about the thoughts that come to mind right before they use.
- Ask the client to keep a record of the thoughts they had when they had cravings.

## Tips for Creating Alternate Thoughts

- Acknowledge the thought.  
(E.g., Client acknowledging the thought: "I am thinking about getting drunk before my date.")
- Generate a positive coping statement. It could be helpful to think about the consequence of using or using a positive affirmation.  
(E.g., Client might use a positive coping statement such as, "If I get drunk before my date this person is not going to be interested in me. I choose not to drink before this date. I've got this.")
- Use assertive language. Pick words that someone would use if they believed they could reduce their substance use or quit entirely. Try assertive words like "no" or "choose" when thinking about the craving or urge.  
(E.g., Client's assertive language could be, "No, sneaking drinking thought, I cannot have just one, I end up wasted and people don't like that. I choose to be sober for my date tonight so I can have a better chance for a second date.")

Problem Substance Use Thought	Alternative Thought
No one will ever know if I have this one ____	
I'm going to do an experiment and see if I can have ____	
I won't be able to socialize if I don't have a ____	
I deserve a reward. I've had a hard day.	
Other:	
Other:	