



THE TOOL:

# Cost/Benefit Analysis

## EFFECTIVELY USED FOR WHICH OF THE 4 POINTS?

**Building Motivation**    Coping with Urges    Problem Solving    Lifestyle Balance

**EQUIPMENT REQUIRED:** Flipchart/Markers **or** Blackboard & Chalk

**WHAT IT IS:** A method for exploring the short-term vs. long-term benefits associated with continuing or discontinuing the behavior.

## WHEN IT IS USED: (Common question or statement that may prompt using this tool)

Whenever a member seems to be wavering in his/her motivation to alter his/her behavior. Typical comments to prompt the use of this tool might include:

“Why bother to quit using...it’s too hard.” Or “What’s the use, I’m just going to relapse anyway.”

## EXAMPLE OF ITS USE IN A SMART RECOVERY® MEETING:

When a member makes it clear that they he/she is having difficulty maintaining motivation, it’s often useful to work with the individual to help him or her explore the positive and negative consequences (the costs and the benefits). The group can work together to help the person document 1) the benefits of engaging in an addictive behavior pattern and, 2) the benefits of **not** doing so.

Some view this process as a “Time Effects” analysis because it is the effects over time that people don’t like, while others prefer to refer to it as a “Risk/Reward” analysis. Regardless, the idea is to get the individual to seriously consider the “Costs” and “Benefits” related to his/her behavior.

A Facilitator may wish to start with the question: “Let’s assume that you decide to drink (use, gamble, engage in unsafe sex, etc.), what will be the positive effects in 1 to 2 minutes?” (Group members often provide the negative effects, despite the question!) It’s appropriate to start with the positive effects because that is why they continue to decide to drink, use, etc.

Then ask: “What will be the positive effects in two hours assuming you continue to drink?”

Then inquire: “What will happen in 24 hours? in two days? in two years? in twenty years?”

Then, continue by asking about the negative effects:

(Note: It’s useful to have a member or the Facilitator document the responses. You can use a folded piece of paper, putting the positive effects on one side and the negative effects on the other, or place two columns on a flipchart, marking one “positive” and the other “negative”.)

Ask: "Let's assume that you decide not to drink (or gamble, use, etc.), what will be the positive effects of that decision in 1-2 minutes? 2 hours? the next day? etc. Then ask what will be the negative effects of not drinking?"

You may wish to change the time spans depending on the individual's circumstance. That is, sometimes ask regarding 1-2 minutes? 2 hours? 6 hours? the next morning? the next week?

Note that age has an impact on the answers. Young people know that bonding with friends is an important and healthy part of growing up. So getting drunk with your buddies has positive effects over time (i.e., a young person may indicate "having fun with friends" as a benefit of continued use.) But, of course, if he/she overdoes it, he/she may experience very negative (perhaps even lethal) effects over time.

Someone may not be able to come up with the positive effects of not drinking or using in 1-2 minutes. The answer: You get the opportunity to practice standing the discomfort and of learning how to resist urges. Likewise, the negative effects in 1-2 minutes are that you lose these opportunities AND you reinforce the belief: I have to have what I want when I want it. WAH!

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