

# Distress Tolerance



## Urge Surfing

### FACTS ABOUT URGES

#### **Urges do not inevitably lead to actions**

- Urges and actions are not the same thing
- Urges are impermanent and do not have to be acted upon

#### **Struggling with urges ultimately feeds them**

Internal struggling or fighting feeds the urge:

- e.g. flipping between wanting to engage in the behaviour and wanting to resist the urge
- e.g. thinking thoughts such as: 'I wish this urge would go away'; 'it is driving me crazy'; 'I can't make it through this'

#### **Attempting to block urges makes them worse**

- Attempting to block or avoid an urge can work in the short term, but suppressing the urge ultimately increases it
- Trying to block the urge is like trying to block a waterfall - you eventually end up inundated

### HOW TO MANAGE URGES

- Mindfulness is a skill we can use to manage urges without feeding or suppressing them - in other words, not making them worse!
- Mindfulness allows us to step aside, let the urge be and watch it go right past
- Using mindfulness, we observe the urge in a non-judgemental way without feeding it or fighting it
- This allows us to make the thoughts regarding the urges less important - they are just thoughts
- Using mindfulness to manage urges is an ongoing process - chances are, they will come back again, however each time you overcome a bout of urges they become less intense and less frequent, and therefore more manageable

# Urge Surfing



## Using Mindfulness

### USE THE FOLLOWING STEPS TO MANAGE URGES

1. Remember that urges pass by themselves
2. Imagine that the urges are like ocean waves that arrive, crest and subside. They are small when they start, will grow in size, and then will break up and dissipate
3. Watch your breath, don't alter it, let the breath breathe itself
4. Notice your thoughts about the urges
5. Don't judge them, feed them or fight them, just observe them
6. Notice the urge experience as it effects the body
7. Focus on one area of the body where you can feel the physical sensations associated with the urge and notice what is occurring
8. Notice:
  - The quality of the physical sensation - whether it is tight or loose, its temperature (hot or cold)
  - The location of the sensation - its position in the body
  - The intensity of the sensation
  - The borders of the sensation - are they well defined or fuzzy?
  - How these aspects changed with your breathing - does it get larger or smaller? More or less intense? Does the quality change?
9. Be curious about what occurs and notice changes over time - the key is replacing the fearful wish that the urge will go away, with interest in our experience. When we do this we notice the urges change, crest and subside and it becomes more manageable
10. When you find your mind turning to thoughts, acknowledge the thoughts, then bring your attention back to the physical sensation of the urge