

THINKING OF THE PROS AND CONS

You will see an example of how to do this on the next page.

This skill is a way of looking at unhelpful/ destructive behaviour. It is the kind of behaviour we do that we probably regret the next day.

Examples of the kinds of behaviour we mean are: Abuse of alcohol, using drugs, overspending, over/under eating, physical/verbal abuse, gambling, procrastination etc.

We sometimes engage in these behaviours as a way of dealing with distress.

These behaviours seem helpful in the immediate term but generally have negative/harmful consequences in the longer term.

Instructions:

Draw up a table divided into four sections.

- The upper section is for a list of the pros and cons of **not tolerating** the distress- that is, coping by hurting yourself, abusing alcohol or drugs or doing something else impulsive or destructive.
- The lower section is for another list of the pros and cons of **tolerating** the distress- that is coping by using skills.

When making these lists look at both short term positive and negative consequences and more long term positive and negative consequences. Think about and list the positive consequences of tolerating the distress and engaging in more effective behaviour.

Think of all the negative consequences of not tolerating your current distress and of acting impulsively. Remember other times when you have acted in this way and what harmful or unhelpful situations have arisen.

In your list, focus on your long term goals- does this behaviour fit with them?

EXAMPLE of PROS AND CONS

Behaviour we are analysing: OVERUSE OF ALCOHOL when stressed

<p style="text-align: center;">PROS</p> <p>Advantages for me of doing this</p> <p><i>Social</i> <i>Makes me feel better</i> <i>Relaxing</i> <i>Distracts me</i> <i>Escape</i> <i>Fun</i> <i>Socially acceptable</i> <i>Makes me feel less self conscious</i> <i>I forget my problems</i></p> <p>What keeps the behaviour going- short term reinforcers</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CONS</p> <p>Negative consequences (usually take longer to appear)</p> <p><i>\$ expensive</i> <i>Health/Physical effects eg hangovers</i> <i>Cannot study well the next day</i> <i>Relationship problems</i> <i>Potential problems with the law- disorderly conduct, fights, drunk driving</i> <i>Effects my ability to do my job</i> <i>Potential addiction</i> <i>Doesn't deal with the problem</i> <i>Can make things worse</i> <i>Embarrassing behaviour</i> <i>Feelings of shame /regret</i> <i>Unsafe sex and other unwise choices</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Motivator for change</p>
<p>DOING SOMETHING SKILFUL eg SEE PLAN</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">PROS</p> <p>Advantages of doing something more skilful</p> <p><i>Feel more competent</i> <i>Better for my self esteem</i> <i>Effects last longer</i> <i>More likely to address the problem or at least not make things worse</i> <i>Better for my physical and mental health</i> <i>No hangovers</i> <i>My girlfriend doesn't get so angry</i> <i>Cheaper</i> <i>Can get to work the next day or get my assignments finished</i> <i>Not taking risks</i></p> <p>Motivator for change- why do something different?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CONS</p> <p>Disadvantages</p> <p><i>HARD</i> <i>Need to know what other things I can do</i> <i>Need to know what works</i> <i>Takes longer to work</i> <i>Takes time to learn</i> <i>May get laughed at by my friends</i> <i>My friends expect me to go drinking</i> <i>I would have to think about what to say to them about my not drinking</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">The barriers to change- what you need to overcome if you really want lasting change</p>

PROS AND CONS

Behaviour we are analysing: _____

<p style="text-align: center;">PROS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">What keeps the behaviour going- short term reinforcers</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CONS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Motivator for change</p>
<p>DOING SOMETHING SKILLFUL eg SEE PLAN</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">PROS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Motivator for change- why do something different?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CONS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The barriers to change- what you need to overcome if you really want lasting change</p>

