

Surfing the Urge Activity

1.

This is a mindfulness-based grounding activity designed to assist clients who may be dysregulated or experiencing anxiety, panic, stress or strong cravings. It contains a suggested script for guiding your client through the activity.

Firstly, ask permission

It sounds like you are having some difficulties with managing cravings that are coming up for you. I have an activity that might be helpful for you to use at these times. Is that something you might be interested in? *(wait for response)*

Explain the concept

The activity is called 'Surfing the Urge'. It can be helpful sometimes when people are making changes to their behaviour like what you are going through. We know that urges rarely last longer than around 20-30 mins but if we give into those urges or give them a lot of attention it can actually feed them and make them feel worse. The problem is trying to stop thinking about something can be really difficult. The important thing to remember here is that 'urge-surfing' isn't about trying to fight off the craving - in fact it's the opposite - it involves accepting that urges or cravings can sometimes occur, and when they do, you consciously experience the urge as it runs its natural course. You ride it out like a surfer rides a wave in the ocean. So in this activity we view the urge like a wave that starts small and then grows in size but eventually reaches a peak and then crashes and breaks into foam. In fact, some people find it useful to name it as it happens, saying to themselves something like "this is a craving, and it will pass". And, over time, if your urges are no longer being reinforced, they will diminish and fade away. Does that make any sense? *(wait for response)*

Okay so there are three steps in urge surfing. As I go through them, I might be quiet at certain points and that's so you can focus on the activity but I will still be here on the end of the phone.

STEP 1

Step 1 is to identify how you are experiencing the craving. Sitting down where you are, feet flat on the floor, close your eyes if you feel safe doing so, and focus your attention inside. We are just going to take a couple of breaths to centre ourselves. Breathe in...one...two...three... and then out...one... two...three... And then breathe in... one... two... three... and then out... one...two...three... And then breathe in... one... two...three... and then out..... one..... two..... three..... Let your mind wander through and around your body and take note of where you feel the craving. Is it in your chest or shoulders? Or is it a feeling in your mouth or your belly? Acknowledge in your mind the physical reactions that you are experiencing. *(pause for 5 seconds)*

STEP 2

Step 2 is to identify the feelings you are experiencing. Do your shoulders feel tense? Are you experiencing a smell? How much of your body is involved in the urge? Is the feeling changing while we are talking? Does it have a colour or a shape? Just observe the urge, watching it ebb and flow, knowing that this will pass. Now let's bring our attention back to our breathing again... Breathe in.....one..... two.....three..... and out.....one..... two..... three..... And breathe in.....one..... two.....three... and breathe out..... one.... two...three... *(continue 1-2 more times, then pause for 5 seconds)*

STEP 3

Lastly pay attention to any other sensations in your body that might be occurring. Thinking about how intense the feeling is for you. Is it lessening or increasing? Know in your mind that if it is increasing, that it will reach its peak and then subside again like the ocean..... Coming back to your breath again. Breathing into the urge or the sensation in your body. ... Breathe in.... one.....two.....three.... and out.....one.....two..... three..... *(and continue)*

Now that we are coming to the end of the activity, know that If you need to surf the urge again you can just do this, confident that over time the feeling will just wash away and pass. *(pause for 5 seconds)*

Ending the activity

Okay so slowly just feeling your feet on the floor moving them up and down, and just shuffling a little bit in your seat and slowly opening up your eyes and coming back into the room. And then just let me know when you are back.