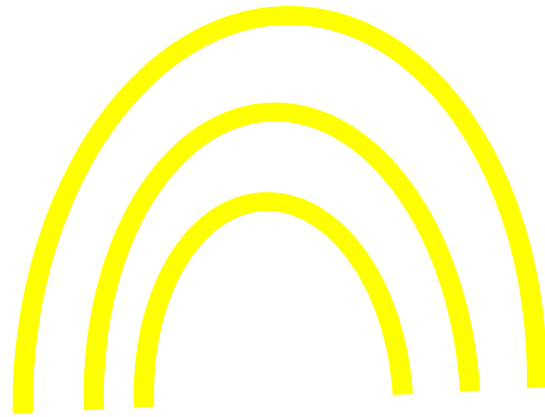




Impulse Control in Recovery

Why Impulse Control Matters

In recovery, impulses can feel powerful—whether it's the urge to use, escape stress, or act without thinking. Learning to pause and make intentional choices strengthens your long-term success.

Research shows that people who can delay gratification (like in the famous Marshmallow Test) often do better at reaching their goals, building stronger relationships, and staying resilient.

Similarly, strategies from Indistractable teach us how to master our attention, avoid distractions, and focus on what matters most.

Impulse control is about more than resisting cravings—it's about creating a life you want to stay present for.

Reflection

Think about a time when you gave in to an impulse. What did it feel like in the moment? What were the consequences?

What are some of the most common impulses you face in recovery right now?

When you resist an impulse, what positive feelings or outcomes usually follow?

Lessons from the Marshmallow Test

The Marshmallow Test taught us that:

- Waiting and resisting urges gets easier when we distract ourselves.
- The ability to pause can be practiced and strengthened.
- Choosing long-term rewards over short-term pleasure leads to growth.

What “marshmallows” (temptations) show
up in your recovery?

What long-term rewards are you working toward that are more important than the short-term temptation?

Insights from Indistractable

In Indistractable, Nir Eyal explains that distractions often come from within—uncomfortable emotions we try to escape. Instead of avoiding discomfort, we can learn to sit with it and redirect our energy.

Key Strategies

1. **Master Internal Triggers** – Notice the urge instead of fighting it. Name it: *“I’m feeling restless.”*
2. **Make Time for What Matters** – Schedule meaningful activities that leave less room for impulsive choices.
3. **Remove Distractions** – Limit easy access to temptations.
4. **Reframe Your Identity** – Tell yourself: *“I am the kind of person who follows through.”*

What are your biggest internal triggers
(boredom, stress, loneliness, etc.)?

If you were living as your “indistractable” self, what would your daily routine look like?

Practical Tools for Strengthening Impulse Control

- **The 10-Minute Rule (Indistractable):** When an urge strikes, tell yourself you can act in 10 minutes—most cravings pass by then.
- **Distraction with Purpose:** Just like the kids in the Marshmallow Test who sang songs or covered their eyes, find healthy distractions (journaling, walking, calling a friend).
- **Think Through the Consequence:** Imagine how you'll feel in 10 minutes, 10 hours, and 10 days if you give in vs. if you hold strong.
- **Grounding Techniques:** Use breathing or sensory exercises to ride the wave of the urge.

Exercises

1. Identify Your Triggers

What situations, feelings, or people make you more likely to act impulsively?

2. Create Your “Indistractable Plan”

Write down 3 healthy actions you can take when temptation strikes:

1.

2.

3.

3. Daily Reflection

At the end of each day:

- Did I face a “marshmallow moment”?
 - How did I handle it?
 - What can I try tomorrow?
-
-
-

4. My Support Tools

List 3 people, activities, or coping tools that can help you when your impulses feel overwhelming:

1.

2.

3.

Affirmations for Impulse Control

I can wait, and the urge will pass.

Discomfort is temporary, growth is lasting.

I am building the life I want, one choice at a time.

Write your own affirmations here:

A faint, stylized illustration of a plant with long, slender leaves and a thin stem, set against a background of horizontal lines. The plant is rendered in a light, sketchy style, with the leaves showing some internal veining. The stem is thin and curves upwards. The background consists of several thin, horizontal lines that span the width of the page.

Quick Grounding Techniques

- **5-4-3-2-1 Method:** Name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, 1 you taste.
- **Box Breathing:** Inhale for 4, hold for 4, exhale for 4, hold for 4. Repeat.
- **Cold Water Reset:** Splash water on your face or hold an ice cube until the urge passes.

Closing Reflection

How can you apply the Marshmallow Test and Indistractable strategies in your recovery this week? Write one specific goal:

What is one long-term reward you want to remind yourself of when impulses feel overwhelming?