



RECOVERING FROM A CRAVINGS FLARE-UP

Goal of the Handout: To describe specific actions that members can take to recover orderly thoughts after a cravings flare-up.

Application: A craving for a processed food is a flare-up of the addiction manifesting as loss of rational thought patterns. By taking specific actions that are compatible with lifestyle, members can make cravings stop and restore rational thought no matter how serious the flare-up. A worksheet is provided to make a plan for containing a cravings flare-up.

Processed food addiction is unlike other addictions to drugs and alcohol because triggers, cues, and reminders of processed foods are more prevalent than those for other addictions. Whereas a heroin addict can expect to go through days without exposure to heroin paraphernalia, food addicts do not have that protection from cues. Reminders and availability of processed foods are very common in westernized cultures due to the intense advertising and availability of cheap processed foods. Processed foods are generally used in social and business situations. Thus is it virtually inevitable that food addicts will frequently be exposed to provocative reminders of addictive foods.

Even a trigger which has been neutral for a long time can cause a flare-up of cravings during times of fatigue, stress, strong emotions, or unusually prolonged exposure to a cue. Given the high likelihood of a cravings flare-up, coupled with the severe consequences of letting cravings lead to relapse, it's worthwhile to make a plan to contain a cravings flare-up.

Members should start to take action as soon as they experience a craving. A craving indicates that the disease of processed food addiction has been activated and loss of rational thought is at risk. Members should not wait until they've acted on the craving to take corrective action.

Members should use the worksheet below to identify those corrective actions which would be easiest to take given their own lifestyles, skills, and capabilities. Members should keep engaging in these activities until the cravings stop. To evaluate the success of controlling a cravings flare-up, members should test the functionality of their

memory by trying to recall the reasons that they don't use processed foods. This shows that memory is functioning and rational thought has been restored.

You should share the below list of recovery actions with a trusted friend, sponsor, or family member who can help you work through these actions. Be careful to avoid saboteurs.

The Worksheet below can help you prepare to contain a cravings flare-up. Activities such as creating a safe place, downloading recordings, identifying meditation tapes, making a list of affirmations, identifying trusted helpers, and establishing a walking route will make it easier for you to regain mental clarity after a cravings flare-up.

There are seven areas in which we can contain a cravings flare-up: Environment Management, Physical Activity, Thought Management, Soothing Activities, Meals, Rest and Sleep, and Recovery Communities.

WORKSHEET TO CONTAIN A CRAVINGS FLARE-UP

On a scale from 1 to 5, how easy would this be to do?

ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT

Visual and smell triggers: As quickly as possible, move to an environment where no processed foods can be seen or smelled. If in a public space, look up at the ceiling and count ceiling tiles until you can leave.

Availability triggers: As quickly as possible, move to an environment where no processed foods are available.

Stress triggers: As quickly as possible, move to an environment where no stressors are active.

People triggers: As quickly as possible, move away from people who are associated with stress or people who eat processed foods. This may include children and elders. Get child and elder care.

Road triggers: If you need to move from one place to another, get a clear visualization about what you will do before leaving one place. Visualize yourself getting into your car and driving a safe route, arriving at your next destination safely. If you are walking, choose a route that does not go past food outlets of any kind.

Entertainment triggers: Avoid media images of any kind. These images are designed to provoke feelings of inadequacy

Low cravings ?	In a cravings crisis?
1-5	1-5

so you will buy something. Put a cover over the TV and dispose of printed materials that show lurid food pictures and distorted body images.

Travel Triggers: Travel with headphones and listen to meetings and meditations. Face away from sources of food. Request the hotel to clear out the refrigerator. Always travel with your own food.

Avoid: food environments such as grocery stores, convenience stores, drug stores, and restaurants.

Watch for four days: It can take up to four days for cravings to subside. During those four days, manage environments carefully. Avoid any food or stressful environments.

Get help: The activation of cravings can be considered as the activation of an illness or disease and may necessitate calling in sick to a workplace, and getting child care or elder care until the cravings have stopped.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Walking: As soon as possible after experiencing a craving, go for a long walk in a setting which is free from commercialism. Walking has been shown to reduce cravings. Focus your attention on sights of beauty along your walk. Avoid public thoroughfares where you might attract judgement.

Chair exercise: If walking or standing are not possible, get out a video that will take you through chair exercises in a trigger-free environment. Try this in the outdoors, perhaps sitting on a deck, where you can see nature.

Yoga: Yoga is calming. Find a comfortable video on youtube.com.

Gardening: Gardening is also a calming physical activity.

Affirmations: While exercising, repeat an affirmation such as, 'my brain is calm and orderly.'

Avoid: It might be necessary to avoid gyms and workout places that sell processed snack foods or have televisions until at least a few days after the last craving.

THOUGHT MANAGEMENT

Distance: Put the craving thought into a balloon, watch it float out of your head and disappear into the distance.

Objectify: Consider the craving thought objectively. Say to yourself, 'It's just a thought. I don't have to act on it.'

Repeat an affirmation: 'I can wait until this craving subsides. I am strong. I can sit and wait. I know it will go away.' Keep a list of affirmations that are important to you.

Breath: Sit quietly and focus on your breathing. Take deep breathes and just think about how the breathe is moving past the tip of your nose. On the exhale, push the cravings out.

Diversion: Divert thinking to a pleasant topic such as a hike, swimming, a song, or a daily meditative reading.

Prayer: Pray earnestly for the craving to be relieved.

Cost/Benefit Analysis: Review your last written Cost/Benefit Analysis or listen to a Conference Call Recording on the Cost/Benefit Analysis.

SOOTHING ACTIVITIES

Craft: In a safe environment, work on a craft, or coloring book.

Bath: Take a long shower or a bath.

Massage: Self-massage.

Music: Put on soothing music.

Read: Read an addiction recovery, a meditative, or a thought-changing book.

Meditate: Listen to a meditation.

MEALS

Extra Meals: Keep extra meals in the freezer or frig so you can maintain clean, on-time eating until the cravings stop. Make a few quick meals if you need to.

Take Meals: Always take meals with you so you have safe food until the cravings stop.

Raw vegetables: Keep raw vegetables in your car to help you get home safely during a cravings attack.

REST AND SLEEP

Lie down: Lie down in a peaceful place. Close your eyes and listen to a recorded meditation that relaxes the body.

Go to bed: Go to bed early enough to sleep until you wake up naturally.

RECOVERY COMMUNITIES

Facebook: Open Facebook to a food addiction support group and post about your circumstances.

Orient the brain: Read down through the posts in your Facebook Group and expose your brain to pictures of safe meals. At each picture, repeat, 'This is my food.'

Phone meeting: Attend a phone meeting with abstinent people.

Make a call: Call a person who has strong recovery.

Call Recording: Listen to a meeting call recording

Service: Encourage others

Reach out: Engage a small chat group

When you have finished the worksheet, spend some time repeatedly visualizing what you will do when a craving occurs. Rehearsing your actions will help you remember what to do even during a craving.