Handout: Overview of Sessions

SESSION 1: AUTOMATIC PILOT AND MINDFUL AWARENESS

We will discuss "automatic pilot," or the tendency to behave mechanically without being fully aware of what we're doing. We discuss this in relation to smoking and alcohol use (acting on cravings and urges "automatically") and how unique cancer experiences may be relevant. To bring attention to the body, we will practice the exercise known as a body scan.

SESSION 2: A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH DISCOMFORT

This session focuses on learning to experience triggers, cravings, and thoughts of using without automatically reacting. We focus on recognizing triggers and what the reaction feels like in the body, such as our thoughts and emotions that go with cravings. We use mindfulness to bring awareness to this automatic process, learning to experience craving and urges in a way that helps us take control of the wheel and decide how we respond.

SESSION 3: FROM REACTING TO RESPONDING

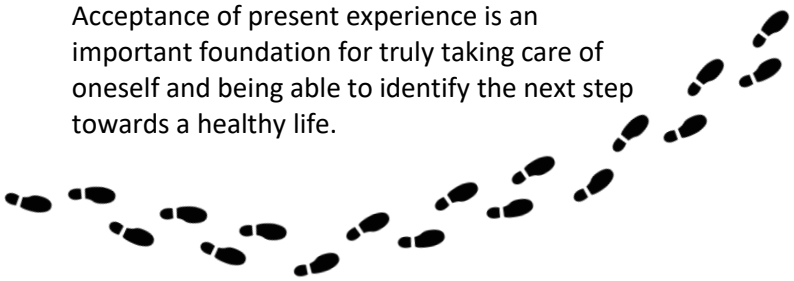
"SOBER space" is learned to expand the quality of mindfulness from formal sitting or lying down practice to daily situations. This helps us "be with" the different physical sensations and emotions that may come with cravings and urges. We also explore sensations that arise while smoking mindfully.

SESSION 4: MINDFULNESS IN CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

We focus on being present in situations or with people that have previously been associated with substance use, using mindfulness to learn to experience pressures or urges to avoid automatically reaching for a substance. We identify individual relapse risks and explore ways to cope with the intense feelings that come up in high-risk situations.

SESSION 5: ACCEPTANCE AND SKILLFUL ACTION

Acceptance of present experience is an important foundation for truly taking care of oneself and being able to identify the next step towards a healthy life.



We practice techniques, such as SOBER breathing space and focus on using these in challenging times. This session moves from noticing warning signs and learning to pause, to taking action in both high-risk situations and in daily life. This is also the smoking quit day!

SESSION 6: SEEING THOUGHTS AS THOUGHTS

With a focus on experiencing thoughts as just thoughts, we may then continue the exploration of awareness and its connection to emotions and behavior. We look at the role thoughts play in the relapse cycle, specifically thoughts that are "sticky" or hurtful, and ways to work with them.

SESSION 7: SUPPORTING AND SUSTAINING WELL-BEING

This session focuses on how to react and respond to personal warning signs for relapse. This includes discussion of broader lifestyle choices, balance, self-compassion, and the importance of including nourishing activities as part of a full, healthy life style.

SESSION 8: WORKING WITH WHAT IS

This session will introduce the concept of gratitude within mindfulness practice, as a way to show appreciation for ourselves, others, and the world around us. There will also be an increased focus on the role of acceptance (or allowing), and how that interacts with craving and other difficult experiences we may face.

SESSION 9: SOCIAL SUPPORT AND CONTINUING PRACTICE

In this final session, we review skills and practices learned in this group and discuss the importance of building a support system. We reflect on what we learned and share our individual plans for incorporating mindfulness practice into daily life.