Handout: SOBER Breathing Space

This exercise may be done almost anywhere because it is very quick and simple. It can be used in the middle of a high-risk or stressful situation, if you are upset, or when you are experiencing urges and cravings to use. It may help you step out of automatic pilot, becoming more aware and mindful in your response. The acronym used to remember this exercise is "SOBER" consisting of five steps.

S - Stop. This is the first step in stepping out of automatic pilot. When you are in a stressful or risky situation, or at random times throughout the day, remember to stop or slow down and check in with what is happening.

O- Observe. Observe the sensations happening in your body. Observe any emotions, moods, or thoughts you are having.

B- Breath. Gather your attention and bring it to your breath.

E- Expand. Expand your awareness to include the rest of your body, your experience, and to the situation, seeing if you can hold it in your awareness.

R- Respond. The last step is to respond mindfully, with awareness of what is really needed in the situation and how you can best take care of yourself. You always have a choice in how you respond. [1]

[1] Adapted from Segal, Williams, and Teasdale (2002). Copyright 2002 by The Guilford Press.