

DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 20

(Distress Tolerance Worksheet 17)

Burning Bridges and Building New Ones

BURNING BRIDGES

Accept at the most radical level that you are not going to engage in addictive behavior again, and then move actively to cut off all addictive behavior options.

- 1. Make an absolute commitment to abstinence from the addictive behavior, which is _____ (describe addictive behavior). Then walk into the garage of abstinence and **slam the garage door shut**. (Remember that the tiniest slit of space can let an entire elephant in.)
- 2. List everything in your life that makes addiction possible.
- 3. Get rid of these things:
 - Throw out contact information of people who collude with you.
 - Get rid of all possible cues and temptations.
- 4. List and do everything you can that will make it hard or impossible to continue your addictive behavior.
 - Ruthlessly and at every moment, tell the truth about your behavior.
 - Tell all your friends and family that you have quit.

BUILDING NEW BRIDGES

Create visual images and smells that will compete with the information loaded into your visual and olfactory brain systems when cravings occur.

Cravings and urges are strongly related to vivid images and smells of what is craved. The stronger the imagery or smell, the stronger the craving.

- Build different images or smells to think about. Try to keep these images or smells in memory when you have an unwanted craving. For example, whenever you crave a cigarette, imagine being on the beach; see and smell it in your mind to reduce the craving.
- When you have unwanted cravings, look at moving images or surround yourself with smells unrelated to the addiction. Moving images and new smells will compete with your cravings.
- "Urge-surf" by imagining yourself on a surfboard riding the waves of your urges. Notice them coming and going, rising high, going low, and finally going away.