

TOOL: PLAYING THE TAPE THROUGH



Playing the Tape Through is a cognitive strategy used in addiction recovery to help evaluate the consequences of giving in to an urge or craving. The essence of this tool is to visualize not only the immediate consequences of relapse but also the long-term impact on your life and goals, including the positive aspects you risk losing.

This tool guides you through visualizing the chain of events that would likely unfold from the moment of temptation to the long-term impacts, enabling you to make more informed decisions that align with your recovery goals.

STEPS TO USE PLAY THE TAPE THROUGH TECHNIQUE

Recognize the Urge: The process begins at the moment you feel an urge to drink or use drugs. You recognize this urge and pause instead of acting on it.

Start the Tape: You envision yourself at the crossroads of a decision – to give in to the urge or to stay committed to your recovery. Visualize the immediate effects of giving in to your urge. How would you feel right afterward?

Play the Tape Forward: Extend your visualization to the hours and days following the indulgence in the urge. What are the potential consequences? Consider impacts on your health, emotional well-being, relationships, and progress in recovery. This might include losing control, engaging in risky behaviors, disappointing loved ones, and feelings of guilt or shame.

Acknowledging the Ripple Effect: Continue playing the tape forward. Consider how giving in to the urge impacts your personal and professional life, health, relationships, and personal growth.

Reflect on Your Values and Goals: Contemplate how the actions you visualized align (or don't align) with your values and recovery goals. How would giving in affect your life goals?

Make a Conscious Decision: With this comprehensive foresight, make a conscious decision. Ask yourself, "Is the momentary satisfaction worth the potential consequences?"

INTEGRATING PLAYING THE TAPE IN DAILY RECOVERY

Routine Practice: Regularly practice this technique to strengthen your decision-making skills, even in moments of minor temptation.

Journaling: After using the technique, jot down your observations and decisions in a journal. Reflect on what you learned about your triggers and decision-making process.

Seeking Support: Discuss your experiences using this technique in therapy or support groups to gain additional insights and support.

Combining with Other Strategies: Use 'Play the Tape Through' with other recovery tools like mindfulness, urge surfing, and support networks for a comprehensive approach.

By consistently applying the 'Play the Tape Through' technique, you empower yourself to make choices that protect and advance your recovery. This tool offers more than just a glimpse into the future; it provides a pathway to create it, aligning your actions with your long-term goals and the life you aspire to live in recovery.

“VISUALIZE THIS THING THAT YOU WANT, SEE IT, FEEL IT, BELIEVE IN IT. MAKE YOUR MENTAL BLUE PRINT, AND BEGIN TO BUILD.” — ROBERT COLLIER.

EXERCISE: PRACTICE PLAYING THE TAPE THROUGH

Objective: To retrospectively apply the 'Playing the Tape Through' technique to a past urge, understanding how it could have helped make a more informed and supportive decision for your recovery.

Recall a Past Urge: Think about a recent or significant past instance where you experienced a strong urge to drink or use substances.

Describe the Urge and Setting: Write down the details of this situation. What was the setting? What triggered the urge?

Start the Tape at the Urge: Begin the mental tape at the moment you felt the urge. Imagine you decided to give in to this urge.

Play Forward the Immediate Actions: Visualize what would have happened immediately after giving in. What actions would you have taken? How would you have felt physically and emotionally?

Consider the Short-term Consequences: Reflect on the potential short-term consequences of these actions. How would they have affected your emotional state, relationships, and self-esteem?

EXERCISE: PRACTICE PLAYING THE TAPE THROUGH (CONTINUED)

Visualize the Long-term Impact: Extend the tape to the long-term implications. How could this decision have affected your recovery journey, health, career, and personal growth?

Acknowledge the Positive Aspects at Risk: Think about the positive elements you value in your life – relationships, achievements, health, and self-respect. How would they have been at risk?

Reflect on the Learning: Write down what insights you gain from this exercise. How could ‘Playing the Tape Through’ have changed your response to the urge? How might it influence your future decision-making in recovery?

“DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE CONDITIONS ARE PERFECT TO BEGIN. BEGINNING MAKES THE CONDITIONS PERFECT.” – ALAN COHEN