



# Urge Surfing

An urge is defined as an impulse to act (Harris, 2019). Turner, Welches, & Conti, (2014) argue that an urge is an impulse to indulge in a behavior that provides instant relief or gratification, but has long-term negative consequences.

When a person experiences an urge, they have two choices. They can either act upon it or not (Harris, 2019). Urge surfing is a technique used in Mindfulness-Based Sobriety (MBS) (Turner et al., 2014) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (Harris, 2019) to help people learn how to be with an urge without acting impulsively upon it.

The main assumption behind the technique of urge surfing is that urges are transient; they do not last forever, and individuals can therefore “ride them out” (Handel, 2011).

Urges follow a predictable pattern, much like that of an ocean wave, of entering a person's consciousness, increasing in intensity, reaching a peak, and then subsiding before another urge comes (Harris, 2019 & Turner et al., 2014).

It is assumed that individuals have no control over the urge and therefore should not try to resist or fight the urge.

Instead, the person can only control how they react to the urge and can practice being with the urge and nonjudgmentally observe it as it comes, peaks, and subsides

Clients are encouraged to be aware of their personal values and the assumption is that people should only act upon those urges that are in line with their personal values.

Urge surfing operates through a set of basic steps which are observing the urge, acknowledging it, breathing into the urge and making room for it, and nonjudgmentally watching the urge rise, peak, and fall again (Harris, 2019 & Turner et al., 2014).

Individuals are encouraged to practice and develop the skill.

# The Mindfulness Based Practice of Urge Surfing

1. Acknowledge you are having an urge.
2. Notice your thoughts and feelings without trying to change or suppress them. It may be helpful to write these down in a notebook or journal. This may also help to take your mind off the urge - every moment you can delay the urge you increase the chance of the urge weakening on its own.
3. Be gentle with yourself and offer yourself grace. Remember, it is okay to have urges - they are natural reactions to addictions and habits. Some discomfort is OKAY. You don't have to change it. An urge is a feeling, not a "must," meaning you can have the feeling and decide not to act. All urges are temporary - and just like any other feeling, it too will pass on its own.