

W.A.I.T. – Why Am I Talking?

Mindful communication assessment

Printable worksheet · 5 parts

Name _____ Date _____

The Pause Between Breaths: W.A.I.T. Assessment

Reactive Communication in Recovery Self-Assessment

In active addiction, substances often served as artificial regulators of emotional reactivity or as excuses for communication failures. In recovery, the absence of these substances can initially leave you vulnerable to heightened reactivity without the development of new skills.

WAIT

What Am I Thinking? • Why Am I Talking?

The Pause Between Breaths: Just as there is a natural space between inhaling and exhaling, there can be a purposeful space between stimulus and response in our interactions. This pause creates room for choice rather than automatic reaction.

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"The pause between stimulus and response, between breath and breath—this is where recovery lives, one WAIT at a time."

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PART 1 OF 5

The WAIT Practice Framework

W

What Am I Thinking?

Pause to identify automatic thoughts arising in response to triggers

A

Am I Activated?

Recognize physical signs of emotional activation

I

Intention Check

Clarify your purpose in communicating at this moment

T

Take Mindful Action

Respond from awareness rather than reactivity

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PART 2 OF 5

Self-Assessment

For each statement, choose the option that best describes your experience:

Part 1: Reactive Communication Patterns

Part 2: Mindful Communication Skills

☐ Calculate My Scores

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PART 3 OF 5

Self-Reflection Questions

Understanding Reactive Patterns

Communication in Recovery

The WAIT Practice

Growth Opportunities

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PART 4 OF 5

Action Planning

Based on your assessment results, create a personalized action plan to develop more mindful communication skills:

Skill to Develop:

Example: Creating a pause before responding to criticism

Current Challenge:

Describe the specific challenge you face with this communication pattern...

Triggers and Obstacles:

What situations or people trigger this reactive pattern? What makes it hard to change?

SMART Goal:

Create a Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound goal...

Action Steps:

List specific, concrete steps you'll take to develop this skill...

Accountability Measures:

How will you track progress? Who will support you?

Remember: Progress, Not Perfection

Developing mindful communication in recovery is a gradual process. Each time you practice creating a pause between stimulus and response, you strengthen new neural pathways. Be patient with yourself and celebrate small victories along the way.

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PART 5 OF 5

The Neurobiological Connection

Understanding the brain science behind reactive communication can help motivate and inform recovery practices:

Amygdala Activation

The brain's threat-detection system can trigger emotional reactions before the prefrontal cortex has time to engage, creating the experience of "speaking before thinking."

Neural Pathways

Years of reactive communication create deep neural pathways. These patterns persist into sobriety but can be rewired through consistent practice.

Stress Response

Triggering situations activate the sympathetic nervous system (fight-flight-freeze), creating physical symptoms that fuel reactivity.

Recovery Brain Training

Practices like WAIT strengthen prefrontal cortex function and create new neural pathways, gradually making mindful communication more natural.

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