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HALT: The Dangers of Hunger, Anger, Loneliness, and Tiredness

In After Treatment, All Articles, During Treatment



HALT Click image for Animation

Click Image for Animation about HALT

The key to maintaining a life in recovery is a combination of self-care and self-awareness. By taking care of ourselves and recognizing certain signs, we can prevent relapse. One of the tools some people use is HALT. This handy acronym reminds us to take a moment (HALT) and ask ourselves if we are feeling Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired. It seems simple enough, but when these basic needs are not met, we are susceptible to self-destructive behaviors including relapse. Fortunately, hunger, anger, loneliness, and tiredness are easy to address and serve as a warning system before things reach a breaking point.

Hunger can be physical or emotional need. Understanding the need to eat is fairly straightforward. However, we should remind ourselves not just to eat, but to eat well. Meeting nutritional needs allows our bodies to operate to the highest potential, and will keep up feeling better. However, when we HALT and assess our situation, we can describe a hunger for less tangible things such as affection, accomplishment, and understanding. This is why having a support system is so important. Those who care for and love you will give you food for your heart, and ease the emotional hunger that you're feeling. To ease hunger, do not turn to destructive habits or negative people. This will not fill the physical or emotional emptiness that you're feeling. Instead, find something wholesome to eat with a good friend or loved one.

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Anger is a normal, healthy emotion to experience. The important thing is to HALT, and take time to understand what is causing your anger, and know how to properly express it. Perhaps you are angry with a situation, a person, or maybe yourself. It might be one little thing that spins out of control, or an ongoing event. No matter what is bothering you, assess whether or not you can confront what is angering you. Calmly talk to the person you have an issue with or fix the problem you're having. If what is angering you is out of your control or you aren't ready to confront the issue, try to express yourself in other ways. Exercising, punching a pillow, or even cleaning are active ways to get rid of the excess energy anger brings with it. Creative projects such as painting, singing, or writing might be a better way for you to dispel your anger. Meditation or prayer can be way to calm yourself anywhere and at any time. Finally, talking to someone who isn't involved in the situation can be a very useful way to think think through your anger. Regardless of how you expel your anger, make sure you acknowledge it and reflect upon its causes so you can then release it in constructive, not destructive, ways.

Loneliness can occur when we are by ourselves or when surrounded by many people. We isolate ourselves when we don't feel like others can understand us, withdrawing into ourselves out of fear or doubt. Being alone is a self-imposed situation. If you're feeling lonely, HALT and ask yourself if you have reached out to anyone lately. Your support system is there for you when you feel depressed, overwhelmed, or anxious, or if you just someone to talk to. Going to a meeting, calling a friend, or visiting a loved one might be just what you need. You can also simply go out in the world by taking a walk, running errands, or going to a coffee shop. Rather than hiding from everyone and returning to substance abuse, reach out and connect with others who want to see you happy and healthy.

Tiredness takes a toll on our bodies, mind, and spirit. When our days are filled with errands, meetings, and activities it is easy to ignore how tired we become. However, running on low energy compromises our ability to think and our capacity to cope. Taking the time to HALT is particularly important when you're tired. Satisfying the physical need to sleep, rest, and rejuvenate is critical to keeping healthy

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emotionally, and spiritually. A good night's sleep or a leisurely nap may be all you need to change your outlook for the day. If your day is particularly hectic, take a short break by listening to music, going for a walk, or simply taking a deep breath. Maybe it's been a rough couple of days or week that requires a trip to your favorite park, movie theater, or restaurant. Recharging your body, mind, and spirit will help you get through tough moments and maintain your sobriety.

HALT can serve as a reminder to all of us that we need to take care of our basic needs every day. For those recovering from addiction, paying closer attention to your feelings will help you prevent relapse. Take a moment each day to check in with yourself. Ask, "Am I hungry, angry, lonely, or tired?" Honestly assessing how you feel takes only a minute. Doing so will make the everyday stress of life easier to deal with and help you maintain sobriety.