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Impulsivity Clinical Practice Workbook

A clinically branded, function-preserving edition retaining the original exercises, psychoeducation, checklists, logs, planning tools, and response space.

DSM-5-TR · ICD-11 CLINICAL ALIGNMENT

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How to use this workbook

- Use this workbook selectively and collaboratively; it is educational and does not replace individualized assessment, diagnosis, treatment, medical care, or crisis services.
- Skip, pause, or modify any activity that increases distress, danger, shame, or loss of functioning. Adapt language for culture, disability, neurodivergence, health, resources, and lived context.
- Ratings in this workbook are reflection tools unless a named, validated measure and interpretation are explicitly provided.

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Impulsivity Self-Assessment

The following are common signs you might be struggling with impulsivity. Rate each statement on a scale from 1-5 (1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree”):

Statement	Rate (1-5)
1. “I often make decisions on the spur of the moment without considering the consequences.”	1-2-3-4-5
2. “I frequently interrupt others when they are speaking because I feel the urge to say what's on my mind right away.”	1-2-3-4-5
3. “I tend to spend money recklessly, buying things without thinking about whether I can afford them or really need them.”	1-2-3-4-5
4. “I often start new projects without finishing old ones because I lose interest quickly.”	1-2-3-4-5
5. “I find it difficult to wait my turn in group situations and tend to jump in without being called on.”	1-2-3-4-5
6. “When I feel angry or excited, I usually react immediately and don’t stop to think about what I’m doing.”	1-2-3-4-5
7. “I engage in risky behaviors more often than others, like driving fast or engaging in unsafe sexual activities.”	1-2-3-4-5
8. “I tend to blurt out answers in meetings or during conversations without fully forming my thoughts.”	1-2-3-4-5
9. “I frequently regret things I say or do almost immediately after the moment has passed.”	1-2-3-4-5

Score: _____/45

The score reflects the severity and impact of your impulsivity.

1. What statements resonated with you more than the others?

2. Which of the identified patterns or habits from the assessment do you feel most interested in working on changing?

Impulsivity and You

1. What are some recent examples where you acted on impulse without thinking about the consequences?

2. In which areas of your life does impulsivity appear most frequently (e.g., financial decisions, relationships, work tasks)?

3. What have been the short-term and long-term consequences of your impulsive actions? How have these consequences affected your life?

Impulsive Action	Consequences	Impact

Identifying Impulsive Triggers

Situational Triggers

1. Think about times when you acted impulsively. What were you doing just before? What kind of situation was it? List these situations and describe what about them may have influenced your impulsivity.

Emotional Triggers

2. Reflect on your emotional state during times you've been impulsive. What emotions were you feeling? List these emotions and consider why they might lead to impulsivity.

Environmental Triggers

3. Consider if certain places, people, or times exacerbate your impulsive tendencies. List these environmental factors and note why they might be triggering.

4. Look for patterns in your listed triggers. Do certain combinations of factors more frequently lead to impulsivity?

5. For each major trigger, brainstorm potential ways to reduce exposure or increase your control over the situation.

Delay Tactics

Exercise 1. Choose a small reward that you can give yourself (e.g., a piece of candy, a short break). Set a timer for a short period (e.g., 5 minutes) during which you must wait before you can have the reward. Increase the delay time incrementally with each successful attempt.

Reward	Delay Time	Reflection on Experience

Exercise 2. Place a tempting item in sight but set a rule that you cannot use or consume it for a set period. Reflect on your feelings and strategies for resisting the temptation. Increase the delay time incrementally with each successful attempt.

Temptation	Delay Time	Reflection on Experience

Exercise 3. Next time you want to make a non-essential purchase, wait for a predetermined period (e.g., 48 hours) before buying. Decide if you still want or need the item after the delay.

Item Considered	Delay Period	Decision After Delay

Exercise 4. Identify a long-term goal that requires you to save money, time, or resources. Plan short-term sacrifices that will contribute to this goal, such as saving a small amount of money each week instead of spending it.

Long-Term Goal	Short-Term Sacrifices	Benefits Envisioned

The Pause and Plan Technique

1. When you identify a trigger, consciously decide to stop all action and take a deep breath. Count slowly to ten, focus on your breathing, or engage in another brief mindfulness exercise to center yourself.
2. Think about the consequences of potential actions you could take in response to the trigger.
3. Choose an action that aligns with your long-term goals and is likely to result in a positive outcome.

Impulse	Consequences	Chosen Action

4. After implementing your chosen action, reflect on the outcome.
Consider what worked well and what could be improved for next time.

Commit to applying this technique in everyday situations, not just when
you feel highly impulsive.

Behavioral Replacement Strategies

1. List behaviors that are typically impulsive and problematic. Describe the immediate outcomes of these behaviors.

Impulsive Behavior	Immediate Outcome

2. For each impulsive behavior listed, identify what need or desire you were trying to fulfill (e.g., stress relief, attention, boredom relief). Write down healthier ways to fulfill these needs. The following are some examples:

Impulsive Behavior	Underlying Need	Healthier Alternatives
<i>e.g. Impulsive Shopping</i>	<i>Seeking pleasure or comfort</i>	<i>Set a budget; use a wish list to delay purchases; engage in free or low-cost activities that bring joy, such as hiking or visiting public parks.</i>

Impulsive Behavior	Underlying Need	Healthier Alternatives

3. Keep a journal or log of each time you successfully implement a replacement behavior, and note any challenges faced.

Situation	Successes	Challenges

Setting Up Barriers to Impulsivity

Physical Barriers

1. Identify situations where physical barriers could prevent impulsive behavior (e.g., removing credit cards from your wallet to prevent impulsive spending).

Impulsive Behavior	Physical Barrier

Emotional Barriers

- Identify emotions that trigger impulsive behaviors (e.g., anger, excitement). List emotional regulation strategies that can act as barriers.

The following are some suggestions:

- ☐ Use deep breathing techniques.
- ☐ Write down thoughts and feelings to process emotions more clearly.
- ☐ Allocate a specific time to focus on worries, limiting their impact throughout the day.
- ☐ Engage in regular physical activity to reduce stress.
- ☐ Take short breaks during emotional escalations to prevent impulsive decisions.

Trigger Emotion	Coping Strategy

Cognitive Barriers

- Identify impulsive thoughts that precede impulsive actions. Develop questioning techniques to challenge these thoughts. The following are some examples:

- Is there actual evidence for my thought, or am I just assuming?
- What would I tell a friend who had this thought?
- Is this thought based on feelings or facts?
- Am I confusing a "possibility" with a "certainty"?
- Am I having this thought out of habit, or do facts support it?
- Am I taking responsibility for something that's not my fault?
- Am I assuming I can do nothing to change my situation?
- What might be another perspective on this situation?
- Am I underestimating my ability to cope with the worst-case scenario?
- If this thought is true, what can I do to cope or deal with it?
- Five years from now, will this situation matter?

Impulsive Thought	Questions to Challenge it

Social Barriers

- Identify trusted individuals who can help you manage impulsivity.

Establish a plan for how these individuals can assist you when they notice impulsive behavior or when you feel an impulse coming on.

Support Person	Role in Managing Impulsivity

Imaginal Exposure

Imaginal Exposure involves mentally exposing oneself to the triggers of impulsive behaviors and rehearsing alternative, healthier responses. This helps individuals reduce the power of impulsive urges. By vividly imagining scenarios where they typically act impulsively and practicing alternative responses, they can begin to weaken the habitual nature of their impulses.

1. First, identify specific situations where you typically feel impulsive urges. Write down these scenarios in detail, including what triggers the impulse, how you feel just before you act, and what the usual outcome is.

Example Scenario:

- **Situation:** *Online shopping when feeling stressed.*
- **Trigger:** *Receiving a promotional email from a favorite store.*
- **Feelings Before Acting:** *Excitement mixed with a sense of urgency.*
- **Usual Outcome:** *Purchasing items I don't need and feeling regretful afterwards.*

Situation:	
Trigger:	
Feelings Before Acting:	
Usual Outcome:	

2. Close your eyes and vividly imagine yourself in one of the scenarios. Try to incorporate all your senses and emotions. Notice everything around you in this mental image—the sights, sounds, and especially how you feel.

3. As you imagine the scenario, identify the thoughts and beliefs that go through your mind right before you act impulsively. Write these down.

Example Thoughts:

- *"I might miss out on a great deal."*
- *"Buying this will make me feel better."*

4. Next, challenge these impulsive thoughts with rational responses. Write these alternative thoughts, focusing on long-term consequences and rational decision-making.

Example Rational Responses:

- *"I don't need this item right now, and saving money will benefit me more in the long run."*
- *"There are healthier ways to cope with stress than shopping."*

5. Plan a different action to take in the imagined scenario. This action should be something constructive and within your control.

Example Alternative Action:

- *"When I receive a promotional email, I will delete it immediately or unsubscribe to reduce temptation."*
- *"I will take a 10-minute walk or practice deep breathing when I feel the urge to shop impulsively."*

6. Imagine yourself performing this alternative action in the scenario. Visualize yourself handling the situation calmly and making a healthy choice.

7. After the imaginal exposure, reflect on what it felt like to choose a different action. What emotions did you experience? How difficult was it to resist the impulse? Write down your reflections.

Regular practice is key to making this exercise effective. Aim to go through this worksheet at least once a week, or whenever you anticipate facing a triggering situation.

Mindfulness Exercises

Basic Breathing Meditation

- Find a quiet place and sit comfortably.
- Close your eyes and take deep, slow breaths.
- Focus your attention on the sensation of breathing in and out. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to your breath.

Duration: Start with 5 minutes daily, gradually increasing to 10-20 minutes.

Body Scan Meditation

- Lie down or sit comfortably.
- Start at the top of your head and slowly move your attention through different parts of your body. Notice any tension or discomfort without trying to change it.
- As you move your focus down to your toes, breathe into each part of your body, releasing tension with each exhale.

Duration: Perform this exercise for 10-15 minutes daily.

Observing Thoughts

- Sit comfortably and close your eyes, focusing on your breath.
- Allow your thoughts to flow freely. Observe each thought as it comes and goes, imagining it as a leaf floating down a stream.

- Whenever you find yourself getting pulled into a thought, gently return your focus to your breath.

Duration: Practice for 10 minutes daily.

- In conversations, focus fully on the other person, avoiding the urge to think about your response while they are speaking.

- Notice the tone, pace, and volume of their voice, as well as any pauses or silences.

- Respond thoughtfully, reflecting on the information shared before speaking.

Mindful Eating

- Choose one meal per day to eat mindfully.

- Focus on the experience of eating—notice the colors, textures, flavors, and smells of your food.

- Chew slowly and pause between bites, appreciating each moment of the eating experience.

Visual Imagery for Impulse Management

1. Imagine a scene where you successfully manage your impulse.

2. Include details such as the environment, your actions, what you say, and how others might respond.

3. Add sensory details to each scenario—what you see, hear, feel, and even smell.

Focus on feelings of calm and control during the visualization.

Set aside a few minutes each day to go through your visualizations.

Note any improvements in impulse management or areas that need more focus.

Problem Solving Model

1. Clearly state the problem. Identify why it's a problem and whom it affects.

2. Brainstorm a list of all possible solutions, regardless of feasibility at this stage. Assess each solution's pros and cons and select the best option.

Possible Solutions	Pros	Cons

3. Choose the solution that best addresses the problem without leading to significant new problems.

4. Put the chosen solution into action. Plan how you will implement the solution. Assign tasks and set deadlines if applicable.

Stress Management Techniques

1. Reflect on the past week and identify moments when you felt most stressed. List the situations, people, or activities that trigger stress.

2. List any techniques or activities you currently use to relieve stress. Evaluate the effectiveness of these techniques in reducing stress and impulsiveness.

Strategy	Effectiveness (1-10)

3. Choose new stress management techniques to try. The following are some suggestions. Check off the ones that may be helpful or add more to the list:

- ☐ Practice slow, deep breaths to activate the body's relaxation response.
- ☐ Use visualization techniques to imagine yourself in a peaceful setting.
- ☐ Incorporate activities like walking, running, or cycling to reduce stress hormones.
- ☐ Write down your thoughts and feelings to clarify your mind.
- ☐ Prioritize tasks and create a schedule to manage your time more effectively.
- ☐ Spend time with friends and family who provide emotional support.
- ☐ Listen to calming or uplifting music to manage your mood.
- ☐ Escape into a book to distract yourself from stressful thoughts.
- ☐ Express yourself through drawing, painting, or crafting.
- ☐ Connect with nature and enjoy the calming effects of tending to plants.
- ☐ Watch a funny movie or show to trigger laughter and relieve stress.
- ☐ Spend time with a pet to take advantage of the therapeutic effects of animal companionship.
- ☐ Schedule regular massages to reduce muscle tension and improve relaxation.
- ☐ Reduce your intake of substances that can exacerbate anxiety and stress.
- ☐ Engage in projects that can provide a sense of accomplishment.
- ☐ Keep your brain engaged and interested by learning something new.
- ☐ Take breaks from electronic devices to reduce information overload.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

4. At the end of each day, rate your overall stress level and any impulsive behaviors. Note any correlations between reduced stress levels and decreased impulsiveness.

Date	Stress Level (1-10)	Impulsive Behaviors	Notes

2026 Clinical Alignment

DSM-5-TR (including Sept. 2025 update) · ICD-11 CDDR / 2026 MMS

Classification status

- DSM-5-TR: No diagnosis under this title · No diagnosis is established by the title.
- ICD-11 CDDR: · No diagnosis is established by the title.
- This workbook is non-diagnostic. A title, checklist, or completed activity never establishes a diagnosis.

Pages requiring the updated interpretation

- The audit identified source pages 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 18, 20, 21, 27, 28. The statements below supersede incompatible diagnostic, scoring, safety, or resource wording on those pages.

Diagnostic and differential limits

- Assess duration, distress/functional impairment, cultural and medical context, substance/medication effects, and relevant differential diagnoses before assigning any diagnosis.

Document-specific corrections

- Pages [2, 4] · Frame 'Impulsivity' using the DSM/ICD status below; add duration, impairment, exclusions, and differentials without reproducing criteria. The title alone must never be treated as a diagnosis.
- Pages [1, 2, 3, 4, 28] · Treat the Impulsivity ratings/checklists as author-created reflection tools only. Remove unsupported severity bands, cutoffs, totals, or language suggesting diagnostic validity; label response anchors and recall period explicitly.
- Pages [1, 3, 18, 20] · Use only within competence and after individualized assessment of acute risk, medical/substance contributors, functional impairment, culture, accessibility, and readiness; stop or adapt exercises that increase destabilization or unsafe behavior. Apply this specifically to the workbook's Impulsivity Self-Assessment, Impulsivity and You, Identifying Impulsive Triggers, Delay Tactics sections.
- Pages [1, 3, 9, 10, 11, 20, 21, 27] · Review all medical assertions in Impulsivity with a qualified medical professional; distinguish psychoeducation from individualized advice and add referral thresholds, contraindications, and medication/procedure cautions appropriate to this population.

Measures, scoring, and permissions

- Treat the Impulsivity ratings/checklists as author-created reflection tools only. Remove unsupported severity bands, cutoffs, totals, or language suggesting diagnostic validity; label response anchors and recall period explicitly. custom/unvalidated unless evidence is supplied confirm no third-party item wording was adapted

Intervention scope and contraindications

- Use only within competence and after individualized assessment of acute risk, medical/substance contributors, functional impairment, culture, accessibility, and readiness; stop or adapt exercises that increase destabilization or unsafe behavior.

Crisis and current resources

- For immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department. In the U.S., call or text 988 or use 988lifeline.org. Outside the U.S., use verified local emergency and crisis services. A workbook is not a crisis service or safety plan.

Authoritative references

- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/updates-to-dsm/updates-to-dsm-5-tr-criteria-text>
- <https://icd.who.int/browse/2026-01/mms/en>
- <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240077263>
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