STRATEGY: Defeat urges with DEADS

You can knock down urges DEADS! This is an easy way to remember strategies when faced with an urge. Urges can muddy your cognitive abilities, making it hard to think clearly. DEADS can help you think clearly about how to deal with the urge, no matter how intense.

D = Deny / Delay (Don’t give in to the urge) — Remind yourself, repeatedly if necessary, this urge will pass. Refuse to give into it — no matter what!

E = Escape the trigger — If you know what is causing the urge, leave immediately.

A = Avoid the trigger — You can keep track of when you get urges using the urge log (Figure 4.4). Urges can occur routinely as part of your daily pattern. If you know you will be in a situation that triggers an urge, plan to avoid the situation. The earlier in your recovery that you identify high-risk stimuli that trigger urges, the earlier you can avoid those situations or escape when unexpectedly faced with them.

Attack the urge — Dispute irrational beliefs (DIBs, page 46) and obsessive thoughts, or do an ABC (page 39). Practice relaxation or meditation (page 67).

Accept the urge — Tell yourself the urge will pass soon and that if you don’t give in to it, the next urge will be less intense, and they will become less frequent. You may want to sit quietly by yourself to surf the urge: feel it build then fade while you acknowledge your thoughts and feelings about the urge, the present, and your future. Remember, don’t turn the urge into a bigger issue by pretending it doesn’t exist.

D = Distract yourself with an activity — Do something: go for a walk, read a book, or watch TV. If you’re putting your mind on something else, then it can’t focus on the urge. Simple activities, such as counting objects or saying the alphabet backward also can fill up your attention. Do something, even if you don’t want to (clean the fridge, walk the dog). Motivation may follow the action.

S = Substitute for addictive thinking — Send in healthy substitute thoughts to squeeze out the urge:

Replace an irrational belief (This urge will kill me) with a rational one (This urge is bad but it won’t kill me and it will pass).

Substitute feeling down and alone by going to the gym or stopping by the SROL chat room.
Identify your strategies for successfully coping with urges.

**D** = Deny / Delay (Don’t give in to the urge)

How long do urges last if you don’t give in? How bad do they get before fading? What can you quickly do that will help you deny them?

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**E** = Escape

What triggers can you get away from? What can you do to escape a trigger’s influence?

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**A** = Avoid, accept or attack

What can you do to avoid urges? What techniques or strategies have helped you “to be” with the urge until it passes without giving in? How do they make you feel and think that is different from how you think and feel when you’re not having an urge? What tools or words can you use to attack the urge?

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**D** = Distract yourself with an activity

What activities have you considered, written down, or done to take your mind off the urge and to fill the time that you used to spend on your addictive activity?

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**S** = Substitute for addictive thinking

What thoughts can/have you developed to dispute the illogical thinking that comes with urges? What healthy activities can you do to replace down thinking and feeling?

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