The tool: Hierarchy of Values Worksheet
Determine what is MOST important to YOU.

Effectively used for which of the 4 points?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Motivation</th>
<th>Coping with Urges</th>
<th>Problem Solving</th>
<th>Lifestyle Balance</th>
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A. Take a few minutes or so and write down a list of things that are important to you:

B. From this list, look through and choose those which you consider to be the “Top Five”... the five things you consider to be the MOST IMPORTANT to you (in no particular order):

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Joe Gerstein, a generous man who was a major player in the founding of SMART Recovery®, served as its first President and currently a member of the Board of Directors has a great little tool that he uses with people in the SMART Recovery® meetings he facilitates. It is called the “Hierarchy of Values, and goes something like this:

Take a few minutes or so and make a list of the things that are important to you. Once that is completed, pick out the five things that you would place at the very top of the list—the five things that are MOST important to you. There is no "right" or "wrong" answers, as these are the things that are most important to YOU!

(Note: If you haven't already done so, please take the time to create your own “Top Five” list BEFORE you read on. This exercise will have a greater impact if you take the time to determine and write out your “Top Five” before you continue reading.)

For the purposes of this discussion, here's a sample list (in no order of importance):

1. Family
2. Friends
3. Happiness
4. Health
5. Independence; self-sufficiency; well-being

What’s missing? Is it missing from your list as well?

What Joe has noticed is how rarely people put alcohol (or whatever other DOC) in the list of the things that they deem “most important” to them. Yet often their actions would suggest otherwise… that it was the most important thing in their lives!

When we sit down and really think about what we value most in our lives, it's (most likely) safe to say that our DOC isn't one of them. But yet every time that we use, we are placing those things in jeopardy; we are gambling with the things that we treasure and hold dear, putting them at risk with the potential of losing them.

So effectively, when we choose (and yes, it IS a choice) to drink or drug (or whatever other maladaptive behavior), we are choosing our drug of choice (DOC) over the things we value most! Even if that choice is made mindlessly or without thought, it doesn't change anything—our DOC is being chosen over what we deem to be most important!

This happens because the behavior has become such a familiar habit that we often don't actually think about what we are doing! We do things automatically, without consideration of the potential consequences of our actions. In a sense, we are living a part of our lives on autopilot. By being mindfully aware of our thinking, we can begin to change that automatic unhelpful thinking.

It’s important to realize that this lack of “mindful awareness” is not limited to drinking, drugging or other maladaptive behaviors, as automatic responses occur in our lives quite frequently—often on a daily basis.
HIERARCHY OF VALUES
By Lorie (Hammer) Hammerstrom and Jim (GJBXVI) Braastad

Following are a couple of examples* of mindless NON-thinking that are not DOC related:

EXAMPLE #1:

I purchased the house I'm currently living in back in 2005. While moving in, I was carrying boxes down the stairs into the basement. On the first trip down, I was piled high with boxes; though not overly heavy, they blocked my vision of the steps. Not a problem... as it was something I'd done on many different occasions at many other locations. Typically, there are 12 stairs (plus the landings) in a basement stairwell, which is what my prior home had. Having had gone up and down them a countless number of times, those 12 steps had become automatically "programmed" into my mind. Little did I know that in my "new" home, an additional layer of block had been put on the basement to gain additional height to the basement ceiling. That extra layer of block created the need of an additional step in the staircase. So there I was, carrying those boxes down the stairs and I automatically thought I had reached the point where the basement floor was. NOT! That unexpected "extra" step caused me to trip and fall. I suffered a twisted ankle, a big old knob on my head (lucky it was my head... otherwise I might have got hurt!), a bruised ego and some broken items in the boxes! That mishap made me become "mindfully (and painfully) aware" of my new surroundings.

EXAMPLE #2:

This example relates to the very first house I lived in after moving from my parent's home at age 18. For some unknown reason, the light switch for the bathroom in that house was located by the door on the OUTSIDE wall, not the usual location inside the door. Ever since then, there have been times where I still catch myself trying to flip on a light switch (that isn't there) on the wall outside of a bathroom. Though this usually only happens at night when I'm half-asleep, we're still talking an automatic response and/or habit from 35+ years (and 4 different houses) ago!

These are only a couple of personal, real-life incidences of doing things automatically and without thought. What examples and occurrences can you find in your own life? Regardless, these examples of automatic responses and/or actions illustrate how one needs to be mindfully aware of our individual thought processes.

While the examples provided were (for the most part) harmless and may have no real effect on the things on the "Top 5" list, this may not be the case when there is an “automatic response” relating to a maladaptive behavior. This "mindfulness" is VERY pertinent and important in the process of change, as we need to become fully aware of our thoughts and responses related to our DOC, especially those thoughts and actions that have become "automatic" to us.

By becoming both watchful and aware of our thoughts, we can begin to change our automatic, unhelpful and often self-destructive thinking.

*Examples provided by Jim (GJBXVI) Braastad