

# Short-Term Wins vs. Long-Term Goals: What's Worth It?

## ASPIRE Impact Network Resource Worksheet

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### INTRODUCTION

We all face choices between immediate satisfaction and long-term benefits. Whether it's spending money now or saving for the future, using substances for quick relief or maintaining sobriety, or choosing between momentary pleasure and lasting well-being, these decisions shape our lives. This worksheet will help you understand your patterns and make choices that better align with what matters most to you.

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### MY DECISION PATTERNS

**Instructions:** Think about recent decisions you've made and check the patterns you notice.

**When making decisions, I tend to:**

- Choose immediate satisfaction over long-term benefits
- Struggle with delayed gratification
- Make different choices when I'm emotional versus calm
- Regret impulsive decisions after the fact
- Find it hard to stick with long-term plans
- Give up long-term goals when they get difficult
- Make better decisions when I have support
- Notice that small choices add up over time
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**The pattern that affects me most strongly is:**

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**This pattern shows up most often in these areas of my life:**

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### THE VALUE OF NOW VS. LATER

**Instructions:** For each of these common trade-offs, circle where you usually land on the scale.

**Spending money now vs. Saving for the future** Always choose now 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
Always choose future

**Immediate pleasure vs. Health and wellness** Always choose now 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always  
choose future

**Quick fix vs. Addressing root causes** Always choose now 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always choose  
future

**Comfort zone vs. Growth opportunities** Always choose now 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Always  
choose future

**Social acceptance now vs. Authentic self-expression** Always choose now 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
10 Always choose future

**Area where I most struggle with choosing long-term benefits:**

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**Area where I'm best at choosing long-term benefits:**

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## **ANALYZING A SHORT-TERM VS. LONG-TERM DECISION**

**Instructions:** Think about a specific decision you're facing or recently faced.

**The decision I'm considering:**

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**Short-term option:**

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**Benefits of the short-term option:**

- Immediate gain: \_\_\_\_\_
- Emotional payoff: \_\_\_\_\_
- Avoids discomfort: \_\_\_\_\_
- Social advantage: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Costs of the short-term option:**

- Long-term consequences: \_\_\_\_\_
- Missed opportunities: \_\_\_\_\_
- Impact on self-image: \_\_\_\_\_
- Effect on relationships: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Long-term option:**

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**Benefits of the long-term option:**

- Future gain: \_\_\_\_\_
- Alignment with values: \_\_\_\_\_
- Growth opportunity: \_\_\_\_\_
- Long-term relationships: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Costs of the long-term option:**

- Immediate sacrifice: \_\_\_\_\_
- Current discomfort: \_\_\_\_\_
- Delayed gratification: \_\_\_\_\_
- Social challenges: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**What matters most to me in this decision:**

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**THE DECISION-MAKING ENVIRONMENT**

**Instructions:** Our environment strongly influences which choices feel easier. Assess your current environment.

**My environment makes short-term choices easier when:**

- I'm around certain people
- I'm in certain locations
- I have easy access to temptations
- I'm tired, hungry, or stressed
- I'm bored or understimulated
- I have cash/money available
- I'm alone with my thoughts
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**My environment supports long-term choices when:**

- I'm around supportive people
- I've removed easy temptations
- I've had enough rest and food
- I have visual reminders of my goals
- I've made commitments to others
- I've created systems that make good choices easier
- I've scheduled regular check-ins on my progress
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Changes I could make to my environment to support better choices:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

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## **THE VOICE OF FUTURE ME**

**Instructions:** Imagining your future self can help bridge the gap between present desires and future outcomes.

**One year from now, Future Me would want me to know:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Five years from now, Future Me would thank me for:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Future Me would be disappointed if I continued to:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Future Me would be proud of me for having the courage to:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**A message from Future Me about what really matters:**

\_\_\_\_\_

## **FINDING THE BALANCE**

**Instructions:** Not all short-term choices are bad, and sometimes long-term goals need to be reconsidered. Finding the right balance is key.

**Short-term pleasures that actually support my long-term well-being:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Short-term choices I can enjoy in moderation without compromising my future:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Long-term goals that might need reconsideration or flexibility:**

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**Ways to build small rewards into my path toward long-term goals:**

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**How I can celebrate progress along the way:**

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## **OVERCOMING COMMON OBSTACLES**

**Instructions:** Check the obstacles that affect your ability to choose long-term benefits, and consider strategies to overcome them.

**Obstacle: Difficulty visualizing the future**

- Create a vision board with images of long-term goals
- Write letters to your future self
- Talk to people who have achieved similar goals
- Break down distant goals into visible milestones
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Obstacle: Strong emotional states**

- Practice pausing when emotions are high
- Develop awareness of emotional triggers
- Create a plan for high-risk emotional states
- Learn emotional regulation techniques
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Obstacle: Discounting future rewards**

- Set up automatic systems (savings, etc.)
- Create concrete representations of abstract future benefits
- Connect with your deeper values regularly
- Practice gratitude for past choices that benefited you
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Obstacle: Lack of support system**

- Find at least one accountability partner
- Join groups with similar long-term goals
- Share your goals with supportive people
- Seek professional guidance when needed
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**My biggest obstacle and how I'll address it:**

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## DECISION-MAKING PRACTICE: THE WORTH-IT CALCULATION

**Instructions:** Use this framework to evaluate whether a short-term choice is "worth it" in light of your long-term goals.

**Short-term choice I'm considering:**

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**Connected long-term goal:**

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**How this choice might affect my long-term goal:**

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**On a scale of 1-10, how important is the short-term benefit to me? \_\_\_\_\_**

**On a scale of 1-10, how important is the long-term goal to me? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Is there a compromise that could satisfy both needs?**

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**My decision and reasoning:**

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## MY COMMITMENT TO BALANCED CHOICES

**One area where I want to make more long-term-oriented choices:**

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**Specific strategies I'll use:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

**How I'll remind myself of what matters most:**

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**How I'll reward myself for making tough long-term choices:**

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**How I'll handle setbacks when I choose short-term over long-term:**

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**REMEMBER**

- Both short-term and long-term thinking have their place
  - The goal is choices that align with your deeper values, not perfection
  - Small choices compound over time—both positive and negative
  - Your capacity for delayed gratification strengthens with practice
  - Creating supportive environments makes better choices easier
  - Compassion toward yourself helps you learn from all choices
  - What feels "worth it" changes as you grow and your perspective expands
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