



# JLW

## TIP #3

EMBRACE THE LAUGH TRACK ... THE SITCOM METHOD

The next tip is about working through those impulses you have that sometimes lead to behaviors you'd like to change within yourself. Think things like texting your ex or looking at their socials, checking your weight often, any substance use, or immediately replying to your boss' non-urgent emails at 9pm. Any of those sound familiar or trigger thoughts of another behavior you'd like to curb? Yes? Good, use that. No? Well, read on anyway because honestly I don't believe you.

I love this tip because it's probably the easiest for me to explain and possibly the easiest for my clients to conceptualize. So, here we go. I'll just use the example of the ex and their social media; because, honestly, we've probably all been there.

Ok, so it's a weeknight and you're on your couch watching tv and ALL you want to do is look at your ex's Instagram. Why? It's not because you're looking to find something that'll upset you ... it's the opposite. You're searching for that sweet relief you'll get when you find nothing that'll upset you at all. So what's the problem? The obsession (yes, I stand by calling it an obsession) with your ex's social media is simply an impulse that your brain has convinced you will make you feel better when you're hurting. Sure, does it feel good in the moment to know they haven't moved on or maybe they're less than happy? Sure. But does it actually assist YOU in moving forward? Absolutely not. Go ahead, try and prove me wrong.

Ok, so here's where the Sitcom Method comes into play. Before you open that Instagram app on your phone, I want you to force yourself to wait a full 30 minutes (the length of your favorite sitcom). Here's the caveat, though ... when you agree to wait before giving into the impulse, you're also allowing yourself permission to give in 30 minutes from now. Allowing ourselves that future permission can often make it easier to delay the impulse. Thus, teaching our brains that we will continue to live if we don't give into every impulse.

So now 30 minutes have passed and the New Girl credits are rolling; do you view that Instagram profile? Maybe. Or maybe you implement the skill again and stave off that impulse relief for a total of 60 minutes and two episodes. You then continue to do this (or don't) until the night is over, the impulse has passed, or you've finally given into it.

What's the point? By giving in to impulses less often, you're improving in your attempt at behavior modification. If you view that Instagram four times on Monday night, but only twice per night by Friday, well, that's an improvement.

Now let's link in the other examples we mentioned earlier. Trying to reduce your alcohol consumption each night? Well, maybe this skill can assist you from reducing your intake of 6 beers each night to 4 and then eventually 2. That's an improvement in troublesome behavior. What about answering that non-urgent email from your boss? Well, delaying your response actually teaches your boss what your boundaries are ... and it also teaches you that you won't die if you make your boss wait. Eventually, you may even get to a point in which your boss stops emailing outside of hours (probably not) or a point in which you don't answer until the next workday.

If the examples I used don't sound like you, don't get hung up on the specifics. Point is, we all have behaviors we want to improve and curb ... and this skill can be applied to almost all of them.