Habits and Feelings

These two old buddies hang out together most of the time

Habits and feelings are very closely linked. When you do something habitually, it feels natural and you feel impelled to do it. When you think of it a little mental green light goes on. But when you set out to do anything different and to change the habit, you tend to feel uncomfortable. A little caution or red stoplight goes on in your head.

Many good habits for activities and thinking are indispensable to our existence. It is natural for us to sense a degree of discomfort if we cannot brush our teeth or keep an appointment on time, if those are things that we do habitually. We even plan ahead to do things that we've learned are necessary or rewarding. The habits continue to serve us and they always resist change. Most of us also have some habits that are undesirable to a greater or lesser degree, which we do with the same sense of comfort and integration as with the good ones. Both good and bad habits get settled in and strengthened by repetition.

Now that brings us to having an undesirable habit which gets so costly that we feel a need to have some changes take place. Sometimes in the field of substance abuse or other areas of compulsive behavior our lives can become so effected that change is almost forced on us, but we will resist that change even then. When things come to this not-uncommon scenario there is almost always ambivalence. The undesired habit, fortified with those feelings, wants to go on with the practice while our better judgment and other pressures want to end it and restore some things to normalcy. That's when understanding what to do about this becomes the focus at SMART Recovery.

The most important and powerful thing to know in making changes occur is to understand that to change anything, at first, you will have to *act* differently than you *feel*.

The conscious part of your mind with your reason and intelligence can make a decision. But if that entails changing an attitude or feeling, then the part of your brain that does the more subconscious things always resists. Remember that habits and feelings go together, the little green or red lights in your head. Here's the most important thing to remember, everything in those habits was originally learned and chosen and can be unlearned and relearned.

To do this you will have to crash through the barrier of feelings and experience the new behavior. At first you may have to "fake it till you make it." You can't wait till it "feels" comfortable. And then you will have to repeatedly do the new behavior to replace the old habit with the better alternative. This is something only you can do for yourself, so you better know right now, if you are going to succeed in changing a habit, then at first... you will have to force yourself to act differently than you feel!