

# Facilitator Guide: Cost Benefit Analysis

## Introduction: Why Cost-Benefit Analysis Matters

### You Say:

"Sometimes we feel unsure about making a change—or we forget why we started. The Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) tool helps us take a clear look at the advantages and disadvantages of continuing a behavior versus stopping it. Today we'll walk through a simple version of this tool together."

### Key points to highlight:

- This tool helps people **clarify their motivation** by comparing the short-term and long-term effects of a behavior.
- It can be especially useful when someone feels **ambivalent**, stuck, or discouraged.
- CBA encourages **realistic reflection**, not pressure or shame.

## Step 1: Set Up the Activity Visually

### You Say:

"We're going to explore four key questions to help you think through your behavior of concern. To do that, I'm going to draw a giant plus sign to divide the space into four quadrants."

- If you're **in person**, use a whiteboard or flip chart.
- If you're **online**, share your screen using a fillable PDF or whiteboard tool.

Label each quadrant:

- Top left: **Benefits (Rewards or Advantages) of Doing the Behavior**
- Top right: **Costs (Risks or Disadvantages) of Doing the Behavior**
- Bottom left: **Benefits (Rewards or Advantages) of Not Doing the Behavior**
- Bottom right: **Costs (Risks or Disadvantages) of Not Doing the Behavior**

Explain that each section will be filled in one by one based on group input.

## Step 2: Fill In the Quadrants One by One

**You Say:** "Let's take each question one at a time. I'll ask a question, and we'll add your responses to the chart."

1. **What are the benefits (rewards or advantages) of engaging in your behavior of concern?**
  - Examples: Fun, relief, escape, confidence, social connection
2. **What are the costs (risks or disadvantages) of continuing the behavior?**
  - Examples: Health problems, financial stress, damaged relationships, legal risks
3. **What are the benefits (rewards or advantages) of stopping or not doing the behavior?**
  - Examples: Improved health, better sleep, stronger relationships, more stability
4. **What are the costs (risks or disadvantages) of stopping or not doing the behavior?**
  - Examples: Temporary stress, boredom, fear of missing out, discomfort

### **Step 3: Label Each Response ST or LT**

**You Say:** "Now that we've filled in all four quadrants, we're going to go back through each item together and decide—does this benefit or cost happen in the short term or the long term?"

#### **Facilitator Instructions:**

- Read each item aloud, one at a time.
- Ask the group: **"Would you say this is short-term (ST) or long-term (LT)?"**
- Write **ST** or **LT** next to each response as you go.

**You Say:** "Let's notice the patterns together. Often, we'll find that the benefits of engaging in the behavior are mostly short-term, and the costs are long-term. On the flip side, the benefits of stopping are often long-term, and the costs of stopping tend to be short-term."

#### **Ask the group:**

- "What do you notice now that we've labeled everything?"
- "Does anything surprise you about how these line up?"

**Facilitator's Role:**

- Highlight the "aha" moment—seeing how much of the reward is short-lived and how much of the benefit of stopping takes time to develop.
- Normalize if the short-term costs of stopping feel difficult. That's part of the recovery journey.

**Closing the Exercise**

**You Say:** "The Cost-Benefit Analysis tool gives you a clear picture of how your behavior of concern impacts your life. Sometimes, just seeing it all laid out like this helps clarify what really matters to you."

**Optional Reflection Questions:**

- What part of the activity stood out to you?
- How might this tool help you when you're feeling stuck?
- Is there one takeaway you want to keep in mind this week?

**Facilitator Quick Tips:**

- Keep it visual, seeing the quadrants laid out helps make patterns clearer.
- Allow time for reflection between each question.
- Avoid rushing, give participants space to think.

**Summary**

The **Cost-Benefit Analysis** tool helps participants explore both sides of their behavior of concern by organizing short-term and long-term rewards and risks. It supports motivation by creating clarity—not pressure—and empowers people to make more informed, values-driven choices.