

# Module 2: Problem of Immediate Gratification

## Objectives

This module aims to help you explore and gain understanding of the following:

- Why immediate gratification is so powerful
- Ways to counter the power of immediate gratification



## Immediate Gratification

If you have been accessing sexual images of children then you might be wondering why you choose behaviours with such short-term gain when they have such long term negative consequences.

The following list offers some explanations of this:

- Often the long term consequences are less certain (e.g. you **might** get arrested)
- The consequences can be less intense (compared to **instant** sexual relief)
- You can think that you care less about the long term impact (**at the time** and especially if feeling upset/low).
- Moral disengagement – This can take many forms but essentially involves passing responsibility to others (“I wouldn’t look if the images weren’t there”), minimising the harm caused (“it’s only looking”), dehumanising the victim (“it’s only an image”), and collective action (“others are doing it”). Moral disengagement therefore allows enjoyment from material that is morally reprehensible when you know the children are victims of sexual abuse.
- The bikini effect (<http://www.livescience.com/2586-bikini-effect-men-impulsive.html>) which suggests that men are more impulsive after being exposed to ‘sexy’ stimulus, therefore more likely to make rash decisions.

The internet helped to further my own isolation and offer an immediate sense of comfort and support.



This still might not help you understand why you chose to look at sexual images of children and certainly does not excuse the behaviour; however it can help you understand why you prioritised your immediate needs despite the consequences. It is important that you start to think about how you can reduce the power of instant gratification if this has been a particular problem for you.

## What can you do?

One way to counter the power of instant gratification is to think about how you will feel in an hour, a week or month if you do the behaviour (e.g. if you go on-line, look at illegal images and then feel guilty, ashamed etc.) and how you will feel if you don't (e.g. find a book to read or go for a walk and feel proud, happy, relieved).

Another is to draw up a list of the costs and gains of the behaviour; these can be split into the long term and short term.

Costs		Gains	
Short Term	Long Term	Short Term	Long Term
<i>Shame</i>	<i>Lose relationship</i>	<i>Sexual relief</i>	
<i>Guilt</i>	<i>Lose job</i>		
<i>Fear</i>	<i>Depression</i>		

Can you identify any more short term gains or any long term gains?

Very few people can identify long term gains from their behaviour - this shows how powerful the urge for sexual relief can be in the moment but also why they want to stop their negative behaviour.

