

Pros and cons grid

Use this resource to help you to make a strong decision to change by considering all the reasons there are to change, and all of the reasons there are to stay the same.

Pros and cons grid

One of the first and most important steps towards successfully changing any behaviour, (exercise, diet, smoking, drinking, nail biting etc.) is making a strong decision that you even want to change in the first place. The 'Pros and Cons grid', also commonly known as the 'Cost Benefit Analysis', is a great way to do this. Not only will it help to clarify your decision to either continue with, or to modify/stop a particular behaviour, but it will also provide a huge amount of motivation to make changes, if you ultimately chose to do so.

When we are confronted with serious choices or problems, it is common to acknowledge the potential benefits, i.e. what would be good about changing, as well as the negative aspects i.e. what wouldn't be so good about changing. You may know from previous non-decisions, ambivalence, or feeling two ways about doing something can often be the killer of change. Without making a strong decision to change, plans usually just peter out and we end up achieving very little. What the Pros and Cons grid aims to achieve, is to encourage you to take a considered position one way or the other i.e. "I am definitely going to go for it this time", or "now isn't the right time so I've decided against doing anything at this point in time".

In the following exercise, you will think about and record some of the important advantages and disadvantages of CHANGING, e.g. starting an exercise routine. As well as this you will also consider the advantages and disadvantages of CONTINUING WITH a specific behaviour, e.g. eating poorly or maintaining a sedentary lifestyle. This will allow you compare what you have to lose, against what you have to gain. By doing this you will hopefully be able to make a strong and informed decision about whether to change or not.

Be sure to follow all instructions and really give this activity some thought. Even if you feel like you have already covered certain questions, persevere with the process. As with many things there is often a lot of hidden value in the finer points and details. Without following the instructions the risk is that this activity will simply become a list of good things and bad things about changing. THIS IS NOT WHAT YOU WANT. The added value comes through putting in a little extra time by really thinking things through!

Pros and cons grid activity

Task instructions:

Follow these steps to complete your Pros and Cons grid:

1. Identify the behaviour you're thinking about changing
2. Start by considering the pros (good things) of CHANGING this behaviour and record these in BOX 1/6. IMPORTANT! You will be coming back to this box to expand on each point, so keep these initial pros broad. For example instead of writing "I'll look better in a swimsuit", and "My stomach would be flatter", just write "I'll look better".
3. Next, consider the cons (the not so good things) of STAYING THE SAME and record these in BOX 2/5. IMPORTANT! Again you will be coming back to this box to expand on each point, so keep these initial cons broad.
4. Next, consider the cons of CHANGING and record these in BOX 3. You will not be coming back to this box so you can be as specific as you like.
5. Next, consider the pros of STAYING THE SAME and record these in BOX 4. You will not be coming back to this box so you can be as specific as you like.
6. Next, go back to BOX 2/5 (Cons of STAYING THE SAME) and open up and expand on each of your initial points. The challenge is to GENERATE UP TO TEN OR MORE ADDITIONAL POINTS for each of your initial broad points*. Use the following (or similar) questions for each point to get started:
 - a. What would you/others notice?
 - b. What would that look like?
 - c. What would that mean to you/others?

*For example if you said a con of staying the same was, "I would remain overweight", you would expand on this by considering all of the additional flow on cons that would result from this one original point. You might identify some of the following: I would feel guilty, I would look and feel unattractive to the opposite sex, my confidence would remain low, I would not bother with trying to look good, I wouldn't bother with sports anymore because it would be too hard, and so forth. If you really get into this you could even expand on each of these points. For example when considering the point, "I wouldn't bother with sports anymore..." you might include additional points like: I would lose contact with the people in my team, I would no longer go to the bi-annual club get together, I would probably put on more weight as this is the only exercise I do, etc.

7. Next, go back to BOX 1/6 (Pros of CHANGING) and open up and expand on each of your initial points. Again the challenge is to GENERATE UP TO TEN OR MORE ADDITIONAL POINTS for each of your initial broad points*. Use the following (or similar) questions for each point to get started:
 - a. What would you/others notice?
 - b. What would that look like?
 - c. What would that mean to you/others?

*As you did with step 6 the aim is to expand on each original point and create ten additional points. This time however ensure you keep things positive and strengths based. For example

if you said a pro of changing was, “I would look great”, you wouldn’t expand on this by saying, “I wouldn’t have to wear old baggy clothes anymore”. Instead you would say, “I could buy a new wardrobe”. Again you could expand on any of your additional points by considering all of the additional flow on pros. The reason for expanding certain points is to generate enough motivation, energy and hope to successfully proceed through to the action stage of change. It is especially important that you do this with BOX 1/6. Really think about each point by visualising a changed future. This can be a huge motivator to change, as can visualising an unchanged future as in BOX 2/5.

8. After you have expanded on BOXES 2/5 and 1/6, consider your results by answering the reflection questions.

IMPORTANT

- An EXAMPLE of a completed Pros and Cons grid has been included after the reflection question activity. This will give you an idea of how to use this resource if you are still unsure.
- The Pros and Cons grid can often evoke a lot of thoughts, feelings and ideas, all of which are valuable and deserve to be recorded. As a result you may find that you need more space to write things down. If this is the case you could do any of the following:
 - Use the larger A3 sized template (Pros and cons grid – A3 TEMPLATE). You will find this template at the [Exercise Change resources page](#).
 - Use more than one Pros and cons grid to record your ideas. You will find additional templates (Pros and cons grid – A4 TEMPLATE) at the [Exercise Change resources page](#).
 - Use your own paper to record additional thoughts, feelings and ideas.

My pros and cons grid

My identified behaviour is... _____

	Cons - What's NOT SO GOOD about...	Pros - What's GOOD about...
Changing behaviour	BOX 3	BOX 1/6
Staying the same	BOX 2/5	BOX 4

Reflection questions

- What was this exercise like for you? How did it make you feel and what did it make you think about?
- What epiphanies/light bulb moments did you have (if any)?
- What is your thinking around the identified behaviour (the change you want to make) after completing this activity?
- How would you describe your level of ambivalence before and after completing this exercise? If there has been a change, what do you attribute this change to?
- What are your thoughts about wanting to change and move ahead with an action plan after completing this activity?
- What would now need to happen for you to commit 100% to making a change?
- If you didn't end up making any sort of change because of the reasons you listed in BOXES 3 and 4, would you be OK with this? How would this sit with you?

My pros and cons grid - EXAMPLE

My identified behaviour is... *Changing my behaviour around exercising*

	Cons - What's NOT SO GOOD about...	Pros - What's GOOD about...
Changing behaviour	<p style="text-align: right;">BOX 3</p> <p><i>I'd have to motivate myself and to be honest I just can't be bothered, exercise is too hard</i></p> <p><i>I would have less time to do the usual things like cooking, movies, socialising</i></p> <p><i>It might cost money and I don't have a lot at the moment</i></p> <p><i>I wouldn't be able to drink as much or go out to eat. Basically I wouldn't socialise as much</i></p>	<p style="text-align: right;">BOX 1/6</p> <p><i>I would look better</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I would feel better about myself, like I wasn't invisible</i> <i>I could buy new clothes</i> <i>I could meet new people</i> <i>I would feel ok about going swimming or taking my top off</i> <p><i>I would feel more confident</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I would feel happier and more content and satisfied</i> <i>I'd be more assertive and decisive</i> <i>I would get more respect and people would notice me more</i> <i>Better performance at work and I might get a promotion</i> <p><i>I would be healthier</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I would lose weight and fat around my stomach</i> <i>My blood pressure would go down</i> <i>I would feel proud instead of feeling embarrassed or guilty</i> <i>My wife would be happier with me and my children would be too. They might even be proud</i> <i>I would be fitter and be able to keep up with the kids</i>
Staying the same	<p style="text-align: right;">BOX 2/5</p> <p><i>I would continue to look the same</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I would continue to hate my body and be unattractive</i> <i>I would have to keep buying dowdy fat clothes that I can fit into</i> <i>I would still be someone that nobody notices</i> <i>I would never feel as if I could take my top off in public</i> <p><i>I would still have no confidence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I would continue to be weak and be a victim (Bossed around and told what to do)</i> <i>I still wouldn't get respect from people</i> <i>Work will just plod on not going anywhere</i> <i>I would feel embarrassed about myself</i> <p><i>I would continue to be unhealthy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I'd still have my big stomach which is unhealthy and embarrassing</i> <i>My blood pressure and cholesterol would continue to be high or even increase</i> <i>I would feel helpless, guilty and ashamed of my body and my lack of self-control</i> <i>My wife would continue to worry</i> <i>My children would not look up to me and I would set a bad example for them and their health in the future</i> <i>I would remain unfit and wouldn't be able to play with the kids for long</i> 	<p style="text-align: right;">BOX 4</p> <p><i>I wouldn't have to change anything or put in any extra effort to do anything new. Things would just stay the same</i></p> <p><i>I could continue to do the usual things I like doing such as cooking, movies, socialising, video games</i></p> <p><i>It wouldn't have to spend any money on anything exercise related</i></p> <p><i>I could keep up with my social schedule and not have to limit how much I drink and eat when I'm out</i></p>