



# Alcohol and Drug Recovery Service

## Self Help



Greater Manchester  
Mental Health  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Why should I bother reading this booklet?

It could help you:

- Examine your own drug or alcohol use.
- Give you information and practical ideas that will help you make choices that are right for you.
- Start to make changes to your drug or alcohol use, whatever they are, cutting down or quitting... you decide!

# How to use this booklet

This self help guide will help you look at your own drug or alcohol use and help you to make changes if you want to. It is not an information leaflet. It is set out in a particular order so that you can work through your choices regarding your substance use.

There is no time scale that you need to work to. It may be a matter of days, weeks or even months. Work to your own pace.

## The sections include:

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# Understanding

## What does substance use do for you?

Before anyone can change something such as drug or alcohol use, you need to identify what it does for you. Let's be honest if it didn't do anything, you wouldn't use it! You obviously get something out of it. So let's get honest! What need does it meet?

- Does it help me cope?
- Does it help me feel better about myself?
- Does it help me fit in with my friends?

**Look over the list below. What do drugs or alcohol do for you?** Tick all that applies:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> It is relaxing                          | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't feel so nervous or stressed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel I have more fun                  | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't feel anxious                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It helps when I feel lonely             | <input type="checkbox"/> It helps me sleep                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It helps me forget my problems          | <input type="checkbox"/> It eases pain                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I like the feel of getting high         | <input type="checkbox"/> It stops me from thinking too much  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It helps me be more confident           | <input type="checkbox"/> It helps when I'm feeling down      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It helps me laugh and find things funny | <input type="checkbox"/> It lifts me when I feel bored       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It helps me face my responsibilities    | <input type="checkbox"/> It helps me be more creative        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It improves sex                         |  |

Other people expect me to (especially at certain times: at recreational activities, weekend, etc.)

It's part of my life. I'm attached to it

It means I fit it with my mates

It's automatic. It is what I do

Other \_\_\_\_\_

List the top 3 things that drug or alcohol use does for you:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

Now look at the things it does for you, can you think of anything else which may do something similar.

For example, you may put 'helps me relax' and alternative to this may be 'have acupuncture or go to the gym etc' Write your alternatives in the space underneath.

Alternatives for 1: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Alternatives for 2: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Alternatives for 3: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## How much do I really use?

It can be helpful to keep a diary of your use – you can do this next week, or record what you used over the past 7 days.

Write your answers in the box below.

Date & Time Substance	Where were you and who were you with?	What were you thinking?	Why did you use? What need did it meet?	How much did it cost?

Date & Time Substance	Where were you and who were you with?	What were you thinking?	Why did you use? What need did it meet?	How much did it cost?

Is this more or less than you were using this time last year?

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What was good about this week?

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What was not so good?

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## The Cycle of Change – 5 stages

Looking at how change happen can help you understand where you are and identify where you want to go i.e. what changes you want to make. Everyone, no matter who they are, or what behaviour changes they want to make will go through the same process.

They will go through five stages when making any behaviour change. This includes smoking, drinking, losing weight or drug use. A persons' next step will depend on what stage they are in. Moving from one stage to the next means seeing "where you are at" and deciding where you want to go and what is going to help you get there.

The idea behind the stages of change model is that behaviour change does not happen in one step. Rather, people tend to progress through different stages on their way to successful change. Also, each of us progresses through the stages at our own rate. Each person must decide for himself or herself when a stage is completed and when it is time to move on to the next stage. Moreover, this decision must come from you.

### What are the 5 Stages?

#### 1. NOT THINKING ABOUT CHANGE (PRECONTEMPLATION)

Someone who is at the first stage is not really thinking about changing. They like what they are doing, they don't see it as a problem. Frank from Shameless is in this stage, he couldn't care less about his drink and drug use and has no intention of changing.

#### 2. THINKING ABOUT IT BUT NOT QUITE READY TO CHANGE (CONTEMPLATION)

At this stage, someone is considering change. But that's all they are doing, considering it. They are more aware of the consequences of what

they are doing. However they are still in 'two minds', on one hand they know they need to make some changes but on the other hand they still like what they are doing.

### 3. GETTING READY TO CHANGE (PREPARATION)

Someone in the preparation stage has made the decision to change and is getting ready to make that change. They make a commitment to change. The individual makes a plan of "how" they are going to do it. For example finding out dates and times for NA/AA meetings or setting a quit date.

### 4. MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN (ACTION)

In this stage, someone begins to make those changes, whatever they may be. Attending support groups and not using in the house etc.

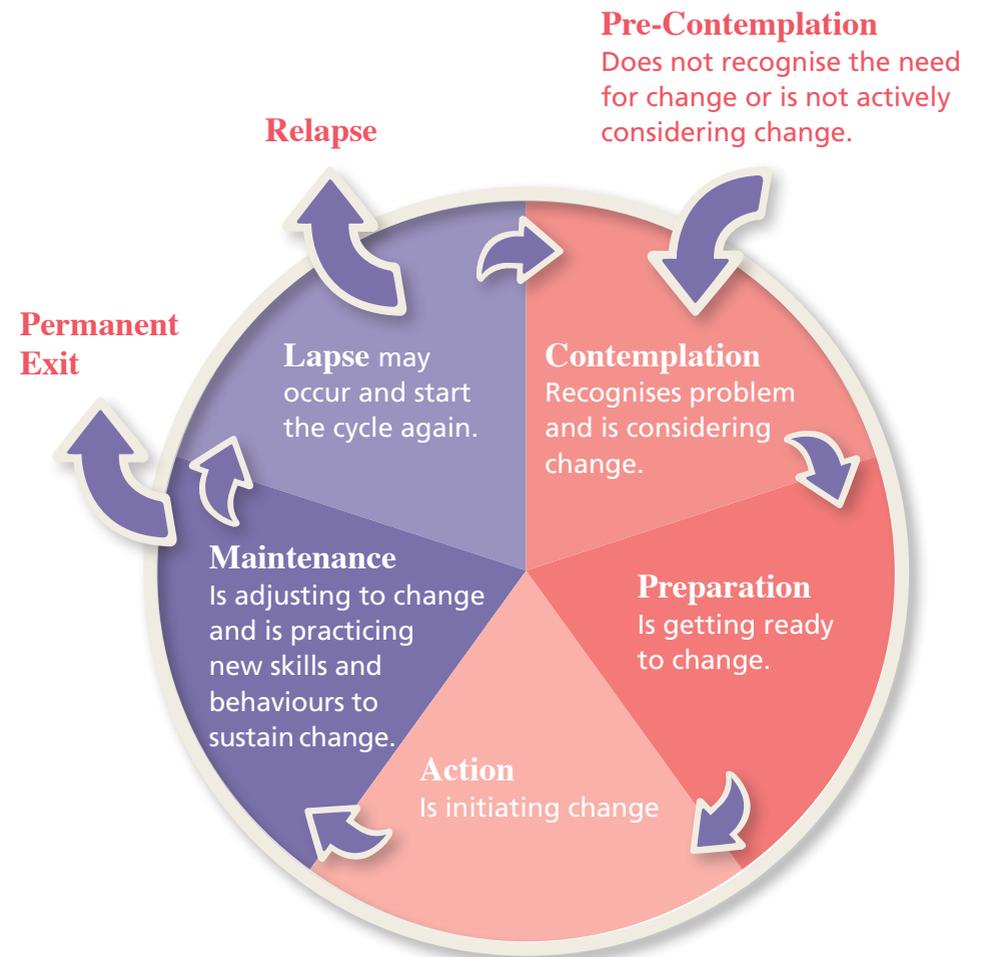
### 5. MAINTENANCE (KEEPING THE CHANGE GOING)

Someone in the maintenance stage keeps the decision to change going and maintains the changes they have made.

People can progress in both directions in the stages of change. Some people will "recycle" through the stages of change several times before the change becomes fully established.

## Dealing with Lapse or Relapse

Along the way to changing, relapse is always a possibility. Although relapse can be discouraging, it can be an important opportunity to learn from and decide to try again. The key is to review your efforts, identify where you went wrong and develop a plan for the next time. People who relapse may need to learn how to anticipate high-risk situations more effectively (like being around people who use drugs/ alcohol). In addition develop more appropriate coping strategies such as assertiveness skills. It is useful to know which stage you are at in the cycle of change.



## Where are you in the Cycle of Change?

Where do you think you are?

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What makes you think this?

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Where do you want to get to, what's your next step?

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**As already stated change is not easy and it doesn't happen over night, it requires a good degree of effort and commitment.**

Sometimes you will need to look at what else is going on in your life? How much do your friends influence continued use or support the changes you are trying to make. Sometimes you will have to make sacrifices in order to make changes, for example not seeing friends who use.

Below is a table which outlines suggestions to help you through the stages:

<b>Precontemplation</b> Does not see a problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Increase your awareness of the risks and problems of drug/alcohol use</li><li>■ Challenge positive attitudes towards substance use</li><li>■ Get other interests</li></ul>
<b>Contemplation</b> Has thoughts about change but is unsure about it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Identify positive reasons for change</li><li>■ Discuss fears of not changing</li><li>■ Believe that you can change if you want to</li></ul>
<b>Preparation</b> Gets committed to makes a change, plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Think about what's important to you</li><li>■ Think about how best to make the change</li><li>■ Make a plan</li><li>■ Get support</li></ul>
<b>Action</b> The person takes definitive action to change behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Put your plan into action</li><li>■ Work on avoiding relapse</li><li>■ Build other interests and hobbies</li><li>■ Find other ways to relax or socialise</li><li>■ Develop coping skills</li><li>■ Make changes in your lifestyle and friends</li></ul>
<b>Maintenance</b> Maintaining the positive changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Revisit your initial reasons for change</li><li>■ Focus on the benefits</li></ul>

If you do experience a lapse or relapse it's important to try and get back on track as quickly as possible and learn from your mistakes.

# Where are you up to with your substance use?

## Is it worth it?

Making a decision about something like stopping drug/alcohol use requires stepping back and taking a good hard look at your use, what does it do for you and how it's affecting you. If it was all bad, you wouldn't be using it at all.

This will involve answering the following questions... **HONESTLY!**

- What does it do for you?
- What problems is it causing?
- Why change? What will be better?

## What does it do for you?

What are the main things you get out of using drugs or alcohol?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Now go back over your list. Think about each benefit and be honest with yourself: Does it still help me do this?

## What problems would you like to avoid?

Tick all that apply:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling anxious / stressed   | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial worries: too much money spent        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict with people I care about  | <input type="checkbox"/> Worries about my physical health               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental confusion. I can't think clearly, or I can't make up my mind about things | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling as if I have no choice .               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling bad about myself   | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty keeping a job                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling paranoid   | <input type="checkbox"/> Not doing as well as I could at school or work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling lost   | <input type="checkbox"/> Losing self-esteem                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Memory loss  | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling like everything is hopeless            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depression   | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling irresponsible or immature              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having problems remembering important things                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling lazy, no motivation                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Messing up my sleep  | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting into trouble with the police           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irregular menstrual cycle  |   |

Any other problems you would like to avoid?

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**Reasons for changing**

What are your **3 MAIN REASONS** for changing? Write them in order of importance.

**1.** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**2.** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**3.** \_\_\_\_\_

# Making your mind up!

When people make any decision, they often weigh up the good and bad things to help them make the decision that is right for them. This is particularly useful when someone is in the "thinking about change" stage (contemplation).

In the left column, write down some **GOOD** things about your drug/alcohol use. In the right column, write down all the **BAD**, unpleasant, or difficult things about your drug/alcohol use. Next, give a score of importance to each item:

**SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT = 1    MODERATELY IMPORTANT = 2**  
**VERY IMPORTANT = 3        EXTREMELY IMPORTANT = 4**

Good	Score	Bad	Score

# Carry on, cut down, or quit? You decide!

The aim of the previous pages was for you to take a closer look at what your own drug/alcohol use is costing you.

The goal you set is entirely up to you. There is additional information to help you no matter what you decide. Making a decision and making a commitment to work toward your goal is an important step.

## But what are you going to do?

Looking over what I have written, the best goal for me is to:

### CUT DOWN

If cutting down, I will have  drug/alcohol free days

and not use more than  times in the week.

### QUIT COMPLETELY

I will start on this day:

  
**DAY**  
**MONTH**  
**YEAR**

# Looking after yourself

## If you do stop, can you expect withdrawal?

Using substances on a regular basis can result in people feeling the need to continue using in spite of continued problems. When people decide to stop they can experience some unpleasant symptoms. These are only temporary and will pass!

These withdrawal symptoms can include:

- Anxiety
- Increased irritability
- Depression
- Difficulty sleeping
- Vivid and disturbing dreams
- Mood swings
- Tiredness
- Physical discomfort such as sweating or hot and cold flushes

These symptoms do pass, usually in one or two weeks. The good news is there are things you can do which help.

- Get plenty of rest and eat well
- Cut back on stimulants such as caffeine, sugar and cigarettes
- If you are struggling to sleep, have a warm bath before bed and a milky drink
- Practice relaxation techniques
- Exercise – it releases endorphins and can help the body relax

# Stopping is easy! But how do I stay stopped?

## Cravings: The facts

- 1 Cravings/urges to use are natural part of modifying substance use. Understanding cravings helps people overcome them.
- 2 Cravings are the result of long-term drug or alcohol use and can continue long after quitting. So people with a history of heavier use will experience stronger urges.
- 3 Cravings can be triggered by: people, places, things, feelings, situations, smells or anything else that has been associated with using in the past.
- 4 Think of a craving in terms of a wave at the beach. Every wave/craving starts off small and builds up to its highest point, and then it will break and flow away. Each individual craving rarely lasts beyond 3 minutes.



- 5 Cravings will only lose their power if they are **NOT** strengthened by using. Using occasionally will only serve to keep cravings alive.  
**A craving is like a stray cat – if you keep feeding it, it will keep coming back!**

- 6 Each time a person does something else rather than use in response to a craving, the craving will lose its power. The peak of the craving wave will become smaller, and the wave will be further apart. The process is known as extinction.



Abstinence from drugs/alcohol is the best way to ensure the quickest extinction of cravings.

- 7 Cravings are most intense in the early parts of quitting/cutting down, but people may continue to experience cravings for some months.
- 8 Be aware that sometimes, particularly in response to stress and certain triggers, craving will be particularly intense but they will decline when stress subsides.



# Ways to cope!

## Surf the Urge!

Remember the stray cat, you've been feeding? In the beginning you feed the cat because it cries for food and attention. You may find it's a nice thing to do and you feel good for being kind. However by feeding the cat you encourage it to repeat its cries and attention seeking. You find yourself giving in every time. Over a period of time the cat grows bolder and braver and louder till eventually other cats join in crying and demanding food and attention!

It's the same with your cravings every time you have a craving it's the cat crying for food and attention, if you use drugs you feed the cat, the cats satisfied for a while but it will come back with louder more persistent cries. Just as your cravings will get stronger and longer in duration! **STOP FEEDING THE CAT!**

If you walk into a room and there's an awful smell, but you stay in the room for 30 minutes is the smell still as bad?...**NO!**

This is called **THE FATIGUE PRINCIPLE**, the smell may knock you sick at first, but after a while you get used to it and the intensity fades. You don't have to do anything to get rid of the smell, it just goes with time!

The same is true of a craving. It may be really intense and all consuming to begin with, but if you don't act on it (**DON'T FEED THE CAT!**) It will go away!

Remember each craving will rarely last longer than a few minutes, you can ride them out!

## 3 D's

### DELAY

Avoid triggers, especially soon after stopping. If you do experience a craving delay the decision to use for a minute at a time or longer if you can manage. During this time say to your self 'I will not use on this craving' this will help you break the habit of immediately reaching for drugs when you have a craving. You may find that if you delay the decision to use, your craving will go in a few minutes.

### DISTRACT

Once you have delayed the decision to use, you need to distract yourself from thoughts of using. Do something like go to the gym, take dog a walk, listen to music, speak to a family member or friend who doesn't use.

### When I have a craving I will...

Write a few options down:

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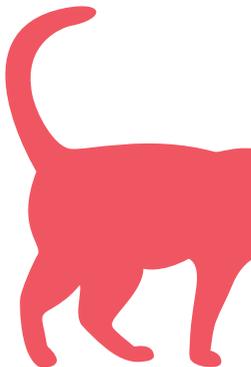
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Once you are interested in, or actively doing something else, you will find the craving will reduce in intensity and soon they will go altogether.

### DECIDE

After the craving has passed, think about the reasons why you wanted to stop using in the first place. Decide then and there not to use again and congratulate yourself on not giving in to something that is **ONLY** a thought or feeling.





# Help and support

## Mutual Aid

### **NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS**

 <http://ukna.org/>  0300 99901212

### **UK SMART RECOVERY – Self-Management and Recovery Training**

 <http://www.smartrecovery.org.uk/>

### **ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS Great Britain**

 <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/>  0800 9177 650

### **COCAINE ANONYMOUS**

 <http://www.cauk.org.uk/index.asp>  0300 111 2285

## Other Support

### **CHEMSEX SUPPORT AT 56 DEAN STREET**

 <http://www.chemsexsupport.com/>

### **LGBT FOUNDATION**

 <https://lgbt.foundation/get-support/befrienders/>

### **MODERATION MANAGEMENT**

**Self Management, Balance, Moderation, Personal Responsibility**

 <http://www.moderation.org/>

### **FRANK – Friendly Confidential Drugs Advice**

 <http://www.talktofrank.com/>  0300 123 6600

Unity offer a range of support to help you in your Recovery – please contact your local service.

Please see back page for contact information.

## Warning

Never drink or use drugs and drive. You may think you are ok, but it lowers your reaction times and puts you and others at serious risk.

Avoid mixing drugs including alcohol. It makes things and you more unpredictable.

Using any substance while pregnant can harm your baby.

# Local Unity services

## Carlisle & Eden

Stocklund House  
Castle Street  
Carlisle  
CA3 8SY  
Tel: 01228 212 060

## Workington

6 Finkle Street  
CA14 2AY  
Tel: 01900 270 010

## Whitehaven

21b Lowther Street  
CA28 7DG  
Tel: 01946 350 020

## Barrow-in-Furness

92-96 Duke Street  
LA14 1RD  
Tel: 01229 207 020

## Kendal

Whitehorse Yard  
39 Stricklandgate  
LA9 4LT  
Tel: 01539 742 780



### The Unity Asset Building Fund supports:

Active Recovery Community • CADAS • CalderWood House • Cumbria Gateway  
Forward Together • Growing Well • Jigsaws • Laurie Brewis Trust • The Vulture Club • The Well

