



Changing your use of alcohol

Background

Over 90% of adults drink alcohol. Most of us do so with no problems for most of the time. Some people find that drinking alcohol is part of being social or it helps them to relax.

How much is too much then? And how often is too often?

The facts are that alcohol affects all of us in different ways and what is ok for some can be a problem for others.

What is clear is that alcohol is a problem for a large number of prisoners. In fact over half of sentenced males and females were classed as hazardous drinkers in the year before coming into prison. This means that they drank over the safe levels of alcohol and could be at risk of harm.

You don't need to have a problem to read this booklet. You may just want to know some facts about alcohol and its effects.

However, if you are worried about your drinking, then there are lots of exercises for you to complete, so that you understand more about why you have been drinking and how you can change it.

Work through this booklet and discuss with your Recovery Navigator.

If you have any questions please contact your Recovery Navigator

We hope you find this workbook useful!

Alcohol and Me

Let's spend some time thinking about your relationship with alcohol. Please answer the following questions:

How old were you when you started drinking alcohol?

.....

How long have you been drinking for now?

.....

Do you think drinking alcohol has caused you problems – *if yes, what kinds of problems? If no, why not?*

.....

.....

.....

.....

When did alcohol start to cause you problems?

.....

.....

Have you ever tried to stop drinking alcohol?

.....

- *How many times?*

.....

- *What happened?*

.....

.....

.....

How would your family/friends/partner describe your drinking?

.....
.....
.....

Have you ever asked for help with your drinking before? What sort of help?

.....
.....
.....

Why do you want help now?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Building Discrepancies

Before you can make changes to your drinking, you need to decide what you are aiming to do.

Use this sheet to help you decide on your goals –

	Continuing drinking the same	Reducing my drinking – also called 'controlled' drinking	Stopping drinking altogether
Reasons FOR: (+)			
Reasons AGAINST: (-)			

Once you have decided on your goal, think about what your drinking tends to be like. Why were you drinking?

High Risk Situations

Make a list of 5 situations that could happen in the future, which are likely to lead to you drinking too much.

Decide how you can respond without drinking

e.g.

Situation – meet Wayne (heavy drinking mate, very persuasive) in street

Response – Be assertive but polite. Tell him you aren't drinking anymore and you are on your way to the gym

SITUATION	RESPONSE
1)	1)
2)	2)
3)	3)
4)	4)
5)	5)

Triggers

Trigger: A stimulus – such as a person, place, situation or thing – that contributes to an unwanted emotional or behavioural response.

The Problem

Describe the problem your triggers are contributing to. What's the worst-case scenario, if you are exposed to your triggers?

Trigger Categories

Just about anything can be a trigger. To begin exploring your own triggers, think about each of the categories listed below. Is there a specific emotion that acts as a trigger for you? How about a person or place? List your responses in the provided spaces.

Emotional State	
People	
Places	
Things	
Thoughts	
Activities/Situations	

Tips for Dealing with Triggers

- Sometimes the best way to deal with a trigger is to avoid it. This might mean making changes to your lifestyle, relationships or daily routine
- Create a strategy to deal with your triggers head on, just in case. Your strategy might include coping mechanisms, a list of trusted people you can talk to, or rehearsed phrases to help you get out of troublesome situation.
- Don't wait until the heat of the moment to test your coping strategy. Practice!

Triggers

In this section, you will develop a plan for dealing with your three biggest triggers. Review your plan regularly, and practice each of the strategies.

Describe your three biggest triggers, in detail:

#1	
#2	
#3	

Describe your strategy for avoiding or reducing exposure to each trigger:

#1	
#2	
#3	

Describe your strategy for dealing with each trigger head on, when they cannot be avoided:

#1	
#2	
#3	

Values

Look at where you are in your life right now and ask yourself the question “What matters to me most?”

Write down the first 5 things that come into your head (i.e., love, family, recognition, money, approval) and write them down, then rank them 1-5, with 1 being the most important. These are your core values.

Put the list somewhere you will see it regularly and stop for a moment each day to consider whether your behaviour is helping you to realise your core values.

For example, if family is one of your core values then your habits should reflect that, which means you are doing things to actively improve. If your drinking/using is affecting your family life, are you focusing on your recovery? Are you attending groups regularly to address issues? Are you focusing your life around recovery as much as you can outside of groups?

My Positive Qualities

Write down 3 or more positive qualities you believe you possess. These can be things such as a good listener, kind, patient etc.

Think about....What do you like about yourself, however small or fleeting? What have you achieved in your life, however small? What challenges have you faced and overcome? What talents and skills do you possess? What do other people like or value about you? What aspects of yourself would you appreciate if they were aspects of another person? What small positives are you discounting? What are the bad things you are not?

It can be challenging to think of even a single thing that you like about yourself. Of course, you do have positive qualities, it can just be a hard time seeing them. Thinking about your positive qualities will help you to begin to build a positive self-image. Regularly review and add new qualities as you think of them. This can be a good exercise to complete regularly, to really reinforce positive self-talk.

5 Step Problem Solving

Step 1: Define the problem

- Before you define the problem, it can feel confusing or vague. Writing your problem will help to organise information, see it from new angles, and identify the most important issues.

When or where did the problem occur?

--

What are the causes of your problem?

Think about *all* the possible causes. Consider your own behaviour as well and external factors.

Define your problem

Be as clear and comprehensive as possible. If there are many parts of your problem, describe each of them.

TIP: If you find it difficult to separate your emotions from the problem, try to complete this step from the perspective of an impartial friend.

Step 2: Develop multiple solutions

- Write down at least 3 solutions to your problem. Without thinking about alternative solutions, we often get stuck on what worked in the past, or the first idea that comes to mind. There are usually many solutions to a problem, and our first idea isn't always the best.

Option 1:

Option 2:

Option 3:

Option 4:

Option 5:

Step 3: Assess your solutions and choose one

- Begin by throwing out any solutions that are obviously ineffective or impractical (keeping things realistic). Next, look at your remaining solutions, and determine which ones are the most likely to be successful by examining them in-depth. This can be done by examining the strengths and weaknesses of each solution.
- During this stage, you might come up with some few new solutions, or find that a combination of solutions is better than one idea.

Solution	Strengths	Weaknesses

Tip: If you're having a hard time thinking of strengths and weaknesses for each solution, consider these things:

Tip: If your solution requires a lot of time or effort, try to break them into small steps. It's easier to follow through with several small steps, rather than one giant task.

Step 5: Review

- Finally, after implementing your solution, you will review what worked and what didn't. Even if your problem wasn't a one-time situation, there are often broader lessons to be learned. Take a moment to reflect on your problem and how you handled it.

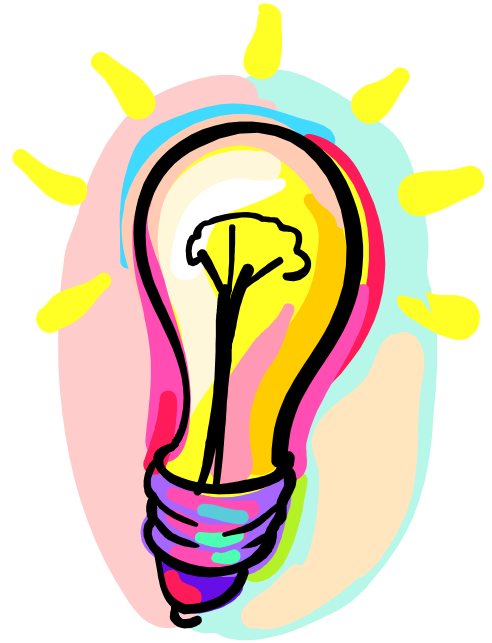
In what ways was your solution effective?

In what way was your solution not effective?

If you could go back in time, what would you change about how you handled the problem?

What advice would you give to someone else who was dealing with the same problem?

Reminder Card



If you find yourself returning to your old drinking habits,
This does NOT mean that –

- you have failed
- you have lost control over your behaviour
- it's not worth trying
- you have no willpower

Setbacks are not that unusual. You may feel guilty or disappointed and you might blame yourself. However, remember a LAPSE is not a RELAPSE and there is no reason to give in to these feelings and continue to drink.

Instead: learn from the experience and ask yourself two questions –

- 1) Which feelings, situations and people led to you drinking again?**
- 2) How else could you have coped with the situation?**

Work out how you can deal with the situation differently and practice it.

Think
Positive!
Start Again!

