

ARCI RECOVERY



A Manual for People with Alcohol Related Cognitive Impairment Information and Resources to help your recovery

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
What is ARCI and ARBD?	4
Stress	6
Relaxation	8
Improving your Memory	16
Attention	21
Problem Solving	23
Alcohol and Emotion	27
Dealing with difficult emotions	29
Coping with Cravings	33
Training to Succeed	37
Keeping Active	39
Healthy Eating	41
Sleep	43
Conclusion	45
Resources	46
Worksheets	50

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Introduction

If you are reading this then you have probably been on a difficult path for some time. Hopefully, you have found the professional and personal help you need to begin your recovery. You have already put in a lot of effort to get to this point. There is lots of help available, but a lot of the hard work is up to you. This manual is a self help resource for people with cognitive impairment due to alcohol use or for people already with a diagnosis of alcohol related brain damage. It is aimed at patients, staff and family/carers as a general but targeted resource to help patients live with, improve and manage their condition. This manual is designed to help you remember some of the important things that will help you in this next part of your journey. Using this manual can help you to stay on your chosen path.

The manual is divided into sections, so you can quickly find information you need. Some people will find that they want to read the whole thing regularly, while others will only need to look at a few sections occasionally. The important thing is to remember to use it, and to keep using it.

It is likely there will be difficult times ahead. One of the best ways to deal with difficult times is to have a plan to manage them. Using this manual, and making sure you get the help you need, will hopefully improve your chances of recovery.

Try to remember 3 things:

1. Recovery can be hard, but it is worth the effort
2. You can do it, though you may need help
3. Help is available, you just have to ask.

Best wishes,

The Penumbra Milestone Team

What is ARCI and ARBD?

Alcohol Related Cognitive Impairment (ARCI) or Alcohol Related Brain Damage (ARBD) are terms to describe what happens to the brain when people drink too much alcohol over a number of years. It is caused by both the direct effect of alcohol on the brain, and by the effects of not eating properly when drinking — a lack of Thiamine (Vitamin B1) can have a very serious effect on the brain. There is no way of knowing who will develop ARCI. It is probably true that older people who have been drinking for a long time are most likely to develop ARCI, though men and women are affected equally often, and both young and older people can develop it. Generally people who develop ARCI have been drinking for many years, but it can also develop quickly in a short space of time.

The main effects of ARCI are:

- **Very poor memory.** This is usually short term (a few seconds or minutes) and medium term (30 minutes or so). Long term memory (of your childhood, or your family, for example) is usually not affected as much.
- **Poor attention and concentration.** This can be problems with keeping up with a conversation, staying focussed on a task like cooking, or watching a TV programme all the way through.
- **Difficulty with understanding information.** You might find it is harder to understand what bills you have to pay, or what medication you need to take at what time, or following instructions for travelling to a new place.
- **Difficulty with problem-solving, decision-making, and judgment.** You might find it harder to budget your weekly outgoings, or to decide which house you want to live in, or plan how to get to an appointment.
- **Difficulty with controlling impulses and urges.** Sometimes people become more irritable and angry, or make decisions without really being able to think them through.



People who develop ARCI often don't realise that they have brain damage because it usually happens slowly over time. People might notice that their memory isn't great, or they forget appointments or arrangements. Sometimes they begin to forget people's names or faces. Often people will get angry or confused if someone points out that they are becoming forgetful.

Sometimes people will try to fill in the gaps in their memories with stories which feel true, but aren't. This can be particularly difficult for family and friends to manage. As the damage becomes worse, people sometimes can't remember whether they have taken their medication, or the last time they washed. Often others around you will notice that you aren't functioning as well as you used to. They might comment on you forgetting things, or say that you are confused.

This can lead to arguments and conflict, which obviously doesn't help anyone. Try to keep in mind that those around you will often be worried about you.



ARCI can be a devastating problem, and can lead to life-threatening and fatal physical and mental health problems.

The good news is that ARCI can be treated. The first step is always to **stop drinking alcohol**. This shouldn't be done alone though if you are currently drinking heavily, as **sudden withdrawal can lead to seizures and other problems**. A carefully managed detox process is needed, which can be arranged through your GP. As soon as people stop drinking their brains will try to mend the damage. We know from experience that almost everyone is able to recover some of their previous level of living. Some people recover almost completely, while for others the damage is too severe and they will require a lot of help and support to manage their lives.

This manual is designed to help people who have ARCI or ARBD to remember and to practice things which will aid their recovery and improve their functioning. It is also for those who live with or work with people with ARCI/ ARBD, to offer some information and guidance on what helps.

Stress

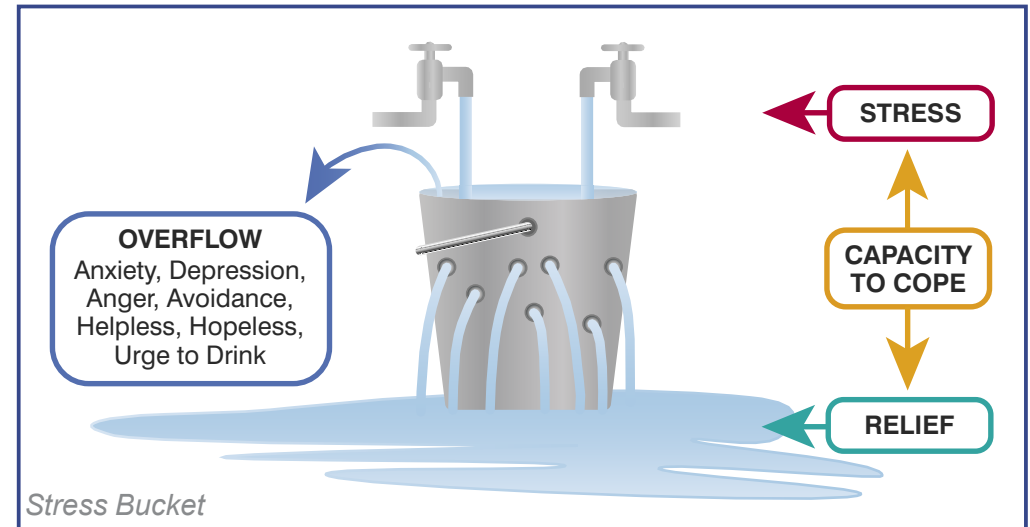
Life is full of stress.

Almost anything can be stressful: finding you've run out of milk, remembering to pay your bills, losing your keys. And then there are the big things: memories, relationships, loneliness, and a thousand other things. If we don't do anything about our stress levels it can overwhelm us, leaving us angry, irritable, depressed or anxious. That's when it can feel easier to reach for a drink to help us cope or forget about the stress.

We can all cope with a certain amount of stress, but we all have limits. One way of thinking about this is to imagine that your capacity to cope with stress is like a bucket. Now think about stressful things as little taps of water, filling up your bucket. If there's too much water going in, eventually your bucket will overflow. The "overflow" is the effects of feeling overwhelmed. This is generally things like anxiety, depression, anger, or an urge to drink.

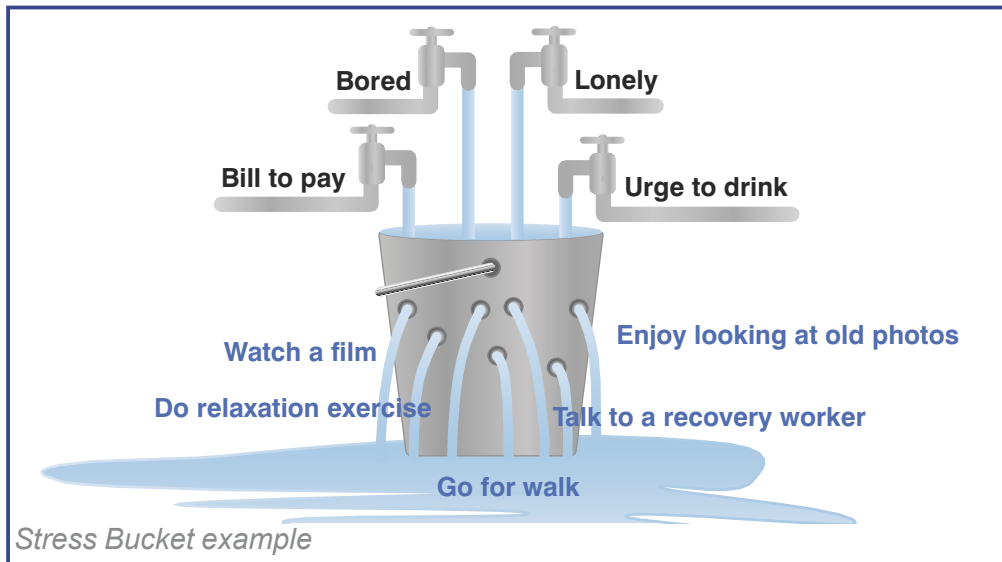
So, because life is constantly adding more stress to our bucket, we have to have ways of safely allowing the stress to get out of the bucket – we need holes to let the stress out. These are things like friends, family, exercise, hobbies and interests. Unfortunately, many people find that alcohol reduces their stress. This might be true in the

short term, but in the long term it will actually **increase** your stress and become a tap instead of a hole.



We all need to let the stress out, but using alcohol creates more stress to put in the bucket. We have to find other ways of getting the stress out so we don't end up with a full bucket. There are some suggestions in this manual of ways to reduce stress without using alcohol. However, it's really important to know what works for **you** in reducing your stress. Once you know, write it down so you don't forget.

You can use the bucket image to check if you are becoming overwhelmed. Draw a bucket like this (it doesn't have to be perfect). Next, draw some arrows, and write above them what is causing you stress this week. Then draw some holes in the bottom of the bucket and write down what you are doing to reduce the stress. You will be able to see if you have too much stress coming in, or too little going out. If you can't think of things that will let the stress out, **ask for help**. There are some [Stress Bucket](#) sheets at the end of this manual for you to use, and space here to try it out just now.



Draw your bucket here:

Relaxation

Relaxation techniques have been used for thousands of years to help people feel better. But they really only work if you use them regularly. It's like having a painkiller in the kitchen cupboard — it will only help if you use it.

The next few pages have some relaxation exercises that you can try, but there are other possibilities. See what works for you.

Controlled Breathing

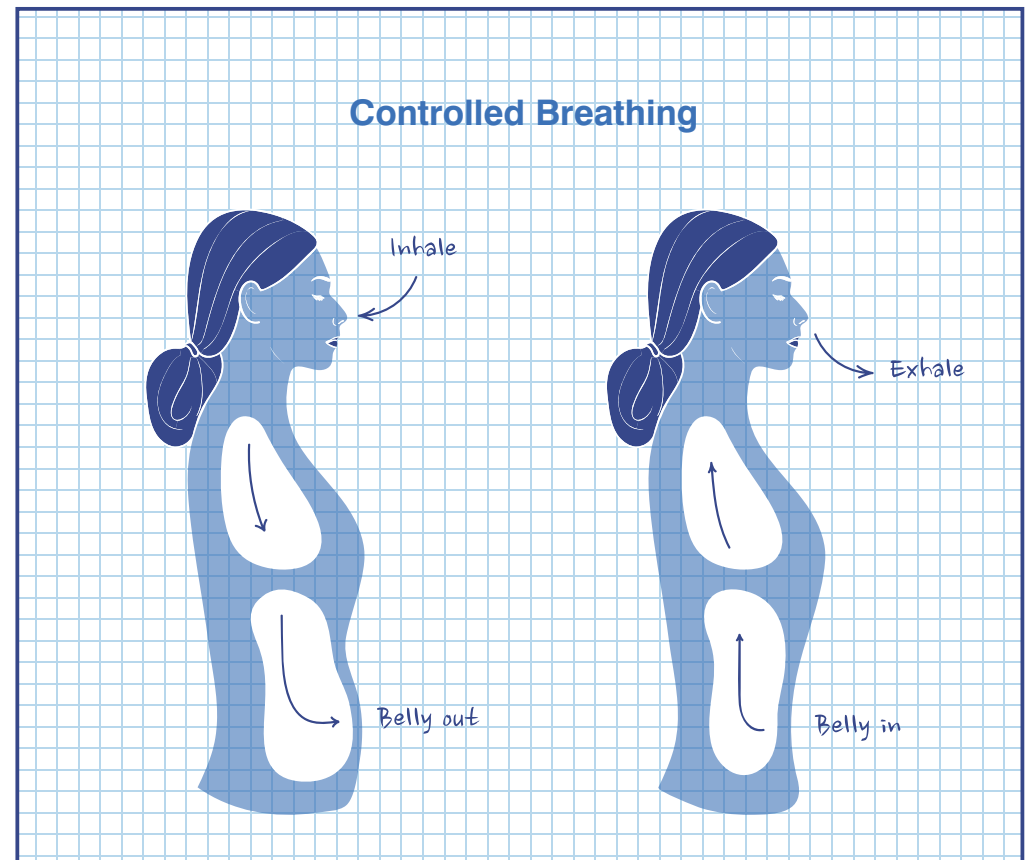
The quickest way to relieve stress in the short term is to practice controlled breathing. This involves using the diaphragm to breathe in rather than the chest muscles.

Using your diaphragm will make your stomach move outwards when you breathe in, and your shoulders shouldn't move much. Try placing one hand on your tummy as you breathe in. If it moves out when you breathe in, you are doing it right.

If you have any kind of breathing difficulty, please check with a medical professional before using this exercise.

To get the biggest benefit, follow these 3 rules:

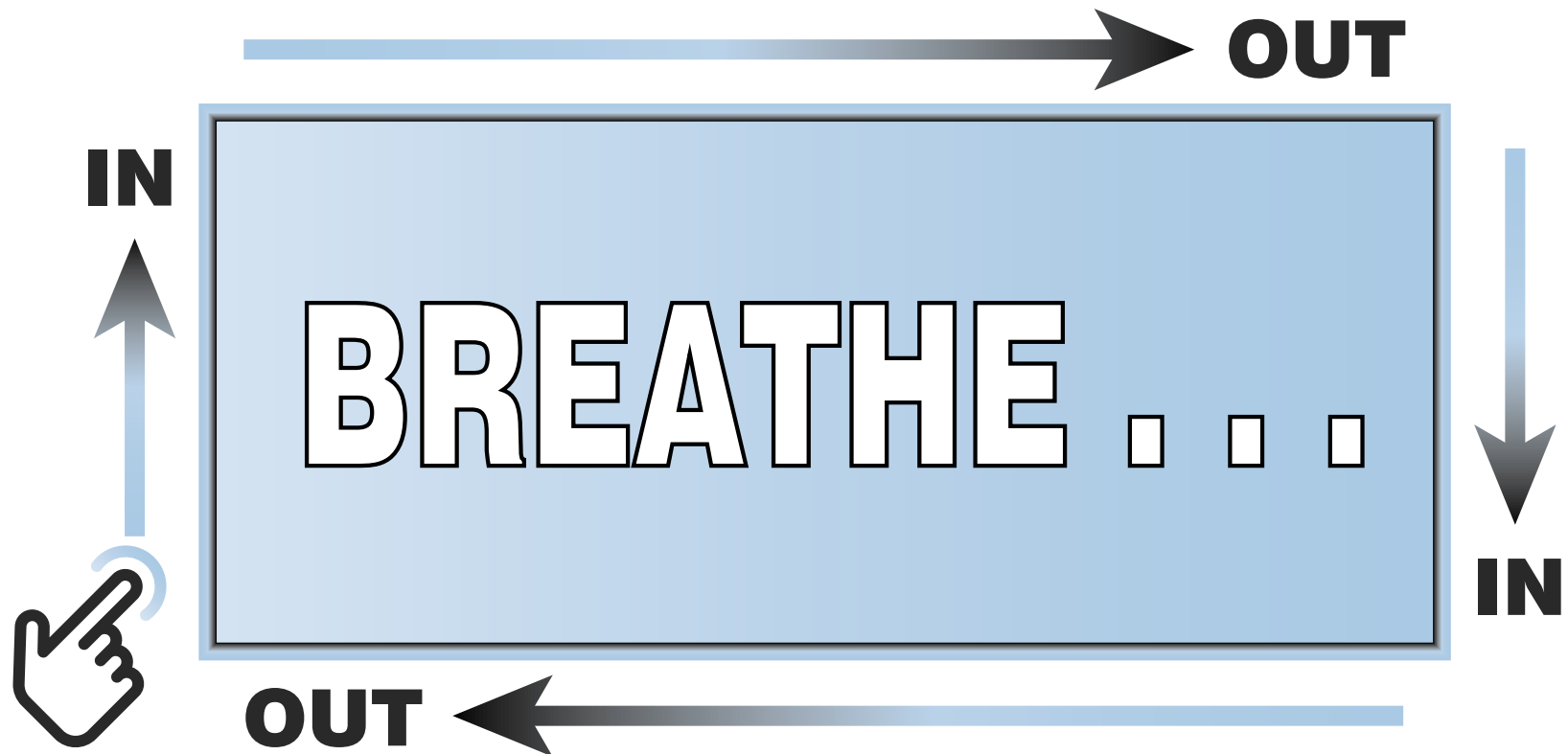
1. **Use your diaphragm**
2. **Breathe in slowly, breathe out more slowly**
3. **Keep doing it for at least 2 minutes.**



Practice this at least 5 times a day, so that you will remember how to do it when you feel most anxious or stressed.

Another way of doing this is to use “Rectangle Breathing”.

Use your finger to slowly draw the outline of the rectangle. Breathe in as you draw slowly along the short edge and breathe out as you draw along the long edge. Remember to use your diaphragm, and keep it going for at least 2 minutes.



Safe Place Imagery



Let's begin by thinking about your breathing. Take five deep, full breaths. Use your diaphragm. As you breathe out, feel the air flowing from deep inside, and try to let your shoulders relax as the air leaves your lungs. You are beginning to release any tension, discomfort and distraction from your mind. Shift your attention from the outer world to your inner world, and take a short break to a place that's peaceful and quiet. Imagine that when you breathe in, your body is filling with new air and energy, and when you breathe out you let go of a little bit of tension, a little bit of discomfort, a little distraction. So, you're breathing in energy and relaxation, and breathing out tension and stress.

You might want to allow your eyes to close. Let any outside sounds around you be in the background. They're not important to you right now. If there is something you need to pay attention to, you can open your eyes again at any point.

Now, start now to imagine a place that is peaceful and safe — a place where you feel really good. It might be a place that you've actually been to in your life, or somewhere you've seen on TV or in a film. Or it can be a new place, some place that you've never imagined yourself going to before. It doesn't really matter. As long as it's very peaceful, and very safe. A nice place to be for a few minutes...



Now try to look around and notice what you can see in this special, quiet, peaceful place. Remember to keep breathing, in and out, nice and slowly. Notice the colours around you. What can you smell? Can you hear anything? Or is it just peaceful and quiet. Feel yourself comfortable, warm, and safe. Notice the temperature and the time of day and the season of the year. Maybe there are sounds that are alive around you, of birds or the wind perhaps.

Try to notice any feelings of peacefulness or comfort that you feel and allow it to be there, don't worry about it.



You have nothing else to do right now and nowhere else to go. You are simply enjoying a few quiet moments in this peaceful place.

And if this is a pleasant experience, you can come back here and enjoy this anytime you want, just by deciding to shift your attention to your inner world, allowing your breathing to get deep and comfortable, and imagining yourself coming to this very peaceful, very quiet place. If your mind wanders or you get distracted, take another breath or two and refocus your mind back into this beautiful, peaceful, and quiet place and let this be your focus of attention for five minutes, or ten minutes, or twenty minutes — whatever works for you.

When you are ready to return, you can just slowly open your eyes, bringing your awareness back to where you are. But try to keep some of the peace and safety with you for a little longer.

You can use this space to write down your favourite places...






Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

This is a technique which is particularly useful for improving sleep, but can be used anytime. Don't do it after a big meal, and if you have any problems with cramps or painful muscles then check with your GP. Make sure you are comfortable and the room is warm enough, turn off the TV (though some gentle music might help). Follow this routine once a day if you can.

- 1 Right hand and forearm:** Squeeze your hand into a fist. Hold for 5 seconds, then relax as you breathe out. Repeat with your **left hand and forearm**.
- 2 Right upper arm:** Bring your right forearm up to your shoulder and tense your bicep. Hold for 5 seconds, then relax as you breathe out. Repeat with your **left upper arm**.
- 3 Forehead:** Raise your eyebrows as high as they will go. Now frown deeply.
- 4 Eyes and cheeks:** Squeeze your eyes tight shut for 5 seconds, then relax them as you breathe out.
- 5 Mouth and jaw:** Open your mouth as wide as you can, as if you are yawning. Hold for 5 seconds then relax and move your jaw gently from side to side.
- 6 Shoulders:** Move your shoulders upwards as if shrugging. Hold for 5 seconds then relax as you breathe out.
- 7 Shoulder blades/back:** Push your shoulder blades back, trying to almost touch them together, so that your chest is pushed forward. Hold for 5 seconds then relax again as you breathe out.
- 8 Chest and stomach:** Breathe in deeply, filling up your lungs and chest with air. Remember to use your diaphragm. Relax as you breathe out.
- 9 Hips and buttocks:** Squeeze your buttock muscles. Hold for 5 seconds, then relax as you breathe out.
- 10 Right upper leg:** Tighten your right thigh muscles. Hold for 5 seconds then relax as you breathe out. Repeat for your **left upper leg**.
- 11 Right lower leg:** Slowly and carefully pull your toes up towards you to stretch the calf muscle. Relax as you breathe out. Repeat for your **left lower leg**.
- 12 Right foot:** Curl your toes upwards then downwards. Repeat with your **left foot**.

Mindfulness 5,4,3,2,1

This is a helpful technique for when you find your mind is overwhelmed by worries or you feel anxious about something, or you have an urge to drink.

5	Try to get yourself comfortable. Take 2 minutes to use the controlled breathing exercise. Now, look around you and find something that catches your attention. Take a couple of minutes to describe it in great detail to yourself. What is it made of? What colour is it? Are there any marks or stains on it? Where did it come from? Describe each of these in detail. Try to describe everything you can see about it. Repeat this for another 4 objects you can see.	
4	Next, do the same for 4 things you can touch. It might be the material of your clothes, or the tea mug, or the carpet. Use your fingers, or the skin of your cheek, to really explore the texture, the temperature and the feel of the object.	
3	Now do the same for 3 things you can smell. You might have to work a bit harder at this one. Maybe move into your kitchen, or the bathroom. Smell the soap, or shampoo. Try different foods, explore your fridge. Have fun with it.	
2	This time find 2 things you can taste. Please be careful with this one. Find something you can eat. Lick it, or chew it very slowly. Really try to think about the taste. Does it taste as you expected, or like something else?	
1	Finally, find something you can hear. It might be birds singing outside, or traffic going past your home, or the fridge humming in the background. Just try to focus on it for a few minutes.	

This whole process can take quite a while. It uses all of your senses, and people can find it really helpful in distracting them from difficult or troublesome thoughts and feelings.

My Relaxation Plan

As we've mentioned before, these things can help but only if you use them.

Use the table below for at least 3-4 weeks to keep a record of the attempts you've made to use the relaxation techniques. Below is an example. Find blank Weekly Relaxation Plans on [pages 51-54](#).

Week No:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Breathing	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Imagery	—	—	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)	✓	—	✓	✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
5,4,3,2,1	✓	✓	—	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓

Improving your Memory

One of the most common features of chronic alcohol use is the effect it has on your memory.

This can make it difficult to do lots of things, like remembering people's names, or directions, or appointments. You may struggle to remember the day or the month or the year. You might forget birthdays, or begin to lose memories of important events from your past.

When things are really bad you might forget whether you have eaten or changed clothes recently. You may even forget or not be able to recognise loved family or friends.

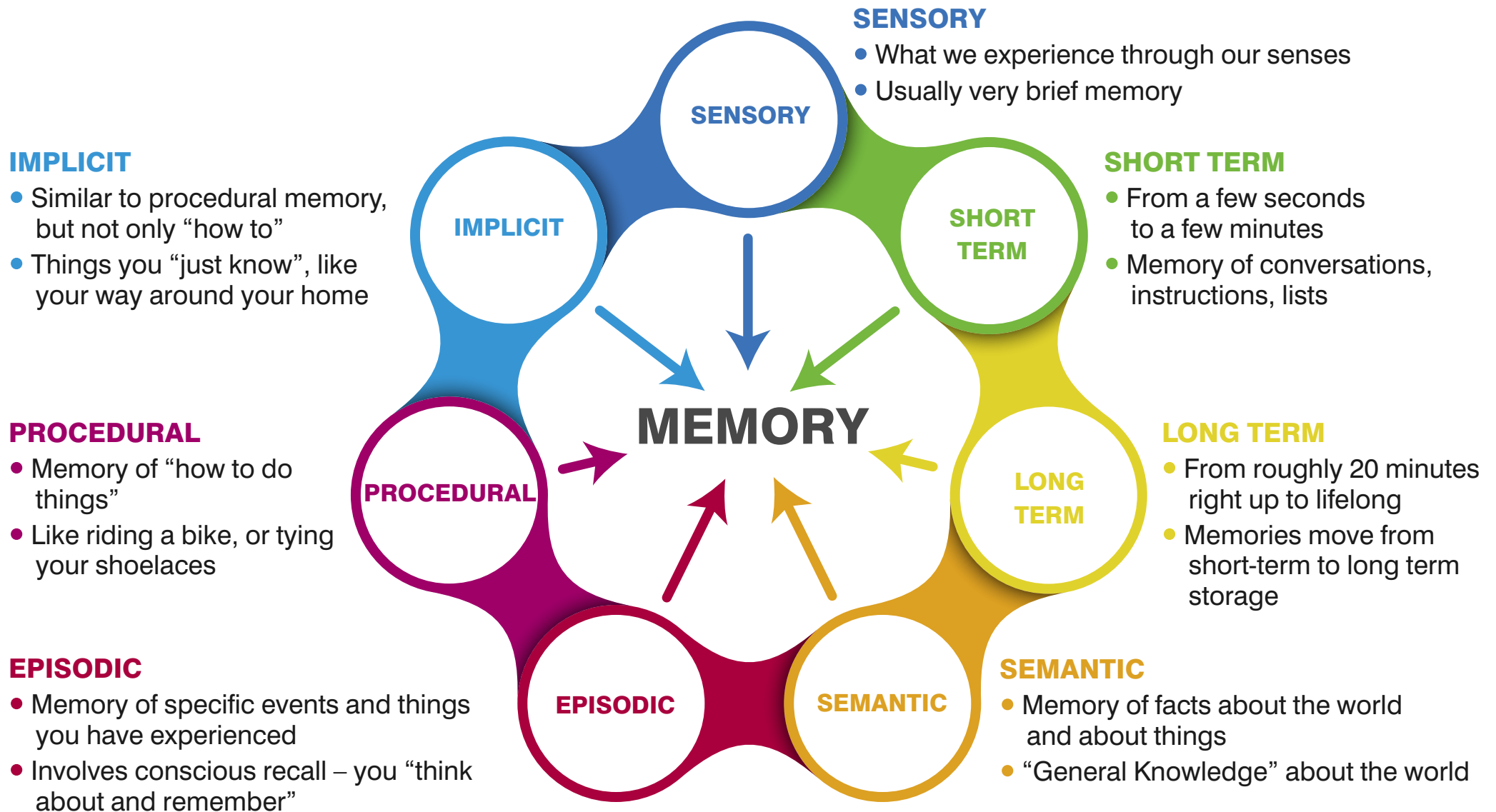
This is how important memory is to us. We rely on it for almost everything, and the more alcohol you use the more likely it is that your memory will be seriously affected. You have probably noticed some of these things happening already, but you can do things to help improve your memory. Pages [18-20](#) have some suggestions.

Remember: Don't just read it — **Do it**



**PRACTICE
MAKES
PROGRESS
NOT PERFECT**

Our memory has 7 important parts



Of these, the most commonly affected in ARCI is **short term memory**, lasting from a few seconds to a few minutes. This might not sound like long, but imagine if you couldn't remember why you have started to read this manual, or if you couldn't remember the start of a conversation a few minutes ago. It can be very difficult to function well in the world if your short term memory is impaired.

There are two important steps in helping our memory:

a. Attention — making sure we have the best chance of taking in the information (see the next section for more information on this)

- i. Listen carefully
- ii. Say to yourself “I want to remember this”
- iii. Use [controlled breathing](#) (page 8) to help calm yourself.

b. Encoding — getting the information to stay in our brain

- i. **Rehearse** the information — repeat the information over and over.
- ii. **Chunk** the information — put two or three items together. Instead of trying to remember 6 items

(bread, butter, milk, tea, cornflakes, orange juice) you can try to put the items into pairs (bread & butter, milk & tea, flakes & juice).

- iii. Use **images** to help you remember. For example, imagine a table set out for breakfast with flakes and orange juice, toast and butter and a mug of milky tea. The clearer you can imagine this the easier it will be to remember. Making the image ridiculous or funny can also help.
- iv. When trying to remember names of people, look carefully at their face and what they are wearing. Try to come up with a **phrase which describes the person, or what they do.**

Use this picture to practice **Attention**, **Rehearsal** and **Chunking**.



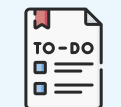
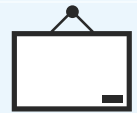
Look at the picture, then try to remember as many as you can by putting some of them together (for example, coffee and croissant, toast and jam, eggs and bacon), then repeat them to yourself.

Next, cover the picture up and see how many you can remember — write them down. After a few seconds look at the picture again and see how many you remembered.

Don't worry if you didn't get them all — do it again! Remember, improving your memory is about practice.

Some more Hints and Tips

- 1 Write things down!** Things like meetings and appointments. As soon as you have an appointment, write it down. It's a bit like having an external memory rather than relying on your internal one.
- 2 Large wall calendar:** Again, use this to write down important reminders of dates, birthdays, appointments, and other things. Put it somewhere obvious where you'll see it every day.
- 3 Whiteboard:** Put a whiteboard on the fridge to remind yourself of shopping items you need.
- 4 Sticky notes:** Keep a couple of pads of sticky notes and pens in obvious places. If you think of something you want to remember, write it down.
- 5 Alarms:** Set an alarm clock for a time you need to remember. Don't forget to leave a note to remind you what the alarm is for! For those with newer phones, set reminders on your phone, with some information about what the alarm is for.
- 6 Kitchen Timer:** If you sometimes forget that you have put something in the oven or on the hob, get an alarm or timer for the kitchen and set it before you leave the kitchen.
- 7 To Do List:** At the end of each day write a list of the things you need to remember tomorrow. Put it somewhere you will find it.
- 8 Record:** Record information as soon as you hear it, such as telephone numbers or new appointments. This can be really helpful if you don't like writing things down. You can also use a smart phone to do this.
- 9 Notes/Memos:** Put reminders up on your front door (e.g. "Remember your Keys"), or in the kitchen ("Turn off the cooker") for important things you always need to remember.



Attention

As we mentioned in the last section on memory, attention is an important part of being able to remember things. It is also important in being able to take part in conversations, watch TV and avoid feeling overwhelmed. Many people who think they have a poor memory actually have an okay memory but poor attention.

There are many ways we can learn to improve our attention. Below are some helpful hints:

- 1 Tiredness:** Checking your level of tiredness is probably one of the most important strategies you can use. Tiredness will have a major impact on your ability to pay attention. Try to plan activities that require your attention at times when you feel at your best.



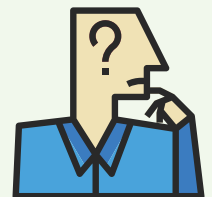
- 2 Time Pressure:** It is harder to pay attention to details when we are in a rush. Slow down, take a breath and allow plenty of time to complete tasks.







- 3 Busy Environments:** Think about your environment. Paying attention in a place that contains lots of distractions is more difficult. Try to reduce noisy distractions such as TV, the radio or other people talking if you can. If you are outside, move to a quieter area if you need to hear what is being said.



- 4 Avoid Distractions:** Our brain can take in lots of bits of information at once, but it is usually best to focus on just one thing at a time if you want to remember it. So, try not to watch TV at the same time you are on the phone or trying to fill in a form. A quiet room is probably best to pay attention to important discussions or tasks. If you find that you are struggling to complete a task because of distractions, write down your task and try it again later.



<p>5 Emotions can get in the way: Feelings such as anxiety, stress or pain can occupy your mind and demand your attention. This can make it difficult to attend to the task in front of you. Let people know if you are feeling this way. Use some of the grounding techniques we mentioned in the Relaxation and Dealing With Difficult Emotions sections to reduce your stress or anxiety.</p>	
<p>6 Set time periods for tasks and then have a “brain break” before continuing. If you are switching between tasks, try and take a small break between switching to give your brain time to adjust. Some people find it helpful to say aloud what they are doing when they change tasks to help them stay on track.</p>	
<p>7 Listening to and following conversations sometimes requires lots of effort. Try to be aware of your own limitations and when your attention is beginning to slip.</p>	
<p>8 Although it can be difficult, letting people know that you have problems with keeping your attention on conversations can help them to understand and help you.</p>	

So, improving your memory involves making sure the information you want to remember has the best chance of going in (Attention), then using tricks and tools to give it the best chance of staying in your short term memory (Encoding).

We also have to accept that sometimes our brain needs a bit of help, which is where writing things down or recording things can be helpful. As with everything though — it only helps if you do it!

Problem Solving

Everyone has problems. Having problems is not a problem, as long as you have solutions.

It can sometimes be difficult to see what your options are, so try to use this procedure to understand what the problem is, and what you can do about it:

Identify your Goal

Identify the Problem

Develop Solutions

Choose One

Do It

Here's an example:

Step	Question	Answer
Identify your Goal	What do I want to do?	Pay my bills
Identify the Problem	What's getting in the way?	Keep forgetting
Develop Solutions	What can I do about it?	Reminder on the calendar; direct debit; ask a family member to help
Choose One	What's my best option?	Direct debit
Do It	What's stopping me?	????

Sometimes one solution leads to another problem. That's fine – just repeat the process until you get to a solution you can do.

For example:

Step	Question	Answer
Identify your Goal	What do I want to do?	Set up a direct debit
Identify the Problem	What's getting in the way?	Don't know how to
Develop Solutions	What can I do about it?	Ask someone I trust to help; look it up on the internet; go to the bank
Choose One	What's my best option?	Go to the bank
Do It	What's stopping me?	????

This process can be also be used for coping with urges, or getting into “red flag” situations. Red Flag situations are those when we know we are more likely to want to drink alcohol.

Step	Question	Answer
Identify your Goal	What do I want to do?	Don't take a drink
Identify the Problem	What's getting in the way?	Strong urges
Develop Solutions	What can I do about it?	Go for a walk; use relaxation techniques; go to a meeting; watch a dvd
Choose One	What's my best option?	Go to a meeting
Do It	What's stopping me?	????

Step	Question	Answer
Identify your Goal	What do I want to do?	Don't take a drink
Identify the Problem	What's getting in the way?	Friends are drinking right now
Develop Solutions	What can I do about it?	Leave the situation; drink lots of water; ask them to stop; distract myself
Choose One	What's my best option?	Leave the situation
Do It	What's stopping me?	????

Here are some blank tables you can use yourself. Find more blank tables on [page 55](#).

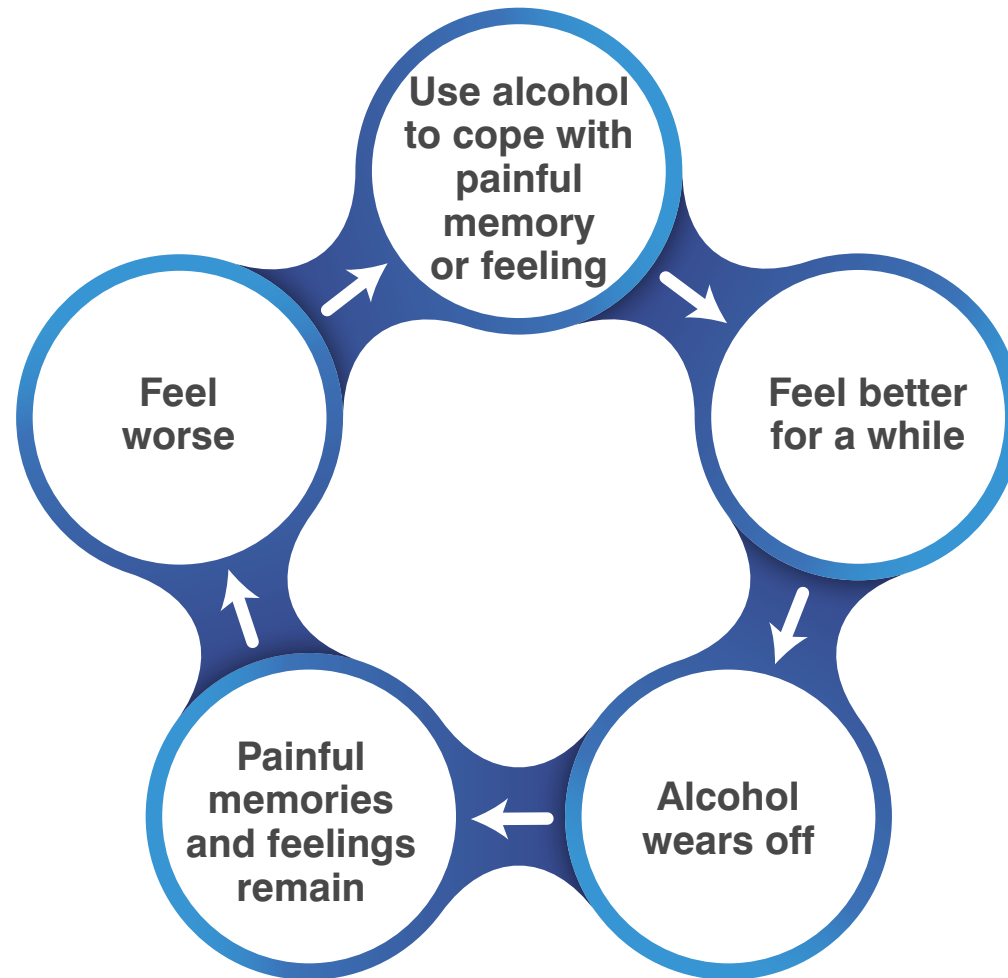
Step	Question	Answer
Identify your Goal	What do I want to do?	
Identify the Problem	What's getting in the way?	
Develop Solutions	What can I do about it?	
Choose One	What's my best option?	
Do It	What's stopping me?	

Step	Question	Answer
Identify your Goal	What do I want to do?	
Identify the Problem	What's getting in the way?	
Develop Solutions	What can I do about it?	
Choose One	What's my best option?	
Do It	What's stopping me?	

Alcohol and Emotion

People use alcohol for many reasons.

Sometimes it's a way of being sociable. Sometimes it's a way of fitting in with people around us. Often it is used to block out difficult feelings and memories. Remember though, when the alcohol wears off the feelings and memories are still there.



Using alcohol will cause more problems in the long term. Look back at the [Stress Bucket](#) (page 6 and 7) — remember that alcohol can be a “hole in the bucket”, but it doesn’t help in the long term. **There are much better ways of dealing with difficult feelings.** These alternative ways often lead to you feeling better for much longer, and so reduce your dependence on alcohol to manage your feelings.



The following pages give you some suggestions on other ways of coping with difficult feelings. You can also look at the [Relaxation section](#) (page 8) for more tips.

Dealing with difficult emotions

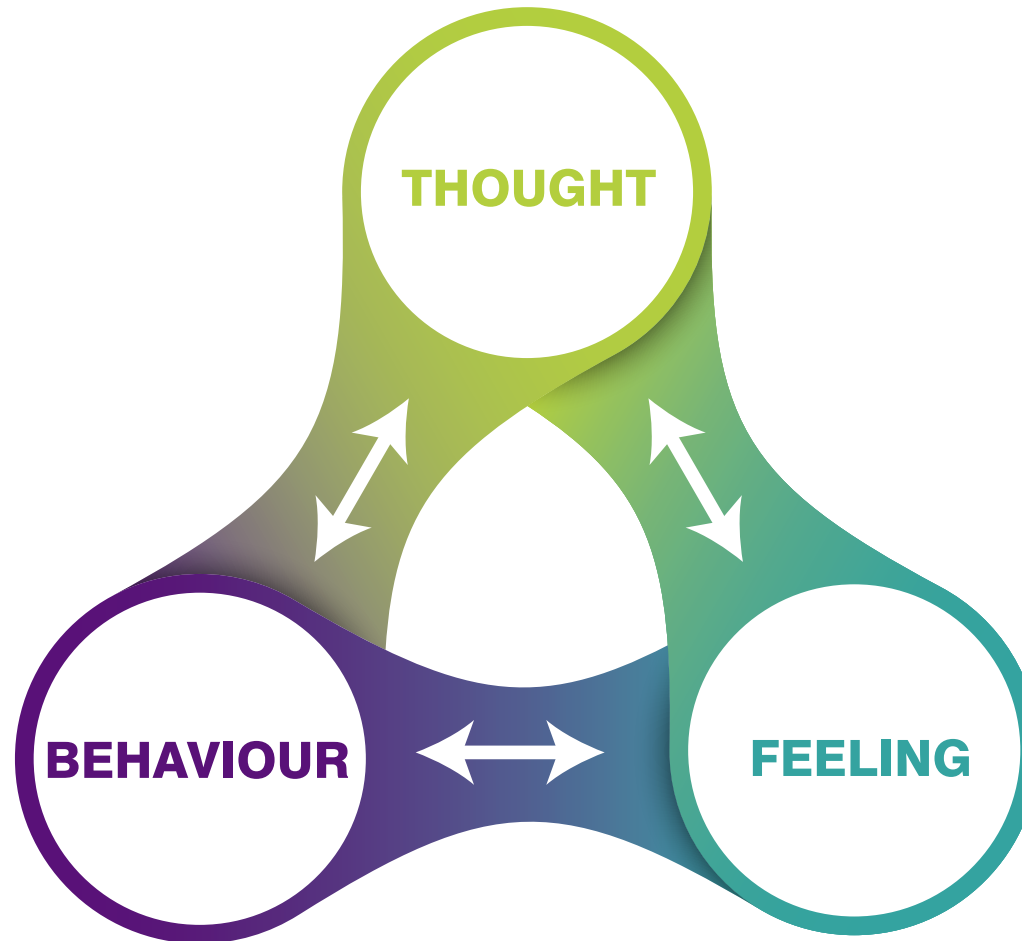
Emotions can be difficult. We sometimes don't talk to people about how we feel. We sometimes don't even really know ourselves how we feel. But we do know that difficult emotions can lead us to drink as a way of blocking them out or forgetting them. The first step in managing difficult emotions is to be able to say what we are feeling, and how strong that feeling is to us. This chart can be helpful:

Emotion					
Intensity	Sad	Angry	Afraid	Ashamed	Happy
High	Hopeless Miserable Depressed	Raging Furious Seething	Terrified Overwhelmed Panicked	Worthless Disgraced Alone	Ecstatic Overjoyed Thrilled
Medium	Lonely Dejected Sorrow	Frustrated Irritated Hostile	Anxious Frightened Worried	Embarrassed Guilty Remorseful	Cheerful Satisfied Content
Low	Unhappy Upset Down	Annoyed Tense Touchy	Unsure Concerned Cautious	Uncomfortable Sorry Sheepish	Pleased Glad Pleasant

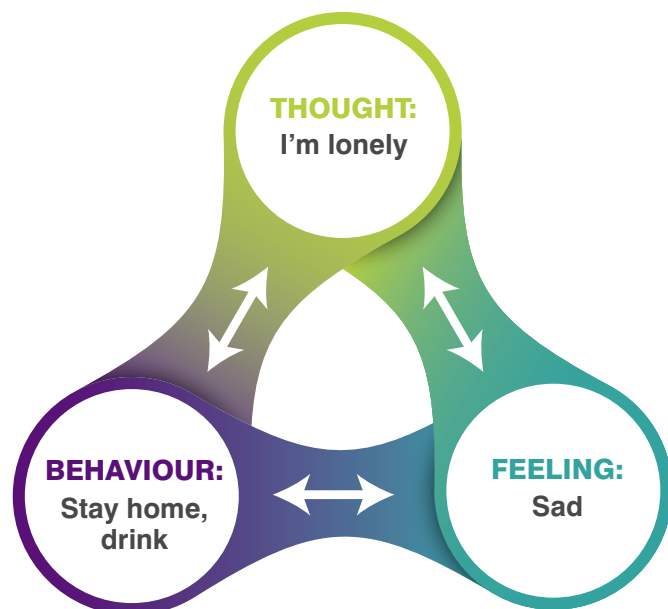
You can use this to begin to identify what you are actually feeling. Of course, sometimes this is really difficult — this is when having someone to talk it through with can be helpful. Other times it seems like we aren't feeling anything. We feel “shut down”. Being able to say that is important too.

Once you can say what you are feeling, you can start to realise that our emotions influence how we think and what we do to cope with them.

This can be summed up like this:



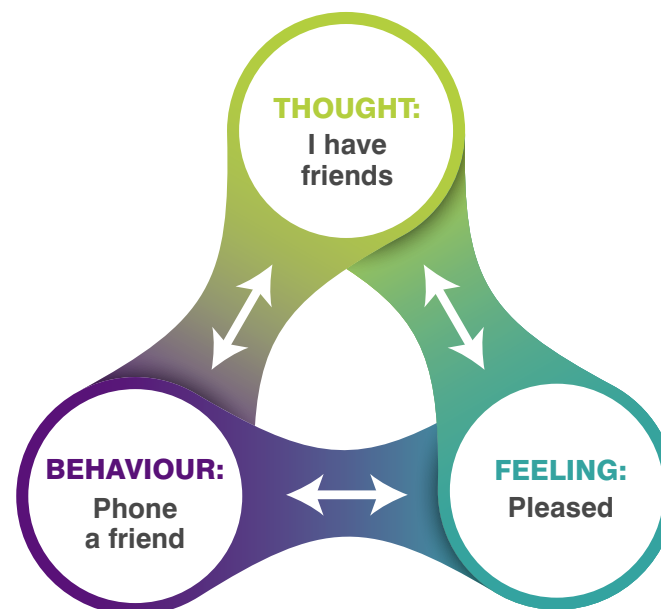
Thoughts, feelings and the things we do all interact with each other. So, we might see something like this:



In other words, you might feel sad and think “I’m lonely”, but not feel like going out because you feel sad, which makes you feel even more lonely. Once that happens, it can be easy to turn to alcohol to help you cope with the sadness and loneliness. Or, you might feel sad, decide to drink at home, and end up thinking “I’m lonely”.

The most important thing to understand is that **you can do something different**. It might be difficult, but doing

something else is exactly what will make a difference. Like this:



So, by doing something different (phone a friend), you can have more positive thoughts and feel better about yourself. You can use this to understand your patterns of thinking, feeling and the actions linked to these. Then you can try something different. There is an Old Way / New Way example on the next page. You can use the [Emotion Chart](#) (page 29) to help you understand what you are feeling, and what you would prefer to feel.

Here are some examples:

Old Way

Situation	Thoughts	Feelings	Actions
Argument with my partner	I've had enough of this!	Angry, sad	Go to the pub
In house alone	I'm lonely	Alone, depressed	Have a drink
With drinking friends	I'll just have one drink	Guilty, anxious	Have a drink to cope

New Way

Situation	Thoughts	Feelings	Actions
Argument with my partner	I've coped with this before	Calmer	Take 5 mins out, do a relaxation technique
In house alone	I can do something different	In control	Phone a friend, go for a walk
With drinking friends	I don't want to drink	Pleased, content	Have a soft drink, or leave

Remember, for new “Actions” you can use the [Relaxation section](#) (page 8) and the [Coping with Cravings section](#) (page 33), or you can come up with your own ideas.

You can use the table in the [Worksheets section](#) (page 56) to write out your “Old” and “New” ways.

Coping with Cravings

*There might be times when you get the urge, or the desire, or a craving, to drink alcohol.
At these times the important thing is to STOP.*

S **tay still:** Don't move

T **hink:** Is this *really* what I want to do?

O **ptions:** What could I do instead

P **lay it safe:** If in doubt, opt out

If you realise you are having a craving or someone offers you a drink, try to **STOP**:

S **tay still:** This will help to interrupt the habit that usually led to taking a drink (for example, walking to the cupboard or the fridge to get a drink, or even stretching out your hand to pick one up). Try to focus on your body, feel the tension in your muscles (Progressive Muscle Relaxation; Play Safe). Once you have noticed what is going on in your body, try to get your brain to wake up.

T **hink:** What do I really want to do right now? Do I really want to go back to having no memory, of feeling physically awful, of regretting my behaviour?

O **ptions:** If you can answer “no” to these questions, then try to have an option about what to do instead. Remember the section on [Problem Solving](#) (page 23). Now would be a good time to get that section out and go through the process of achieving your goal of “Not Drinking”. The following pages have a list of suggestions for things you can try when you are feeling a craving or an urge. Try to be prepared.

P **lay it safe:** Finally, if after you've tried these three things and you are still not sure if you want to drink, then Play safe. Allow yourself to feel the urge, but try to postpone having a drink for another few minutes, or at least until you have tried one or two of the things on this list.

When we are feeling an intense urge, it's often difficult to think of options. This is why having a plan can help. Remember though, these are just suggestions. Some of them will seem silly to you, some are just not possible and some will make sense. Often one thing will only work for a short time, and you might have to do several in a row to reduce the urge. The important thing is to have a range of options, and to keep trying until you find the ones which will work best for you.

Try each one, and tick the ones that work for you. Some of them will only work in some situations — there's space to make a note of when that particular option works for you. There is also space at the bottom of the table for you to write in your own ideas. Keep this table handy for when you need it. You could also write down the ones that you know work for you on post-it notes and stick them up around your house.

Option	Tried it	Works for Me	Works for me when...
<i>E.g. Talk to someone</i>	✓	✓	<i>I'm feeling sad!</i>
Talk to someone			
Play the A-Z game (songs, TV programmes, people)			
Sing a song			
Read a book, magazine, leaflet			
Watch TV or a film			
Hug something soft			
Have a shower or bath			

Option	Tried it	Works for Me	Works for me when...
Splash cold water on your face			
Listen to music			
Do a puzzle			
Play a game on your phone or laptop			
Take a walk			
Have something to eat			
Say out loud 10 good things about yourself			
Make a plan for tomorrow			
Punch a pillow 3 times			
Have a tea or coffee or a glass of water			
Drink ice cold water			
Draw something			
Find a smell you really like			
Find out something you didn't know			
Count to 1000			
Change what you are wearing right now			

My ideas	Tried it	Works for Me	Works for me when...

Training to Succeed

One problem that people often find is that when they are feeling the strongest urges or feeling their lowest mood is the time they find it hardest to remember to use these techniques. They then feel guilty or that they've failed because they weren't able to do something different. Other people can often reinforce this message by getting upset and angry that the person has relapsed again.

It is important to remember that recovery is a process and it needs work. Think of it this way: if you were to decide to run a marathon you wouldn't set out today and expect to succeed. You would understand that you need to train your body to manage the difficult journey. In the same way, you need to **train your mind** to manage the difficult journey ahead. One way of motivating yourself to do that is to use a **daily activity planner** to help you plan and remember to do things which will help your recovery.

Here is an example:

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7-9am	—	<i>gentle exercise</i>	<i>controlled breathing</i>	—	<i>5,4,3,2,1</i>	<i>safe place imagery</i>	<i>safe place imagery</i>
9-10am	<i>controlled breathing</i>	—	<i>5,4,3,2,1</i>	<i>gentle exercise</i>	—	<i>gentle exercise</i>	<i>go for a walk</i>
10-11am	<i>gentle exercise</i>	<i>go for a walk</i>	—	<i>go for a walk</i>	<i>controlled breathing</i>	<i>controlled breathing</i>	<i>go for a walk</i>

Start by trying to put one thing in each day. You can then use the [Problem Solving section](#) (page 23) to help you to think about and plan how to achieve your goals. You can build up the number of things you plan, but be careful not to get overwhelmed. You could also put in your [Relaxation techniques](#) (page 8), to remind you to do that every day.

Daily Activity Planner

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7-9am							
9-10am							
10-11am							
11-12pm							
1-2pm							
2-3pm							
3-4pm							
5-6pm							
6-7pm							
7-8pm							
8-9pm							
9-10pm							
10-12pm							

Keeping Active

Exercise is important.

The recommended level of exercise for adults (19-64 years old) is 150 minutes of moderate activity every week (average of just 22 minutes a day!).

Many daily activities count as exercise — like walking, carrying shopping, gardening and so on. You can mix and match activities, and you might find that some days you work extra hard because of daily living tasks that you have to complete. There are always opportunities to exercise, and get fitter and stronger (for example, taking the stairs instead of the lift when you are out). Remember, though, that anyone with a medical condition (like heart or lung disease) should check with their GP before starting regular exercise.

The recommended levels of exercise advised for older adults (65+) is the same as for those 19-64 years old. However, different types of exercise may be harder to do due to your abilities and mobility level. For any advice on how to get more active, or advice on types of activity, speak to your GP or physiotherapist.

Something else to think about: regular prolonged periods of sitting contribute towards the development of major health conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and some types of cancer. Some experts in healthcare, have recommended taking active breaks (moving around) for every 30 minutes of sitting down.



There are always ways to become more active throughout the day. Small changes to your daily routine can make big differences to your health and wellbeing. Speaking to your physiotherapist is the best way to find out how to safely increase your activity levels.

You can find some good ideas at this website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/free-fitness-ideas/>

You can use the [Daily Activity Planner](#) (page 57) to plan your exercise.

Remember: Don't overdo it, but do something.



Healthy Eating

*Our bodies know what they need to survive.
Alcohol is not necessary for survival.*

There are lots of ways of eating well and improving your health, energy levels, sleep and mood.

Here are a few suggestions:

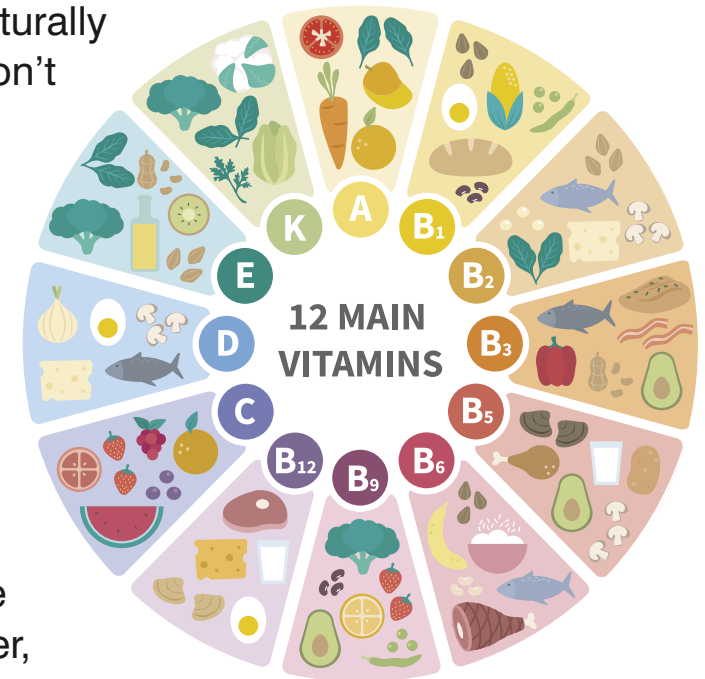
- 1 Drink Water:** Water is the purest fluid we can drink. Our bodies need roughly 2 litres of fluids every day (about 8 glasses), and the more of this that is water the better it will be for us. And remember — tap water is free.
- 2 Fruit and Vegetables:** The experts say that we should eat around 8 portions of fruit and vegetables every day. Most people can manage at least 5 a day. Don't be put off by frozen vegetables (or fruit) — they are usually just as healthy as fresh produce, and can be easier to cook. Make a list of your favourite fruits and vegetables, and make sure you have them on your shopping list. Fruit juice counts too.
- 3 Sugar:** Our bodies need sugar. There are lots of ways of getting sugars into our bodies. Eating brown rice, brown bread and nuts are really good ways of getting the right sort of sugar. But remember, there's nothing wrong with having some chocolate, biscuits or cakes. These things can provide a much needed energy (and mood) boost, but, like most things, too much will do us harm.



4 Vitamins and Minerals: These are essential parts of our diet and are naturally found in most foods. They help our bodies to work properly, and if we don't have enough of them we can become ill. Thiamine is a good example, and people who have alcohol problems often have too little Thiamine. This can lead to problems with memory and with the heart. People who eat mostly "white" carbohydrates (e.g. white bread, white rice) also can have problems with low thiamine. Eating enough fresh fruit and vegetables will ensure you get enough vitamins and minerals. You can also take supplement tablets if you're worried you're not getting enough.

5 Eat Slowly: Most people actually eat too fast. We often eat when we're distracted by other things like watching TV, and we don't fully appreciate the food we eat. Slowing down the way you eat will help you digest better, which helps to get the most out of the vitamins and minerals in the food. It can make food taste better and really focussing on the way food tastes, feels and smells can be relaxing.

6 Eat Regularly: It can be easy to skip breakfast, snack during the day and have too much later on. Our bodies prefer a consistent, regular pattern. Try to make sure you have a good breakfast (cereal or brown toast rather than a fry up), a decent lunch and a regular time for dinner. This will help make sure you get enough vitamins and minerals, keep your blood sugar consistent and stop you getting too hungry.



Sleep

Sleep is one of the most important things we do.

We know that our brain struggles to sleep in the early days, weeks and months of recovery. This is partly because you are developing new routines that don't involve alcohol, so your brain has to get used to it. The good news is that it will improve. And there are lots of things you can do to help.

Top Ten Tips for Good Sleep

- 1 Bedroom:** Your room should be tidy, quiet and dark for sleeping.
- 2 Cut out the caffeine:** It is a stimulant and stops you from sleeping. Try to have your last tea, coffee or fizzy drink no later than 6pm. Tobacco is also a stimulant, so try to cut it out too.
- 3 Exercise:** A little exercise each day will help you sleep, but try to exercise during the morning or afternoon rather than at night.
- 4 No naps:** Don't sleep during the day. It will only make it harder to get to sleep at night.
- 5 Eating:** A light snack before bedtime (and a hot milky drink) can be helpful. Bananas are known to help people sleep.
- 6 Routine:** Our brains like routines, so decide on a regular time to go to bed each night.
- 7 Reduce stimulation:** Switch off the TV around 30 minutes before you'd like to be asleep. TV stimulates the eyes and makes it harder to switch off. If you need noise to sleep try the radio or some music.

- 8 **Relax:** Use Progressive Muscle Relaxation or Controlled Breathing to help you forget about the day.
- 9 **Worry Box:** Sometimes we struggle to sleep because of all the worries from the day. Try writing any worries down on a piece of paper and put them in a box. Tell yourself you will deal with them tomorrow.
- 10 **When it doesn't work:** If you are not asleep after about 30 minutes of trying, then get up out of bed. Stay warm. Don't have tea or coffee or a smoke, and don't turn on the TV if you can avoid it. Wait until you feel sleepy again then return to bed.

It can take a few weeks to get your brain and body used to a new routine. Keep working at it and it will usually work.



Conclusion

And that's all there is to it... Easy, right?

Of course not. If it was, you would already have done it by now. Very few people actually want to live with an addiction. And no one really wants the physical, emotional and social consequences of living with one. People have a long list of health problems (stomach, muscles, liver, bones, teeth, pain, etc.). They generally feel terrible most of the time (and so drink more in order to cope with how bad they feel). They have problems with anger, depression, and anxiety. They have difficulty with friends, partners, work, loneliness, bills, money, food, sleep...

It's not a great life.

But you can change it. You need help, tolerance, understanding and support from friends and family. You need encouragement and advice. You need your GP, hospital doctors, support workers, recovery peers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, dentists, opticians, podiatrists and psychologists.

Most of all, you need your determination, dedication and strength.

This manual is designed to help you, and those around you, to make the journey clearer and to act as a guide, but it doesn't work if you don't take the first steps and then keep walking.

You can do it. We can help.

Resources

Alcohol Recovery and Abstinence

Alcoholics Anonymous

Website: <https://aa-edinburgh.org.uk>

Helpline: **0800 9177 650**

Drinkline Scotland is a confidential advice and information line.

Helpline: **0800 7314 314**

NHS Inform provides information on alcohol misuse and local support services.

Helpline: **0800 22 44 88**

Alcohol Focus Scotland provides information on alcohol issues.

Helpline: **0141 572 6700**

Recovery Hubs

Recovery Hubs are local centres across Lothian with access to a wide range of professional help. They are all drop-in services — you don't need an appointment, just go along during opening hours.

North East Recovery Hub

5 Links Place, Edinburgh, EH6 7EZ.

Tel: **0131 554 7516**

North West Recovery Hub

c/o Craigroyston Health Clinic,
1b Pennywell Road, Edinburgh EH4 4PH.

Tel: **0131 315 2121**

South East Recovery Hub

Temporarily relocated to Ballenden House,
28-32 Howden Street, Edinburgh EH8 9HL.

South Neighbourhood Office – West Wing,
40 Captains Road, Edinburgh EH17 8QF.

Tel: **0131 469 5132 or 0131 469 5093**

South West Recovery Hub

Wester Hailes Healthy Living Centre,
30 Harvesters Way, Edinburgh EH14 3JF.

Tel: **0131 453 9448**

East Lothian and Midlothian resources

East Lothian Substance Misuse Service

The Esk Centre, Ladywell Way, Musselburgh EH21 6AB.

Tel: **0131 446 4853**

Midlothian Substance Misuse Service

11 St Andrew Street, Dalkeith EH22 1AL.

Tel: **0131 285 9600**

West Lothian resources

Community Addictions Service

1st Floor, Civic Centre, Howden Road South,
Livingston EH54 6FF.

Tel: **01506 282 845**

Email: addictions.service@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

WLDAS (West Lothian Drug and Alcohol Recovery Services)

Tel: **01506 430 225**

Health resources

NHS 24 provides health information and self-care advice for people in Scotland. Tel: **111**

Your GP should be your first point of contact for all health related problems.

Mental Health — Crisis Services in Edinburgh and the Lothians

Mental Health Assessment Service on **0131 537 6000**.

This is a self referral service for people experiencing a crisis and in need of urgent help. It is based in the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, Morningside Place.

The Edinburgh Crisis Centre can be contacted directly if you want to discuss a mental health crisis.

Tel: **0808 801 0414**

Website: www.edinburghcrisiscentre.org.uk

Social Care Direct may be able to help with general enquiries and emergency assistance.

Tel: **0131 200 2324** (*from 8.30am-5pm*). If you need urgent assistance outwith these times call the

Out of Hours service on **0800 731 6969**.

Your local Emergency Department or GP can also provide emergency advice and support.

General: Edinburgh

Health in Mind is a central point for a wide range of resources including social supports and leisure activities.

Tel: **0131 225 8508**

Email: contactus@health-in-mind.org.uk

Website: <https://www.health-in-mind.org.uk>

Mental Health Information Station is a great resource for anyone living in Edinburgh. They have a huge range of resources and advice covering mental health, fitness and leisure activities, housing and social advice.

Tel: **0131 537 8688**

Website: <https://services.nhslothian.scot/mentalhealthinformationstation/Pages/default.aspx>

CARDS Rowan Alba: Community Alcohol Related Brain Damage Service is a befriending service which provides emotional health and social networks to service users through volunteers.

Tel: **0771 508 2428**

Email: cards@rowanalba.org

Website: www.rowanalba.org

General: National

Breathing Space: Provides confidential, non-judgemental emotional support in Scotland.

Freephone: **0800 83 85 87** (*Mon-Thur 6pm-2am, Fri 6pm-Mon 6am*)

Website: <https://breathingspace.scot>

Samaritans: Provides confidential, non-judgemental emotional support, 24 hours a day.

Tel: **116 123**

Website: www.samaritans.org

Anxiety UK: Provides support for all anxiety disorders.

Tel: **03444 775 774** (*Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5.30pm*)

Website: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Mental Health Foundation: Provides information and support for anyone with mental health problems or learning disabilities.

Website: www.mentalhealth.org.uk

No Panic: Provides support and advice particularly for those who experience panic attacks.

Tel: **0300 772 9844** (*daily, 10am-10pm*)

Website: www.nopanic.org.uk

Carers

Rethink Mental Illness: Support and advice for people living with mental illness.

Tel: **0300 5000 927** (*Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm*)

Website: www.rethink.org

Housing

CHAI (Community Help and Advice Initiative)

deliver city-wide housing support through a visiting support service aimed at maintaining tenancies and promoting independence.

Tel: **0131 442 2100**

Shelter offer a free helpline for all housing issues.

Tel: **0808 800 4444**

SFAD (Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs) is a national charity that supports anyone concerned about someone else's alcohol or drug use in Scotland.

Tel: **08080 101011**

Website: <https://www.sfad.org.uk>

Edinburgh Carers Council are a local Edinburgh charity that provides free, confidential and independent advocacy for carers supporting someone with mental or physical health.

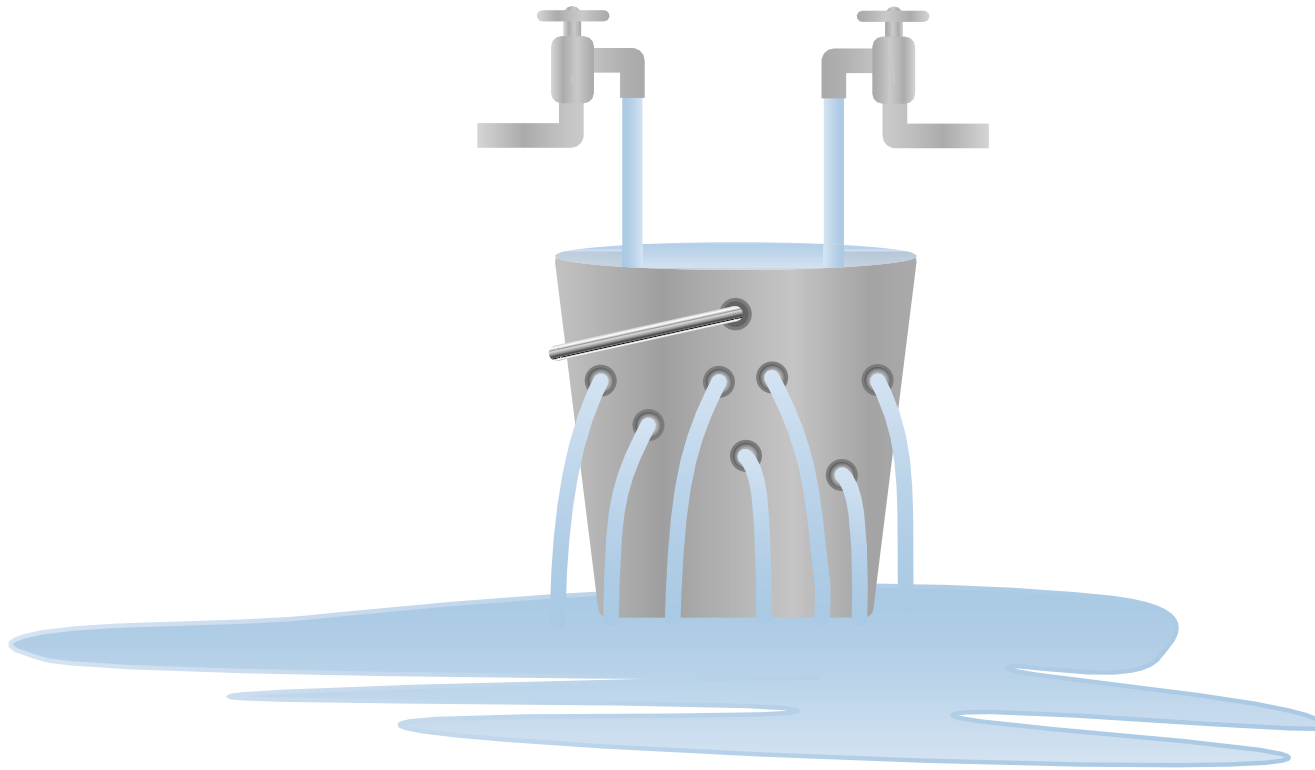
Tel: **0131 322 8480**

Website: <https://edinburghcarerscouncil.co.uk>

Worksheets

A. The Stress Bucket

STRESSORS



MY COPING STRATEGIES

B. My Relaxation Plan

Use the table below for at least 3-4 weeks to keep a record of the attempts you've made to use the relaxation techniques.

Week 1	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Breathing							
Imagery							
Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)							
5,4,3,2,1							

B. My Relaxation Plan

Use the table below for at least 3-4 weeks to keep a record of the attempts you've made to use the relaxation techniques.

Week 2	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Breathing							
Imagery							
Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)							
5,4,3,2,1							

B. My Relaxation Plan

Use the table below for at least 3-4 weeks to keep a record of the attempts you've made to use the relaxation techniques.

Week 3	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Breathing							
Imagery							
Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)							
5,4,3,2,1							

B. My Relaxation Plan

Use the table below for at least 3-4 weeks to keep a record of the attempts you've made to use the relaxation techniques.

Week 4	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Breathing							
Imagery							
Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)							
5,4,3,2,1							

C. Problem Solving

Step	Question	Answer
Identify your Goal	What do I want to do?	
Identify the Problem	What's getting in the way?	
Develop Solutions	What can I do about it?	
Choose One	What's my best option?	
Do It	What's stopping me?	

Step	Question	Answer
Identify your Goal	What do I want to do?	
Identify the Problem	What's getting in the way?	
Develop Solutions	What can I do about it?	
Choose One	What's my best option?	
Do It	What's stopping me?	

D. Old Way / New Way

Old Way

Situation	Thoughts	Feelings	Actions
Argument with my partner	I've had enough of this!	Angry, sad	Go to the pub
In house alone	I'm lonely	Alone, depressed	Have a drink

New Way

Situation	Thoughts	Feelings	Actions
Argument with my partner	I've coped with this before	Calmer	Take 5 mins out, do a relaxation technique
In house alone	I can do something different	In control	Phone a friend, go for a walk

E. Daily Activity Planner

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7-9am							
9-10am							
10-11am							
11-12pm							
1-2pm							
2-3pm							
3-4pm							
5-6pm							
6-7pm							
7-8pm							
8-9pm							
9-10pm							
10-12pm							

All enquiries to:

Penumbra Milestone | 113 Oxfords Road North | Edinburgh EH14 1EB

Tel: 0131 441 5778

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