

## A think before you 'score/drink' card

The idea is you write down what will happen if you use drugs or drink. It should be a written or visual reminder to get you back to reality when the little voice is saying "one little smoke/hit/drink won't hurt".

The reminder should be personal to you, it could include:

- A list of what will happen to you physically, socially, emotionally or financially if you use or drink. You could include information from work you have done with your Care Co-ordinator.
- Photos of who and what you will lose e.g. family/partner/house/children.

It is more effective if you put your reminder somewhere that you will regularly see it, such as in your wallet, on your bedroom door or on your wall.

## Planning your life/replacing the substance with another activity

It is really important that you have a healthy and rewarding life.

The CSSMS staff have trained in the Community Reinforcement Approach (CRA) which focuses on helping you to live the life you want and to build up activities that do not involve drugs and drink.

CRA is also very effective at helping you to improve skills in problem solving, communication and drink/drug refusal.

## Getting help for problems such as depression, anxiety, relationship difficulties and low self-confidence

It is important to let us know if you are experiencing problems in these areas. Staff can help with communication and relationship work and can treat or refer you for help with anxiety and depression.

**We hope you find this leaflet helpful and that you try to practice some of the exercises. If you would like more help with any of the suggestions then please discuss this with your Care Coordinator.**

## Support groups and contact details

Gloucestershire Counselling Service	01453 766310
First Steps to Freedom	0845 1202916
Changes	01782 280648
NA UK 24 hour Helpline	0845 3733366
AA UK 24 hour Helpline	0845 7697555
Frank Helpline	0800 776600
NHS Direct	0845 4647

## Independence Trust (formerly GDAS)

Gloucester	01452 876440
Cheltenham	01242 584881
Stroud	01453 755711
Forest of Dean	01594 825656

## Countywide Specialist Substance Misuse Service

West Gloucestershire Team	01452 891260
East Gloucestershire Team	01242 845614
Criminal Justice Drugs Team	01452 545779
Branchlea Cross	01242 845600

## Primary Care Substance Misuse Service

Countywide Team	01452 523151
-----------------	--------------

CSSMS



# Relapse prevention for beginners

## Detoxification and craving

Detoxification or stabilisation on medication may not completely stop you wanting to use drugs or drink. These feelings, called cravings can go on for months and, in some cases, years.

Craving is a normal experience. **It does not mean that you are weak or unmotivated.**

One explanation for craving is the levels of certain brain chemicals being altered by your drug or alcohol use, so when the drugs or alcohol are withdrawn the natural balance takes some time to be restored.

Another reason is that you have learnt, without knowing, to associate certain situations with drugs or drinking alcohol. This means that powerful memories, and sometimes even withdrawal symptoms, can be sparked off by certain objects e.g. wine glasses, needles, swabs, tin foil, certain people and places, streets, houses and friends.

It is not only craving that can cause relapse. It is thought that 70% of relapses are due to negative emotional states like sadness, anger, anxiety, conflict with someone close to you or social pressure.

There are several techniques that we can teach you to help reduce your craving and lower the risk of difficult situations or emotions causing you to relapse.

## Developing strategies for coping with craving

Studies have shown that craving usually lasts for 30–40 minutes. If you plan to do activities that take your mind off the craving for about half an hour, when you have finished them the craving should have gone away. It is important to write the activities down and to keep the list with you.

If you just do the list 'in your head' you won't remember what you can do to take your mind off drugs/alcohol. It works best if you make a pact with yourself that you will not use or drink until you have completed the chosen activity.

It's up to you what activities you have on your list. Think carefully about what would work for you and have a varied list to cover a variety of situations.

Some successful strategies used by previous service users include: taking a bath, phoning someone, doing some exercise, reading, model making, doing jigsaws, having something to eat and basic breathing exercises.

## Recognising and planning for high risk situations

Situations will arise which will put you under pressure to use drugs or drink again.

You might be feeling stressed and have relied on using drugs or alcohol to deal with stress in the past, or you might have to attend a place where you know you will be put under pressure to use drugs or drink by friends or family members.

The best way of dealing with these situations is to have plans on how to cope when they arise.

You will have to think ahead about what is due to happen in the near future, for example "What will I do if I am given ..... at Fred's party next week?", "How am I going to cope with the stress of a job interview/moving house?"

It is worth practising these scenarios with your Care Co-ordinator, friend, partner or family member.

## Seemingly "innocent" situations

These following situation examples are quite common:

"I just found myself outside X's house with £50 in my pocket and before I knew it ....."

"For some reason I made a mistake and got off the bus one stop early and suddenly found myself in the Dog & Duck with a pint in my hand ....."

When we talk to people who have been in these situations we often find that the person was putting themselves at risk for many hours before the relapse. If we help you to be more aware of potentially risky situations, you can reduce the chance of relapsing.