



Additional Materials for the

STEPS COPE Workbook

**A Parent's Mental Health Problems
Parental Drug Misuse
A Young Person's Own Substance
Misuse
Previous Hidden Harm**

ABOUT THESE MATERIALS

STEPS TO COPE was originally developed to support young people affected by parental **ALCOHOL MISUSE, DRUG MISUSE, or MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS.**

Our Big Lottery grant has meant we have focused on parental alcohol misuse for the last few years. However, following feedback from workers and young people, we have decided to expand our work and provide information on **FOUR ISSUES** that young people may face, either on their own or alongside the parental alcohol misuse. These include:

1

A PARENT'S MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

2

A PARENT'S DRUG USE

3

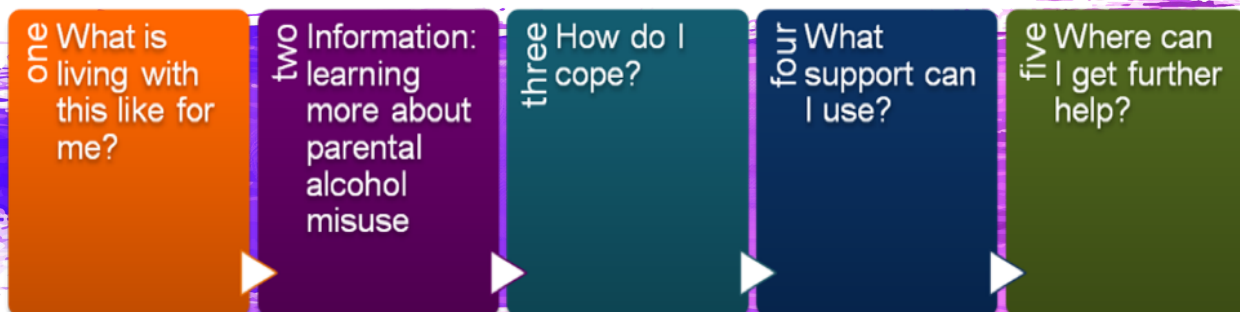
YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE STRUGGLING WITH THEIR OWN SUBSTANCE USE

4

YOUNG PEOPLE WHOSE SITUATION HAS CHANGED (E.G. THEY ARE IN FOSTER CARE), BUT WHO ARE STILL AFFECTED BY PARENTAL ISSUES FROM THEIR CHILDHOOD



This additional information should be used alongside the Steps to Cope (StC) workbook or website. If you are working through the StC intervention, you will be going through these 5 steps:



While the additional information will be useful for all 5 steps, it may be particularly useful when working through Step 2. The important thing to remember is that it will not be telling you what you "should do", but rather help you choose what could work best for you in difficult situations.

GETTING STARTED

We know from what young people have told us that their problems featuring drug abuse and mental health issues, as well as their parent's issues, tend to affect young people in very similar ways. Young people facing these situations tend to:

BOTTLE UP WHAT THEY ARE FEELING

FEEL PANICKY, CONFUSED, OR MIXED UP

TRY TO HIDE IT FROM FRIENDS

FEEL ANGRY WITH THE PERSON AND THE WAY THEY BEHAVE, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY LET THEM DOWN AND BREAK PROMISES



FEEL A RANGE OF OTHER STRONG FEELINGS: UPSET; FRUSTRATED; LONELY; ASHAMED; SAD; EMBARRASSED; SCARED...

FEEL ANNOYED AT THEMSELVES BECAUSE THINGS ARE NOT CHANGING

KEY MESSAGES FROM STEPS TO COPE

Thinking about the problems that can come with living with alcohol or drug misuse or mental health problems in the family may be upsetting and can lead to really strong feelings.

IT'S OK to feel worried, angry, or upset. These feelings are neither right nor wrong - they **NORMAL**. It's what we do with these feelings that is important, so looking at all 5 steps in StC is a good start. A key message for young people from StC is:

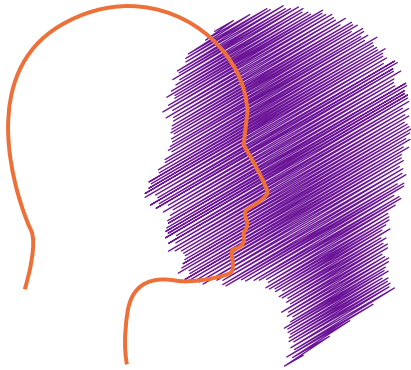
You didn't **CAUSE** it, you cannot **CURE** it, you can't **CONTROL** it, but....

You **CAN** take better care of yourself.

This can **HELP** you and may influence others around you in a **POSITIVE** way.

A PARENT'S MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

When someone has a mental health problem, they may find everyday things very difficult to do and they may feel **CONFUSED** and upset a lot of the time. They may do things that seem normal to them, but to other people they may seem strange.



MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS CAN AFFECT ANYONE.

Without support and treatment, mental health problems can have a serious effect on the individual and those around them.

Every year in the UK, **OVER 250,000 PEOPLE** are admitted to psychiatric hospitals because of serious mental health problems. Many more people will have a wide range of less serious mental health problems.



Mental health problems take many different forms and affect people in different ways. Schizophrenia, depression and personality disorders are all types of mental health problems.

NO ONE IS TO BLAME for someone developing mental health problems. It is no one's fault. There is also no single cause for mental health problems. The reasons they develop are complex, but it is likely to be a mixture of different things, which may include:

- ★ **CHEMICALS IN THE BRAIN** that control emotions being out of balance
- ★ Prolonged periods of serious **WORRY AND STRESS**
- ★ **SIGNIFICANT LOSS** such as death of a close friend, job loss, other endings
- ★ Significant **ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUG ABUSE**

THE MAIN THING TO KNOW IS

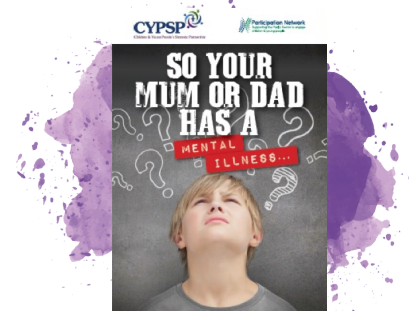
that you cannot cause another person's mental illness and you can't "catch" it.

Due to mental health problems being so common, the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership have developed information leaflets on living with mental health problems. They can be found at:

[HTTP://BIT.DO/CYPSPMI](http://bit.do/cypspmi)

or visit:

[HTTPS://WWW.MINDINGYOURHEAD.INFO](https://www.mindingyourhead.info)



MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

BIPOLAR AFFECTIVE DISORDER ("MANIC DEPRESSION")

This is a type of mental health problem that can make a person feel hyper one day and very down the next. When they are hyper they can seem very energetic, excited and active, behaving and dressing strangely. When they are down they can seem very depressed.

Manic depression is an old-fashioned way of describing 'bipolar affective disorder'.

PHOBIA

When someone has a very big fear of something that most people do not find very scary at all. People can have a phobia of anything from spiders to stamps.

COMPULSIONS

Sometimes when someone is ill they might do something over and over again; this is referred to as a compulsion. It could be something like washing your hands again and again even if they are already clean.

The person usually thinks something bad will happen if they don't keep repeating the action.

They can often have obsessive thoughts and compulsions at the same time.

DEPRESSION

Depression is more than just feeling sad; the person may also feel hopeless or worthless. They may have difficulty concentrating, have little energy, difficulty sleeping and a loss of appetite. These feelings usually last for a long time.

OBSESSIVE THOUGHTS

Usually, these are things the person does not want to think about but that they cannot get out of their head. The person might think the same thing over and over again. It can be upsetting for them and often happens at the same time as a compulsion.



MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

ANXIETY

This is another word for feeling fear, or being scared or nervous. Some people with mental illness can feel like this even if it seems as though there is nothing to be scared of.

PANIC/ANXIETY ATTACKS

This is the feeling someone has when they suddenly feel very afraid or nervous. Usually they feel scared they cannot breathe properly, their heart beats quickly and they start to sweat. They also get a tingling in their fingers, arms, toes and head. They often feel something really bad is about to happen or that they are in real danger.

SCHIZOPHRENIA

("PSYCHOSIS/PSYCHOTIC")

If someone has schizophrenia or is 'psychotic' they might have a lot of confusing thoughts and feelings in their head. Sometimes they find it hard to tell what is real and what is not real. People with this illness sometimes smell, taste, hear or see things that are not really there (these are called hallucinations), but the person believes they are real. They can even feel confused about people they know and love and, as a result, they sometimes behave in ways that seem strange to other people.

STRESS

When someone has a lot of things they worry about all the time, they can feel 'stressed'. They worry so much that they find it hard to think about much else. Stress can stop people sleeping properly and they might eat too much, or too little. If a person feels stressed for a long time, it can stop them from enjoying life and being as happy as they used to be. It can also lead to other, more serious kinds of mental health problems.



STEPS  COPE

These definitions were adapted from the NSPCC's Family Smiles Programme, a service for family members affected by parental mental ill health.

PARENTAL DRUG MISUSE

As with alcohol, living with a parent's **DRUG USE** can create a range of stress and strain for all the family. This section gives some more information about drugs (chemicals that change a way a person's body works).

MEDICINES are a type of legal drugs. If you have ever been sick and had to take medicine, you already know about one kind of drug. Medicines are **LEGAL DRUGS**, which means doctors are allowed to prescribe them for people, shops can sell them, and people are allowed to buy them. But it is not legal, or safe, for people to use these medicines any way they want or to buy them from people who are selling them illegally.



CIGARETTES AND ALCOHOL are two kinds of legal drugs. However, smoking or drinking a lot is not healthy and causes the most damage to people's health in Northern Ireland.

When people talk about a "drug problem," they usually mean abusing medication or using **ILLEGAL DRUGS** such as heroin, cannabis, LSD, cocaine, and ecstasy. Illegal drugs also include newer types which are drugs that are made to mimic the effects of other illegal drugs. These used to be called "legal highs" but are now called **NEW PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES (NPS)**. An example of an NPS is "Spice".



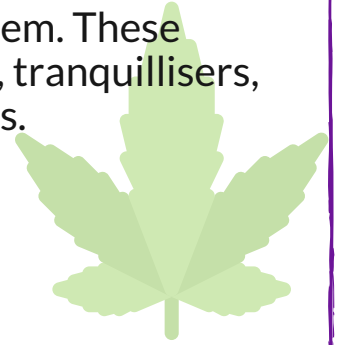
PARENTAL DRUG MISUSE

As you can imagine, there are many different drugs, but we can put them into four groups by how they affect the human brain. These include:

STIMULANTS cause the Central Nervous System to work faster. These drugs include caffeine, nicotine, amphetamines, cocaine or ecstasy.



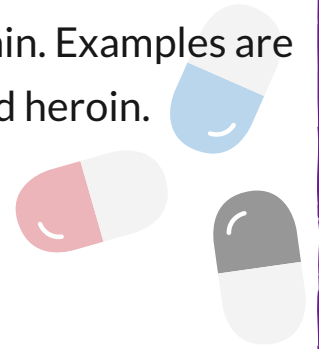
DEPRESSANTS slow down the Central Nervous System. These drugs include alcohol, tranquillisers, cannabis, and solvents.



HALLUCINOGENS alter how a person feels and thinks. They can have lots of different effects on the mind. These drugs include LSD and magic mushrooms.



ANALGESICS (PAIN KILLERS) block pain. Examples are codeine, morphine and heroin.



All drugs, even medicines, have potential **HARM**. Illegal drugs are not good for anyone, but they are particularly bad for a young person whose body is still growing. Illegal drugs can **DAMAGE** the brain, heart, and other important organs. Cocaine, for instance, can cause a heart attack - even in a child or young person.

It is often harder to think clearly and make good decisions when people take illegal drugs. People can do **UNWISE** or **DANGEROUS** things that could hurt them or other people when they use drugs. This adds to the stress of living with someone misusing drugs.

For more drug information see WWW.TALKTOFRANK.COM

YOUNG PEOPLE'S OWN DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE

Every young person has their own story about what led them to try a particular substance. Young people can be **CURIOUS** and if their friends (or parents or other relatives) use drugs, then it is common to want to **FIT IN**.



However, it's important to remember that drug and alcohol use among young people has been falling steadily since 2001; most young people are **NOT USING** such substances.

For some young people, the use of drugs or alcohol is a form of "**SELF-MEDICATION**", which enables them to relieve stress or block emotionally distressing thoughts.



This form of self-soothing may help in the short-term, but can lead to long-term physical health, mental health, and other problems.

No one sets out to develop problems with alcohol or other drugs. Drinking or using drugs can become part of having fun or a good time, but can also get **OUT OF CONTROL**.



The risk of addiction is particularly dangerous during adolescence, as it is a period of change where your brain and body are still developing and experiencing hormonal changes. Alcohol and drugs can **DAMAGE** this growth.

The likelihood of drug or alcohol use becoming a problem later in life is also increased when someone has been regularly dealing with **STRESS**, like living with a parent's alcohol, drug use or mental health problems.

Additionally, excessive alcohol and drug use can get in the way of the support provided by projects like Steps to Cope.

If you think that your own use of alcohol or drugs is out of hand, there are alcohol and drug services for young people that offer one-to-one work, group work, mentoring, and family work.

Just ask your Steps to Cope worker, other people you are working with like a teacher or youth worker, or visit **WWW.DRUGSANDALCOHOLNI.INFO**; it has information about available services for all five Health and Social Care Trust areas in Northern Ireland.

HIDDEN HARM IN YOUR PAST

Some young people may not be living with their parent(s) - they may be living with someone else (like another relative or a foster carer). Despite this, young people can still be affected by problems even if they are no longer living with their parent(s) or even if the problems were a few years ago. A question some young people may have is:

IF I AM NO LONGER LIVING WITH THE PARENT WHO WAS MISUSING DRUGS OR ALCOHOL, OR WHO HAD MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES, WHY SHOULD I DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT NOW?

There are several good reasons why something like Steps to Cope may still be helpful, even if a young person is not living with his/her parent(s):



Some young people may have regular contact with their parent, and their continued alcohol use, drug use, or mental health problem may **REMIND THEM OF THE PAST** or upset them and cause **PROBLEMS**.



Some young people may have questions for why they are **IN CARE** or cared for by **ANOTHER RELATIVE OR A FOSTER CARER**.



Some young people may **BLAME THEMSELVES** or carry **GUILT**, as if it was their fault.

In these cases, StC can be helpful to talk and think about the long-term impact of living with such stressors. It can also be helpful to think about ways of coping that may not be so helpful anymore, and what support is available to young people who are growing up but who may still be affected by childhood issues.

LIVING WITH MORE THAN ONE STRESSFUL PROBLEM

Young people may be living with more than one problem - for example, a parent's drinking *and* a parent's mental health problem. These are known as **ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES** (ACEs). Living with one problem can be stressful; living with more than one problem can make things even more stressful, both in the short-term and as young people get older.



When something makes a young person feel unsafe or scared, their body will go into a **SURVIVAL MODE**. They are thinking of how to protect themselves. Their heart starts to pound, their blood pressure rises, their breathing increases, and their muscles tense up. When someone is constantly put into survival mode, their brain releases **STRESS HORMONES**.



When this happens regularly, it can be toxic, meaning it can have a **LONG-TERM** impact that can affect health and outlook later in life. Without protective factors such as support from strong and caring adults, this toxic stress can lead to **UNHEALTHY HABITS** and **POOR COPING STYLES** like overeating, smoking, alcohol use, drug abuse, and unhealthy relationships.

THERE IS HOPE!

Not everyone who has experienced these stresses will have problems later in life. Building good coping skills, having safe places, and supportive people can help you **"BOUNCE BACK"** from all of this. The strengths both inside (your confidence, self-esteem) and outside yourself (good support) build **RESILIENCE** - the ability to bounce back from problems in life.

Support like Steps to Cope will not take away what young people have lived through; however, so far, our work is showing that it improves young people's resilience and can help them develop strengths that **REDUCE THE IMPACT** of these adverse experiences.



PLANNING FOR EMERGENCIES

It is important to be prepared for an emergency in case you ever find yourself in an uncomfortable situation. The following tips may be helpful.

Make sure you know how to **CALL** an ambulance, the doctor, or the fire brigade. Other people in your house should know how to do this too.



If you need to study or just a **QUIET SPACE**, ask a friend or relative if you can spend time in their house.



Make sure you know your **ADDRESS** and **POSTCODE**. This is important if you ever have to ring the emergency services.



If you want to **TALK** to your parent about the problems, pick a **SAFE** time to do so (such as when they are not drunk or high).



Make a **LIST** of people you can call - maybe a grandparent, aunt, uncle, neighbour, friend, or an older brother or sister. Try to memorise their **PHONE NUMBERS** so that you can contact them in an emergency.



Keep a little bit of **MONEY** aside in case you have to make an urgent phone call. If you have a mobile phone, make sure to keep it **CHARGED**.



What would you do if you found your family member unconscious and you weren't sure what they had taken?

Ring **999** immediately and ask for an ambulance. They will tell you what to do until the ambulance arrives. If there are any **TABLETS OR ALCOHOL** nearby, show them to the ambulance crew.



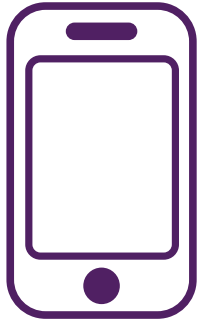
You can use a personalised **SAFETY PLANNING** worksheet to keep all of this information in one place, in case you ever need it. We have provided a form that you can use on the other side of this sheet.



We hope you never find yourself in an emergency situation, but it is always useful to have a plan just in case.

MY SAFETY PLAN

IF I FEEL UNSAFE IN MY HOUSE, I WILL GO TO MY SAFE SPACE AND PHONE MY KEY WORKER.



MY SAFE SPACE IS:

MY KEY WORKER'S NAME AND PHONE NUMBER IS:

IF IT IS AN EMERGENCY, I WILL PHONE THE POLICE.



THEIR PHONE NUMBER IS:

DURING HARD TIMES, I WILL TURN TO A TRUSTED FRIEND SO I DON'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH THIS ALONE.



MY FRIEND'S NAME/PHONE NUMBER IS:

IF I NEED MORE HELP, I WILL CONTACT A COMMUNITY ORGANISATION THAT WORKS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE ME.



THAT ORGANISATION'S NAME/PHONE NUMBER/ADDRESS IS:

SUPPORT - WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER HELP?

Step 4 in the main Steps to Cope workbook will help you look more closely at the **SUPPORT** you use, and Step 5 will help you see if you need more support. There is more information in the StC workbook on where you could look for more support.

There are a range of services offered by Barnardo's, Action for Children, and Crossroads to support **YOUNG CARERS**. They can be contacted through their head offices:



(028) 7963 1344



(028) 9046 0500



(028) 9181 4455



Another useful resource for young carers is the Carers Trust Northern Ireland.

WWW.CARERS.ORG

SUPPORT - WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER HELP?

Other useful contacts to keep in mind:



0800 808 8000



Childline offer a free, confidential 24-hour service to children and young people in distress.

0800 1111

WWW.CHILDLINE.ORG.UK

Support is also available for **ADULT** family members affected by their own or another person's drinking or drug use.



Visit the Northern Ireland Drug and Alcohol Coordination Teams (NIDACTS) website for a directory of of these services for all five Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland.

WWW.DRUGSANDALCOHOLNI.INFO