



Being Practical

What affects **one** member of a family often affects the others. Family can find it hard to give good support to the people they love who have both mental health and substance use problems (or 'dual diagnosis'). A person's recovery can be affected by their family's well-being and by the family's relationship with them.

Recognise signs of stress and your feelings

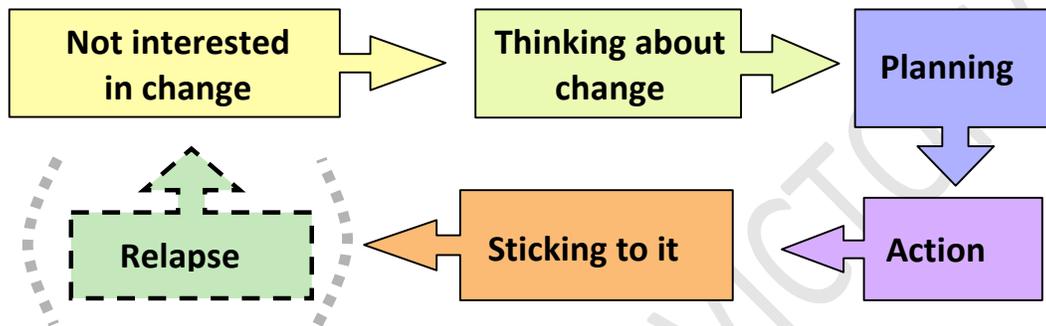
- Sometimes it can take a long time to realise you have become physically, mentally or emotionally tired. Signs can include:
 - ☞ Sleeping badly
 - ☞ Feeling tired all the time
 - ☞ Being grumpy
 - ☞ Feeling like there is nothing to look forward to
- You may have feelings and thoughts that you are not comfortable with - like feeling sad, angry or guilty and wishing that things were different.
- It is important to recognise these signs and feelings, instead of fighting or ignoring them. Remember that you don't have to be superhuman and accepting these feelings (rather than arguing with them) can let you find better ways of dealing with them.
- Taking good care of yourself recharges you → which gives you more physical and emotional energy to deal with challenges → which has a good effect on the people around you.

Recognising the Change Cycle (the stages of change)

- Different members of the family may have different attitudes towards treatment for dual diagnosis. For example, in one family where the son has a co-occurring disorder:
 - Dad may be denying his son's drug use and depression and believing he'll 'snap out of it'.
 - Mum may know her son uses, but doesn't understand why he doesn't stop and thinks the drug use is what is making him feel sad all the time.

- The sister may understand that her brother has a few problems, but also thinks he is not ready to make any changes right now.
- The son may have started cutting down on his drug use and is thinking about going to a Detox (drug withdrawal unit).

The Change Cycle



The change cycle is a way of describing the way people make changes in their lives. People are at different points at different times and it can help to remember that people will often not stay at the one spot but will move through this cycle, sometimes quite a few times, before they have made the complete change.

- Where a person is in terms of their attitude towards their drug use and treatment (the change cycle, *see above*) will affect how they talk and think about making changes. It will also affect how they act with each other and how they react to discussions about problems.
- Being aware of, and understanding where a person is at in the change cycle can help communication. It may also decrease conflict.

Practical ideas for now, ideas to build on & communication

You have to look after yourself on days when you might feel stressed or worn down AND plan what you can do to help yourself for the long term.

IDEAS FOR NOW can be fast and relatively easy ways to recharge your batteries.

Create a list - of things that make you feel better and more interested in the world. Put it somewhere obvious. It might include some of these:

- Walk, run, cycle
- Fishing
- Swim, dance, climb, exercise
- People watch at a market
- Cooking
- Paint, draw, take photos
- Spend time outside – the ocean, in a park
- Go along to a choir, team sport, class, or group
- Keep a record of how you are feeling & thinking
- Check out an art gallery, watch a busker
- The library has free videos, CDs, magazines, books
- Catch up with someone you don't usually see

What healthy thing haven't you done for awhile that you used to enjoy?

IDEAS TO BUILD ON - taking care of yourself in the longer term.

- Give yourself a regular time to talk to others or to a health professional
- Plan regular time off from your responsibilities
- Make changes to your diet and habits to live a healthier life

COMMUNICATION: When you talk to the person who has dual diagnosis, you don't want to always be talking about their symptoms or things related to their substance use or mental health. Sometimes people get stuck in being the person who 'looks after' their 'person with the problem' and **they forget normal conversations**. Keeping your focus on a person's strengths, talents and hopes reminds you both of who they are and what they can do.

Places to contact for help:

- Look at the Odyssey website for information
- ☎ Call **Odyssey House Victoria** directly on (03) 9420 7600 to ask for an appointment.
- Contact an organization that can refer you to a service, e.g. for help with family who have
 - Alcohol and other drugs - **Directline**: 1800 888 236
 - Mental health issues - **Mental Health Advice Line**: 1300 280 737
- Look on the Internet for Family/Carer resources