



“Try Another Way” ©



Making Decisions

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I have got this far what now?



The first step in the “Try Another Way” © program is to put on paper your reasons for wanting to cut down or stop.

Sometimes you don't know whether you will make it.

about it and would be the not so good things?

It is important to sit and think about both the good and less good things, for both using and stopping substances, so that you can find the reasons that will help you to continue to reduce or cease your substance use, even when you don't feel good.

Changing something you have done for a long time isn't easy.

Sometimes no matter what substance you are using doesn't seem to be helping, but it feels better than when they are stopped.

When we change any behaviour, there has to be a good reason to do so. If we don't have a good reason, then we usually don't stick to it.



One of the ways to remind you of your reasons for cutting down or ceasing is to sticky tape the summary sheet to the fridge, mirror or wardrobe. This will help remind you each day why you have made a decision to try and cut down or stay stopped.

The Reviewing Your Substance Use Worksheets at the end of this newsletter, asks you to think about how using substances helps you. You will need to be honest with yourself, when you fill it in.

Now think about all the things that haven't gone okay while taking substances

You are also asked to think about what it would be like not using substances? What would be good

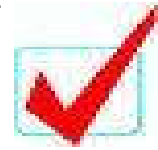


How do I make this program work?

1. Keep in regular contact with your Doctor.
2. Use the My Cutting Down Guide to help you to work out when you are going to take your tablets and when you are going to cut back.
3. Record every substance you take on the Record Sheet even if you have stopped it every day.
4. Complete the Reviewing Your

Use worksheets.

5. Write down your reasons for stopping and sticky tape to the fridge or mirror. Use this to remind yourself that you can do this.



What else can help?

Keep a diary: write down how things are going each day. It is another way of checking how you have been going and how you have been coping. Filling it out at the end of each day gives you a chance to think about how the day went. As you look back over the diary, you will be able to see your ups and downs. Hopefully, there will be more ups than downs. Even if you have already stopped, write down how each



day has gone and remind yourself of how things are going since you stopped.

Alcohol: some people cope with cutting down or not taking other substances by drinking more alcohol. Doing this only leads to more problems. Try to cut down or even stop using alcohol while you cut down or cease other substance use. No matter whether you are trying to cut back your alcohol or other

substance use, try a light beer or only drink one to two cans of super (heavy beer), no more than 4 days of the week. Turn your wine into a spritzig by adding half a glass of soda water. Drinking less during this period, will also help you stick to your goal.



The following stories are from individuals who have tried to cut down their use of benzodiazepines. Their experiences are similar to other individuals who are trying to reduce or cease substance use. I hope you find their journey of assistance to you in your endeavours to cut back or cease substance use

My Story

Why I started to cut down the benzos



Meg started taking benzos 30 years ago. She wasn't coping and was having morbid

thoughts. The tablets gave her courage "and calmed the system down".

Over the next 10 years, Meg took more and more tablets in order to feel good. During that time she was getting angry with herself because things

weren't going right. Meg says, "I decided to take control of my life. I had been through 10 years of therapy. I had been through a lot of therapists and I got sick of being stuck in the house. I got sick of not having a life and I wanted my life back. I wanted control of my life again and I decided that the only person who could help me was me. So I had a complete turn around because when I first got sick, it was oh me, poor me, this is happening to me but nobody really cares and I

wanted people to care but nobody wanted to care. Nobody helped me, it was my problem, I had to deal with it".

Meg also said, "Since I have come off the tablets, I have grown a great deal. I have become a very strong person, a very opinionated person and a person to protect myself as well".



There is not just one way to cut down

Stephen said, “I guess I would call it a gradual weaning off. I just broke the tablets up, so I had 3/8ths for 2 to 3 weeks, then a 1/4 for 2 or 3 weeks and 1/8th for 2 or 3 or 4 weeks and finally none. I think I might have gone to sort of a crumb for a couple of weeks but at no stage did I have any ill effects or find that I couldn’t sleep or anything”.

Jane had a different experience.



She found that she could cope with life on 1/3 of a 5mg tablet. “I stayed like that, on the absolute minimum for another 12 years”. With information and support from friends and a support group, Jane was eventually able to stop.

Trevor was on four valium per day for about 14 years. After having surgery, he didn’t need the tablets any more. He says, “the doctor put me on two Valium[©] a day and he cut me back to one a day and



he said no more. I just went off them. Just the same as if you go off, that you have a drink of water and you just put the glass down and that is it”.

If you have already stopped, look back at your Cutting Down Guide and think about how you did it.

Not the way to do it

Vic is a Veteran and is on other medicines to help with ongoing stress. His doctor recommended that he come off the benzos.

Vic says, “the doctor reckons it is going to take him two years to get me off these things they have got me on. He is going to persevere and do it, he says. So what I did, I went cold turkey. Cold turkey on the Valium[©] and cold turkey on the

coffee. It was the wrong thing to do, because I finished up in his surgery, in an absolute mess”.

Sam also found that **Cold Turkey** isn’t the way to go. “I’ve stopped it myself on numerous occasions, I have just cut it out and I went through three weeks of withdrawals, shakes, tremors, feeling sick, nausea, agitation, nervousness, listlessness, sleeplessness, every side effect there

was.

I have been through, the sweats, the vomiting, the diarrhoea, constipation and I have pulled myself off them. I went cold turkey. **Turkey isn’t the way to go**”.



“Try Another Way”[©] Program

Produced by Jan Parr as part of a self-managed trial for cessation of benzodiazepine use. The finding of this study will be published in Drug and Alcohol Review in 2011.

Reviewing your Substance use

Take the time to think about what is okay and not okay about using and cutting down your substance use. Follow the instructions in each column.

<p>Checklist 1: How does using substances help me?</p>	<p>Checklist 2: What don't you like about using them?</p>	<p>Checklist 3: What would be good about cutting down or stopping?</p>	<p>Checklist 4: What makes it hard to cut down or stop? What gets in the way?</p>
<p>Tick the comments that you agree with, and add other comments at the bottom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Calms me down <input type="checkbox"/> Helps me to cope <input type="checkbox"/> Helps me sleep <input type="checkbox"/> Helps me get through things that stress me <input type="checkbox"/> Can cope with pressure from work <input type="checkbox"/> Problems don't bother me so much <input type="checkbox"/> Feel good <input type="checkbox"/> Relieves pain <input type="checkbox"/> Controls negative thoughts <input type="checkbox"/> Cope with medical problems <input type="checkbox"/> Stops me being uptight <input type="checkbox"/> Keeps panic attacks under control <input type="checkbox"/> Like the feeling in my body <input type="checkbox"/> Don't stress out as much <input type="checkbox"/> Feel confident <input type="checkbox"/> Kills anxiety <input type="checkbox"/> Stops the panic <input type="checkbox"/> Makes me feel I can deal with the world <input type="checkbox"/> Helps me unwind <p>Add your own _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Now go onto checklist 2 and think about the reasons you don't like about your substance use.</p>	<p>Tick the comments that you agree with, and add other comments at the bottom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Feel depressed <input type="checkbox"/> Feel hung over in the morning <input type="checkbox"/> Can't be bothered with anything <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of energy <input type="checkbox"/> Going to sleep during the day <input type="checkbox"/> Hard to remember things or think clearly <input type="checkbox"/> Using more t than I should <input type="checkbox"/> I worry about my health <input type="checkbox"/> Find it hard to get other stuff done <input type="checkbox"/> Worry about how it's affecting my kids <input type="checkbox"/> Feel bad about myself <input type="checkbox"/> Feel tired a lot of the time <input type="checkbox"/> Have to hide it from other people <input type="checkbox"/> Makes it hard to work or get a job or study <input type="checkbox"/> Get angry with myself <input type="checkbox"/> Makes me lethargic <p>Add your own _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Now, flip the coin over and think about what it would be like if you stop your substance use. Tick all the boxes in Checklist 3 that fit for you.</p>	<p>Tick the comments that you agree with, and add other comments at the bottom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Feel healthier <input type="checkbox"/> Get other things done <input type="checkbox"/> Be able to work better or find work <input type="checkbox"/> More energy <input type="checkbox"/> Think more clearly <input type="checkbox"/> Feel better about myself <input type="checkbox"/> Look better or healthier <input type="checkbox"/> Be a better parent <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy other things in life <input type="checkbox"/> Being able to sleep without substances. <input type="checkbox"/> Remember things better <input type="checkbox"/> Save money for other things that are important to me <input type="checkbox"/> Be able to get out and about <input type="checkbox"/> I want my life back <input type="checkbox"/> Time to get off <input type="checkbox"/> Don't want to be addicted <input type="checkbox"/> Get involved in other activities <p>Add your own _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Now, think about all the reasons why cutting down won't work and see if they are in Checklist 4.</p>	<p>Tick the comments that you agree with, and add other comments at the bottom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Addicted <input type="checkbox"/> No-one around to help me do it <input type="checkbox"/> They are too easy to get hold of <input type="checkbox"/> Still enjoy using them <input type="checkbox"/> Help to deal with problems <input type="checkbox"/> Scared will get the shakes and jitters again <input type="checkbox"/> Can't sleep when I stop or cut down <input type="checkbox"/> Won't be able to deal with unpleasant feelings <input type="checkbox"/> Cravings – think about them a lot <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling irritable or moody when I stop or cut down <input type="checkbox"/> Boredom <input type="checkbox"/> Risk of stuffing up when I try new things <input type="checkbox"/> Won't be able to relax or unwind <input type="checkbox"/> Add your own _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <p>I have done all this, now what? Turn over the page and have a go at working out what is more important to you, keeping on using or trying to cut down or stop?</p> <p>(Adapted from H. Mentha, Getting out of it: How to cut down or stop cannabis)</p>

Reviewing Your Substance Use - Example

All of the information from each of the checklists has been put into the table.

	Keep using substance use	Cutting down substance use
Good outcomes	<p><i>Checklist 1: How does using substances help me?</i></p> <p>keeps me calm, relaxed, helps me sleep, stops me worrying about nothing, I can't cope without them, they make me feel good, slows everything down, takes away panic feelings, helps me sleep</p>	<p><i>Checklist 3: What would be good about cutting down or stopping?</i></p> <p>Won't be on them any more, won't have to rely on a substance to cope, don't want to be taking substances any more, think more clearly, feel better about my self</p>
Not so good outcomes	<p><i>Checklist 2: What don't you like about using them?</i></p> <p>Don't work as well, I take more than I should, I feel hung over in the morning, don't like being addicted, wake up with a thick head, worry about my health</p>	<p><i>Checklist 4: So what makes it hard to stop or cut down?</i></p> <p>I won't be able to live without them, still help me cope, won't be able to cope with the world, afraid of withdrawals, can't sleep when I stop</p>

The most important reasons for cutting down and keeping on using have been written down.

Cutting down substance use	Keep using substances
1. Don't like being addicted	1. Afraid of withdrawals
2. Not working any more	2. Won't be able to cope
3. wake up with a thick head	3. Will get sick again

Now comes the difficult part: Weighing everything up

My decision is?

I would like to try cutting down my substance use because I think I can cope without them.



Reviewing your substance use - Summary

Having thought about the good and not so good things about using and stopping your substance use, it's time to put it all together in a table. Follow the instructions in each of the boxes. Check out the example on page 5.

	Keep using substance	Cutting down substance use
Good outcomes	<i>Checklist 1: How does using Substances help me?</i>	<i>Checklist 3: What would be good about cutting down or stopping?</i>
Not so good outcomes	<i>Checklist 2: What don't you like about using them?</i>	<i>Checklist 4: So what makes it hard to stop or cut down?</i>

Write down the most important reasons for cutting down and keeping on using

Cutting down substance use	Keep using substances
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Now comes the difficult part: Weighing everything up

My decision is:

