



# Alcohol Related Brain Damage **A Toolkit for Self-Management and Recovery**

We are Penumbra Mental Health, a pioneering charity providing dedicated services for people with mild to serious and enduring mental ill health. From being there for people in crisis to suicide prevention, supported living to self-harm management and peer support. We are with those we support every step of their journey to a better place. People's experiences are at the centre of everything that we do. We champion peer workers; they know that recovery is possible, because they've been there too. Of course, everyone's journey is different, so we work with people to identify, believe in, and reach their goals, whatever they may be. Recovery will always be the central theme in everything we do. And our HOPE<sup>®</sup> framework is the foundation of the Penumbra approach.

For more, visit: [www.penumbra.org.uk](http://www.penumbra.org.uk)  
or find us on social media.



# Introduction

Welcome to Penumbra's self-management toolkit for people with Alcohol Related Brain Damage (ARBD). If you are reading this, then hopefully you have found the professional and personal help you need in your recovery. There is lots of help available, and this toolkit is designed to help you remember some of the important things that will help you.

ARBD and overuse of alcohol can be very misunderstood. Very few people want to live a life fully reliant on alcohol. Many people whose lives have been negatively affected by alcohol have physical or mental health issues, and experience discrimination.

With help, kindness, understanding and support from friends and family it is entirely possible for people with ARBD to have a happy and fulfilling life. GPs, other health and social care staff, and recovery peers will also be important as you continue on your recovery journey.

---



# **Contents & general info**



# CONTENTS



## General Info

- 8** How to use this Toolkit
- 9** Penumbra's Hope Model
- 10** What is ARBD?
- 13** A Picture of Your Life with and Beyond ARBD
- 14** Wullie's Recovery Story





# Home

- 15 Alcohol – The Vicious Cycle
- 18 Stress



## Relaxation

- 20 Controlled Breathing
- 22 Safe Place Imagery
- 24 Grounding 5,4,3,2,1
- 26 Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- 28 My Relaxation Plan



## Memory and Attention

- 30 What are the Different Kinds of Memory?
- 32 Improving Your Memory - Key Points
- 34 Memory Hints and Tips
- 35 Attention!



## Coping Strategies

- 36 Problem Solving Exercises
- 40 Dealing with Difficult Emotions

# Opportunity



## Healthy Living

- 47 My Physical Health
- 49 Keeping Active
- 50 Eat Well, Live Well
- 51 The Eatwell Plate
- 52 Sleep Well
- 54 Home Safety



## Practical Opportunities

- 56 Computing and Digital Skills
- 60 Know Your Rights
- 62 Benefits and Debt
- 64 Budget Plan



# People

**67** Mutual Aid

**69** Relationships in Recovery

**71** Volunteering and Community

**73** David Y's Recovery Story





# Empowerment



## Useful Resources

- 75 Alcohol Related Recovery
- 75 Physical Health
- 75 Mental Health
- 76 Housing
- 76 Support for Family and Friends
- 76 Multimedia Resources
- 76 Advocacy Organisations



## Emergency Plan

- 77 Help!! I'm having a craving!
- 80 What is a Slip vs. a Relapse
- 82 Harm Reduction
- 84 Getting Back on Track After a Relapse
- 87 David R's Recovery Story



- 89 In Conclusion...
- 90 Acknowledgements

## General Info

# How to use this Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to give people with ARBD helpful self-management tools to make the recovery process easier, and to act as a guide and reference point. These tools and approaches will also be helpful for those who care for and support people with ARBD.

Self-management is about having the knowledge and tools to support your recovery, based on your own experiences, as we are all different people. It also means that if you do need additional support that you feel in control of how it is delivered. Everybody with ARBD has the right to receive support with their physical or mental health if they need it.

In this toolkit you will find help and guidance on common issues people with ARBD face. These include life skills such as how to get better sleep and eating well, and practical information about your rights and how to manage your finances. You'll also find help in dealing with difficult emotions and relationships, as well as useful relaxation techniques and hints and tips on how to improve your memory.

All the evidence shows that stopping drinking gives you the best chance to fully recover from ARBD. However, sometimes people experience lapses and go back to drinking. Taking another drink doesn't have to mean the end of your recovery journey, and this toolkit contains suggestions for how to get back on track.

It can seem hard to know where to start with recovery. But this toolkit is broken down into sections to help you quickly access the things you need, based around Penumbra's HOPE model – Home, Opportunity, People and Empowerment. 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.

# Penumbra's HOPE Model



## Improving Wellbeing

HOPE is a framework for wellbeing.

The HOPE framework consists of 4 areas:

- Home
- Opportunity
- People
- Empowerment.

Each of these areas is important for health, wellbeing and recovery. This toolkit contains plans, tools, tips and resources all related to the areas of HOPE.

A weekly planner form titled "Weekly Planner". It features a grid for planning activities from Monday to Sunday. Each day has a section for "Morning", "Afternoon", and "Evening". Below the grid, there are sections for "Useful phone number" and "Things to remember". The form is blue and white with a yellow sun icon in the top right corner.

At the back of this toolkit you will find a pull out weekly planner. You can fill this out with activities from the toolkit to build up your weekly routine. This will help you stay focussed on what you need to do for your recovery.

# What is ARBD?

Alcohol-Related Brain Damage (ARBD) happens when people drink a lot of alcohol over a number of years. It is caused by both the 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 negative effect on the brain.

ARBD is an ‘umbrella’ term as there are a few variations.



There is no way of knowing who will and who won't develop ARBD. Older people who have been drinking for a long time are most likely to develop ARBD, though both young and older people can develop it. Men and women are affected equally.

**ARBD affects different people in different ways.  
These are some of the main effects:**



**Poor memory**

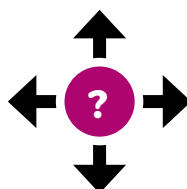
This is usually short term (a few seconds or minutes) and medium term (30 minutes or so). Long term memory is not usually affected as much.



**Difficulty with attention  
and concentration**



**Difficulty with  
understanding information**



**Difficulty with problem-solving, decision-making, and judgement**



**Difficulty with controlling  
impulses and urges**



**Physical health problems  
including balance and coordination**

People who develop ARBD may not realise that they have brain damage because it happens slowly. People might notice that their memory isn't great, they forget appointments, that they need to eat, or even names or faces. Sometimes the brains of people with ARBD will fill in the gaps in their memories with stories which feel true but aren't.

The good news is that ARBD can be treated – and the best way to do this is to stop drinking alcohol. This may seem daunting if alcohol has been a big part of your life for many years. Whilst completely stopping drinking is the ideal, anything that can be done to reduce alcohol will help as the more alcohol, the greater the ongoing problems.

## **Recovery from ARBD is possible.**

75% of people with ARBD make a full or partial recovery and almost everyone recovers some of their previous level of living.

No matter the challenges that you may face, it is possible to live a fulfilling life with ARBD.

The tools that follow will show you how.



# A Picture of Your Life with and Beyond ARBD

If things become challenging, you can return to this picture to help you stay motivated. What would you like your life in recovery to look like?

Write or draw your vision for your future.  
**It doesn't need to be perfect!**



## Wullie's Recovery Story

I was drinking heavily from 18 years old and continued for 35 years. It started off as social drinking and then quickly increased over time. The same friends who I had started drinking with turned around and told me I was drinking too much.

I was drinking all day and all night. I lost jobs over the years to alcohol, often by turning up drunk. I lost a marriage and ended up homeless for two and a half years, sleeping rough in the woods. I made my own bivouac out of branches and leaves and washed in the freezing cold water in a river nearby, still drinking heavily every day. I became hypothermic at one stage and ended up in hospital. When I woke up I thought I'd been kidnapped by aliens or something when I saw the foil wrapped around me, all the wires and white coats. Although it was a scary experience at the time, it didn't faze me and I started drinking again as soon as I left.

I had been through several rehabs and had more detoxes than I can count. The biggest moment for me was when I woke up one morning and could hardly move. That was when I knew something was really wrong. I crawled to my GP and was referred again for detox. It was during this time that I was first diagnosed with ARBD.

It was a shock to the system to be told I had ARBD. My first reaction was 'no, I don't have a disease'. It was explained to me that I had brain damage due to alcohol. I was shocked. I never knew you could damage your brain through drinking. In some ways though, I feel this diagnosis was the best thing that happened for me. It was the scariest thing I have ever had to face up to but it turned my life around. I knew I had to change.

It was a struggle at first. Trying to identify everything that had changed for me and how I had to adapt to that change. I got better results by engaging in all the support I had on offer. I struggled staying off the drink when I left my stay at Penumbra's Milestone service, but again, by using the support I had built around me, I managed to stay sober.

I never thought I would make it to where I am now as a volunteer. I share my recovery experiences and advise others who are early in their recovery. One of the biggest changes in my life has been my confidence increasing and getting my self-respect back. Now I walk along the street with my head held high and people will say hello to me. That is a great feeling. I was so used to people crossing the road to avoid passing me in the street because I was drunk. I'd almost forgotten what it was like to have someone say 'hello, how are you getting on?'

My hope is always to stay sober. It gets easier every day but I have to continue what I'm doing and make sure I never end up down that road again.

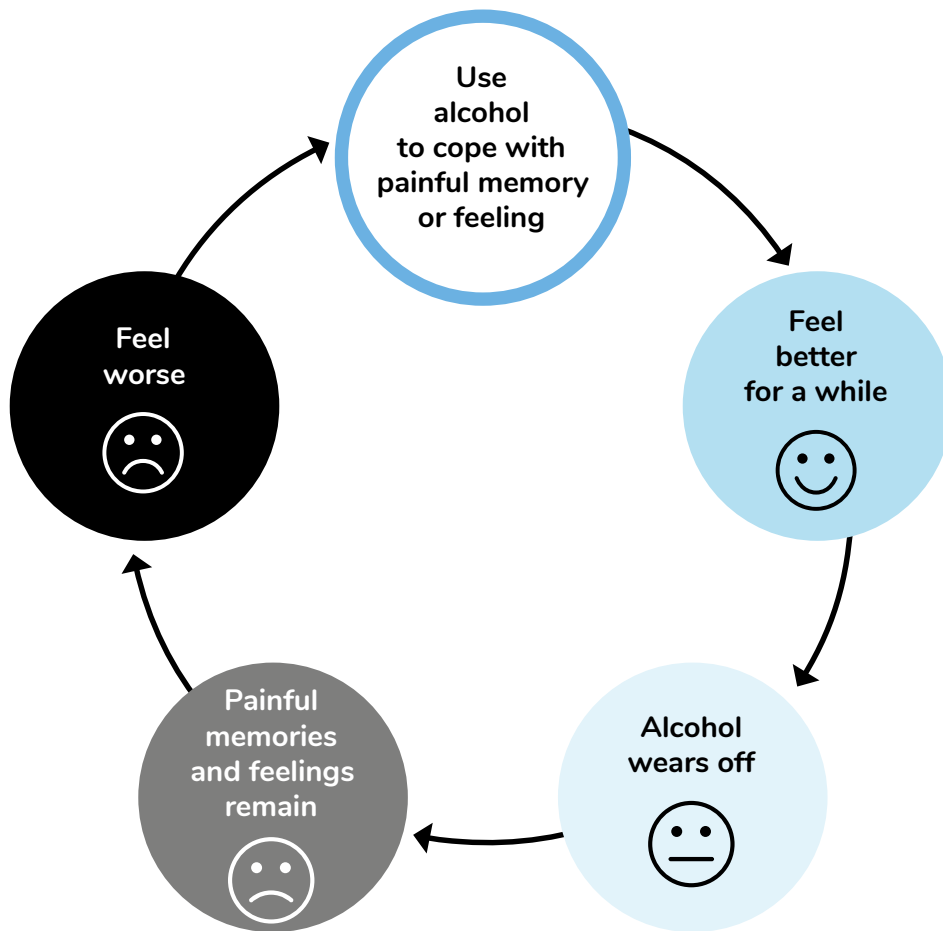


# Home

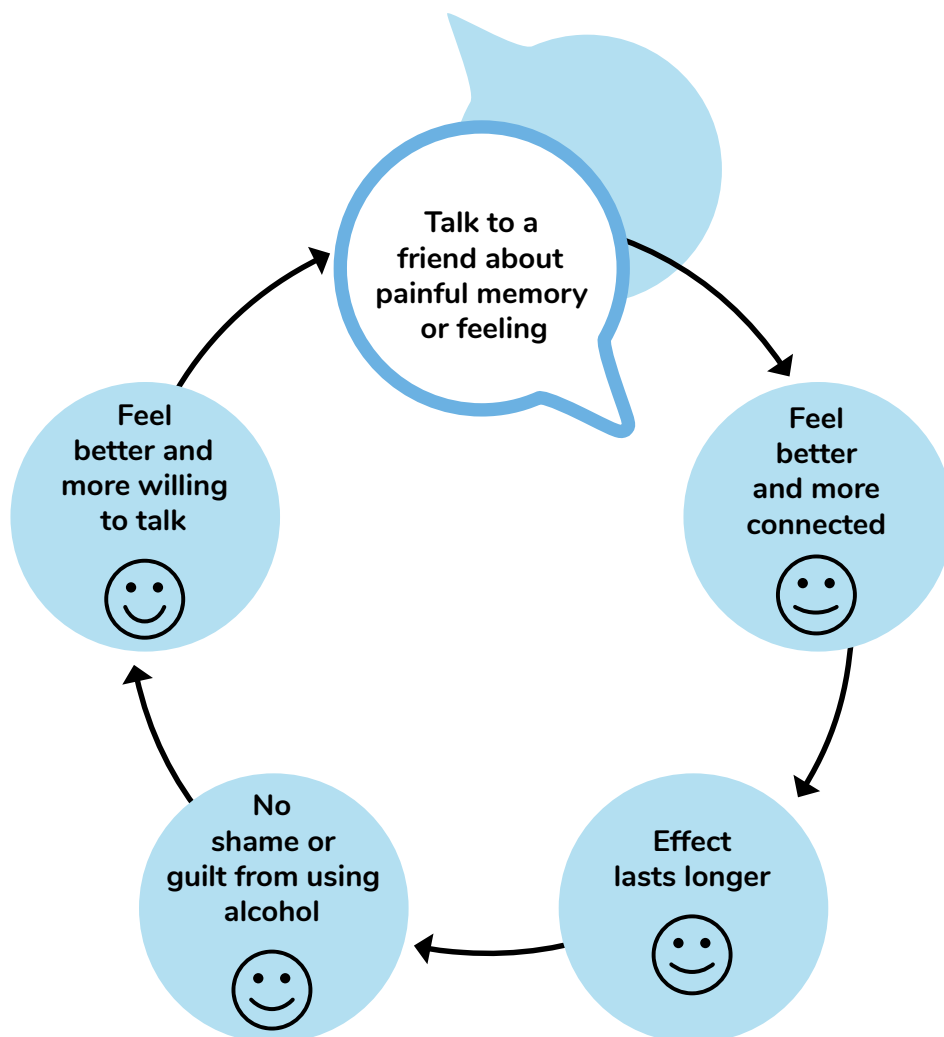


# Alcohol - The Vicious Cycle

Alcohol use can develop into a vicious cycle, particularly if it's been happening for a long time. It can start with using alcohol as a way to deal with difficult feelings or situations. When the alcohol wears off and the feelings are still there, it can lead to taking another drink to cope.



People may come to recognise that this will cause more problems in the long term, but it can be difficult to stop because using alcohol can feel like it helps in the short term. There are other ways of dealing with difficult feelings, which are kinder to yourself. These alternative ways often lead to feeling better for much longer, and so prevent relying on alcohol to manage those feelings in the long run.



The following pages give you some suggestions on other ways of coping with difficult feelings.



Suggestions of people and organisations you can contact can be found in the Useful Resources section at the back on **page 75**.

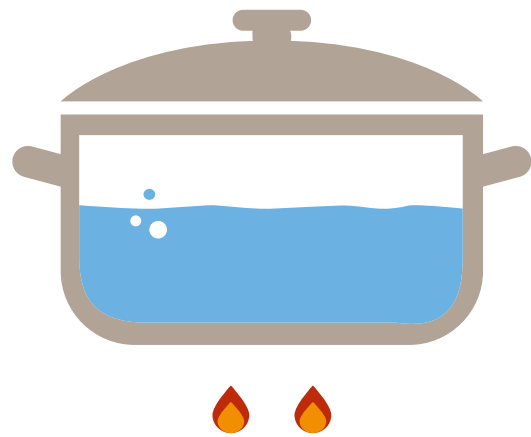
# Stress

Stress can often feel overwhelming, and it's important to learn how to deal with stress in recovery to avoid reacting to difficult feelings.

## Life is full of stress.

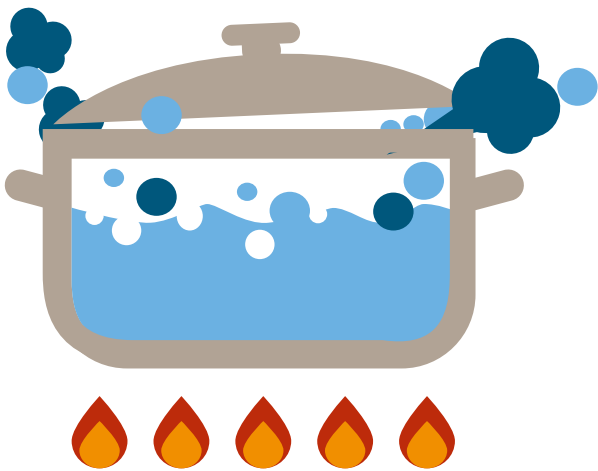
Almost anything can be stressful – something as small as losing your keys, through to big things such as relationships or loneliness. Stress can leave us angry, irritable or anxious and that's when it can feel easier to drink to reduce those feelings.

Stress is a bit like a pot of water on the stove with the lid on. If we have too much heat (stress) underneath it, it can boil over (taking a drink). We need to find ways to turn the heat down before it boils over.



LITTLE STRESS  
NO PRESSURE





STRESS  
PRESSURE BUILDS



### BOILING WATER

- anxiety
- depression
- anger
- avoidance
- helpless
- hopeless
- urge to drink



TURN THE HEAT DOWN  
PRESSURE RELEASED



We need to find ways to turn the heat down to stop the pot boiling over. Taking time for things like talking to family and friends, relaxation techniques, recovery meetings, exercise and hobbies turns the heat down and means that the stress levels are reduced. This makes difficult things easier to cope with.

# Relaxation

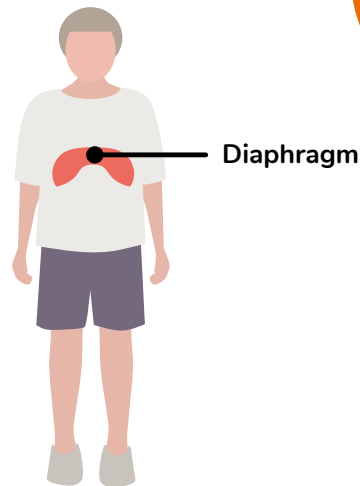
## Controlled Breathing

Practising relaxation can help when faced with stress.

The following pages have some relaxation exercises that you can try. The more regularly you use them, the more effective they are both in a stressful moment, and also day to day. Some of these may seem very simple – however doing them repeatedly could make a big difference.

### Controlled Breathing

The quickest way to relieve short term stress is to practice breathing. This involves using a part of the body called the diaphragm to breathe in. The diaphragm can be found on your stomach just below your ribcage.

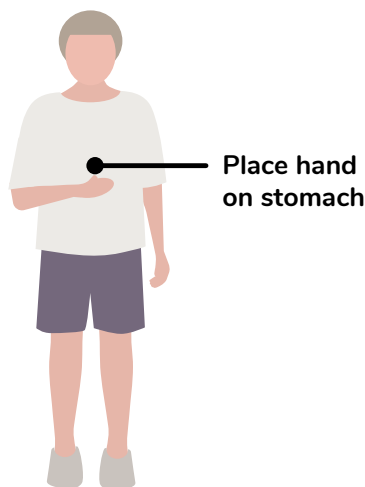


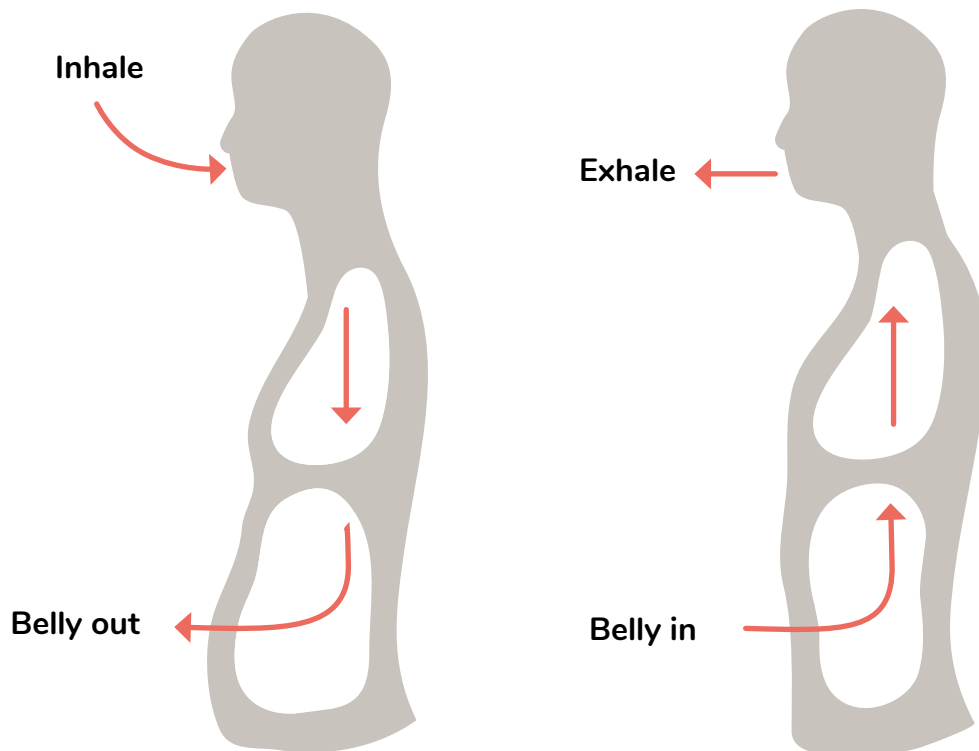
You can do these exercises standing, sitting or lying down



Using the diaphragm will make your stomach move outwards when you breathe in. Try placing a hand on your stomach as you breathe in. If it moves out when you breathe in, you are doing it right.

Breathing in this way sends a message to the brain telling it to calm down.





To get the biggest benefit, follow these 3 rules:

1

**Use the diaphragm**

2

**Breathe in slowly,  
breathe out more  
slowly**

You could use the 7/11 technique - count to 7 as you breathe in, then count to 11 when you breathe out.

3

**Keep doing it for  
at least 2 minutes**



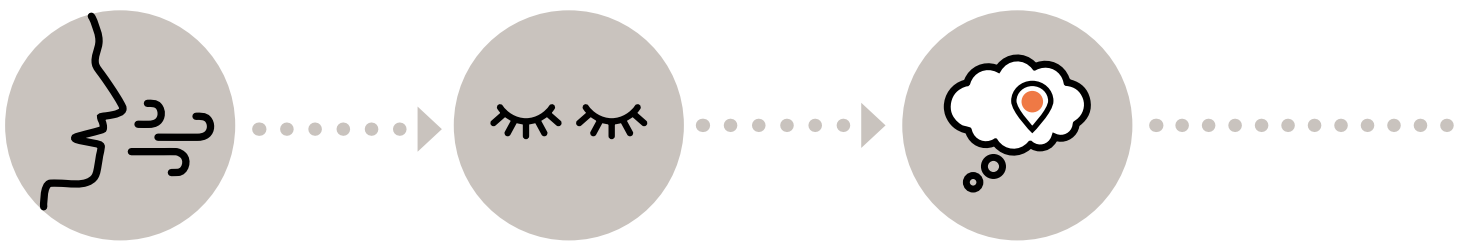
Try to practice this 5 times a day, so that you will remember how to do it when you feel most anxious or stressed.



# Safe Place Imagery

Imagining yourself in a safe place can help your body settle down when feeling stressed. This is because your body really thinks that it's there.

**If you feel uncomfortable at any point – remember you can always stop, and try again later.**



Take five deep, full breaths using 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're just using your breath to shift your attention from the outer world to your inner world, to take a short break and go to a place that's peaceful and quiet. Imagine that when you breathe in, your body is filling with new energy, and with every out breath you let go of a little bit of tension, discomfort and distraction.

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. You can open your eyes again at any point.

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 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 peaceful and safe. A good place to be for a few minutes.



If you find it hard to concentrate whilst reading this, then you could ask someone to record this onto a Dictaphone or Smartphone and follow the instructions whilst listening.



You can also find a recording of this on Penumbra's SoundCloud page.



Try to 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 lovely and quiet?
- Feel yourself comfortably warm, and safe.

Notice the temperature and the time of day and the season of the year. Notice whether it's very quiet or if there are things that are alive around you, sounds of birds or the wind perhaps. Try to notice any feelings any 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 very beautiful and peaceful place.

And if this is a pleasant experience, you should know that 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 beautiful, 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 take keep some of the peace and safety with you for a little longer.

# Grounding 5,4,3,2,1

This is a helpful technique for when you find your mind is overwhelmed by worries or you feel anxious, or you have an urge to drink. Practising grounding techniques calms the body, which sends signals to the brain that everything's OK. This helps you feel more in your body. If you find one of these five distressing, simply stop and move on to the next one.

**Try to get yourself comfortable.**

**Take two minutes to use the breathing exercise to get settled.**

It's worth giving yourself some time to practise this technique.

Try to notice any changes to how you feel, however small.



You may wish to record these instructions and listen to them.



You can find a recording on Penumbra's SoundCloud.



**5 x**



**Look around you and find something that catches your attention.**

- Take a minute to describe it in detail to yourself.
  - What is it made of?
  - What colours is it?
  - Are there any marks or stains on it?
  - Try to describe everything you can see about it.
  - Repeat this for another 4 objects you can see.
- 

**4 x**



**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, temperature and the feel of the object.
- 

**3 x**



**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 x**



**This time find 2 things you can taste.**

- 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?
- 

**1 x**



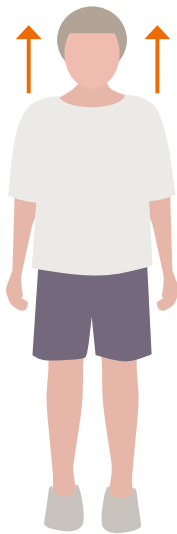
**Find something you can hear.**

- It might be birds singing, or traffic going past your home, or the fridge humming.
  - Just try to focus on it for a few minutes.
-

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Make sure you are in a comfortable and quiet place.
- Be aware of any injuries or pains– don't push yourself too hard.
- If it hurts at any point, move on to the next part of the exercise.

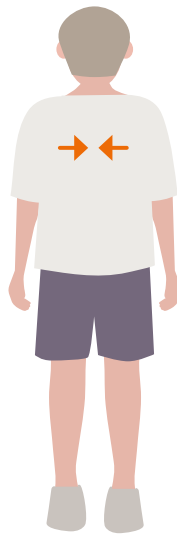
You can do these exercises standing, sitting or lying down



1

## Shoulders

Move your shoulders upwards as if shrugging. Hold for 5 seconds then relax.



2

## Shoulder blades Back

Push your shoulder blades back, trying to almost touch them together, so that your chest is pushed forward.



3

## Chest and stomach

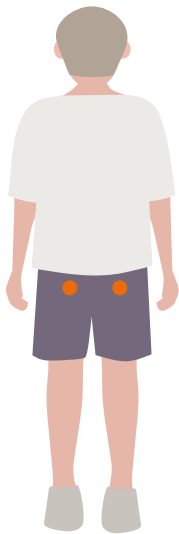
Breathe in deeply, filling up your lungs and chest with air. Remember to breath from your diaphragm.



You may find it easier to record this on Dictaphone or Smartphone to listen to.



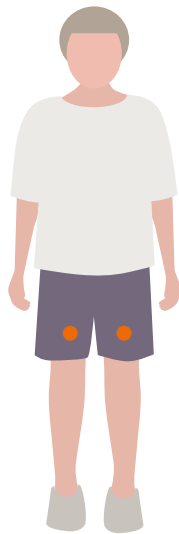
A recording can be found here on the Penumbra SoundCloud channel.



4

### Hips and buttocks

Squeeze your buttock muscles. Hold for 5 seconds, then relax.



5

### Right upper leg

Tighten your right thigh muscles. Hold for 5 seconds then relax.

**Repeat for your left upper leg.**



6

### Right lower leg

Slowly and carefully pull your toes up towards you to stretch the calf muscle. Relax.

**Repeat for left lower leg.**



7

### Right foot

Curl your toes upwards then downwards.

**Repeat with your left foot.**



This is a technique which is particularly useful for improving sleep but can be used anytime.

**Follow this routine once a day if you can**

# My Relaxation Plan

Relaxation techniques can be very helpful, but they are more helpful the more they are practiced. You can use the tables below to keep a record of times you've tried the relaxation techniques and if they were helpful. Hopefully after three weeks you will have found out which techniques work best for you.

<b>WEEK 1</b>	<b>Safe Place Imagery</b>	<b>Muscle Relaxation</b>	<b>Grounding 5,4,3,2,1</b>	<b>Controlled Breathing</b>
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

WEEK 2	Safe Place Imagery	Muscle Relaxation	Grounding 5,4,3,2,1	Controlled Breathing
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

WEEK 3	Safe Place Imagery	Muscle Relaxation	Grounding 5,4,3,2,1	Controlled Breathing
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				



**Remember:**  
if you would like to practice relaxation,  
put it in your weekly planner.





# Memory and Attention

## What are the Different Kinds of Memory?

There are three key parts to our memory, which have different roles.



### Short term memory

This stores information for a few seconds to a few minutes. ARBD affects short term memory in particular.



### Long term memory

This can store information for many years. We might have to make a conscious effort to access our long-term memory, but it is less affected by ARBD.



### Procedural

This part of our memory stores information about how to do things, for example riding a bike or cooking a meal. We don't need to think about these things whilst doing them as they are familiar.

One of the most common features of ARBD is how it impacts on memory.

This can make it difficult to do things like remember people's names, or the time of an appointment. People with ARBD may struggle to remember what the time of day is, forget birthdays, or begin to lose memories of events from the past.

**We rely on our memory for almost everything. The good news is that you can do things to help improve your memory. The following pages have some suggestions.**



Remember: the best way to improve your memory is to practice consistently.

# Improving Your Memory - Key Points

Some of the most common difficulties encountered by people with a diagnosis of ARBD, are difficulties with their memory. This can make things that you used to be able to do easily, quite difficult. For example, you may have trouble with remembering the day of the week, the current month or year.

There are some important ways we can help our memory:

## HAVING ROUTINE

**This helps store information in the procedural memory**



**Do things over and over and over again**



## 1, 2, 3,...

**Do things in the same order every time**



**Try to do things at the same time of day and/or on the same day of the week**

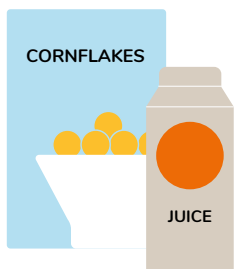
An example of this might be going on the same walk every day at the same time. At first, you might need someone to come with you to help you remember the route. Then you might go out on your own, but you will need to take written directions with you to look at if you get lost. Once you have repeated the walk several times, you won't need to look at the directions as your brain will have learned the route - you won't need to think about it.

## REHEARSAL

Good for helping short term memory



Repeat the information over and over



### Chunk the information

Put two or three things together. Instead of trying to remember six items (bread, butter, milk tea, cornflakes, orange juice), you can try to put items into pairs (bread & butter, milk & tea, flakes & juice).

## IMAGERY



### 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 tea. The clearer you can make imagine this the easier it will be to remember.



### Be creative with your images of the things you need to remember!

You may imagine a figure with; a pint of milk for a body, toast for a head, flakes for hair, and tea bags for earrings. Butter shoes, and cups of tea for hands. Make then a silly as you like, but make sure they are images that you have come up with.

# Memory Hints and Tips

There are many ways to help you remember things that will help with day to day living.



## Large wall calendar

Use this to write down important reminders of dates, birthdays, appointments, and other things. You can also use the weekly planner found at the back of the toolkit to plan your week. Put it somewhere obvious that you'll have to see it every day.



## Whiteboard

Put a whiteboard with a pen attached on or near the fridge to remind yourself of shopping items you need.



## Dictaphone/Smartphone

You can record information as a voice memo 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. Find out more on page 59.



## "To Do" List

At the end of each day write down, or record, a "to do" list for the next day. Make sure you leave it somewhere you will see the next morning!



## Diary

Buy yourself a daily diary. As soon as you have an appointment, write it down.



## Journal

Write down the names of people you meet or work with, where you met them and what you did, in a journal. Read it at the end of each day to remind yourself of what you've been doing.



## Alarms

For those with newer phones, set reminders on your phone, with some information about what the alarm is for. You can also use a kitchen timer when cooking food.



## Sticky notes

Keep sticky notes and pens in obvious places. If you think of something you want to remember write it down and put it somewhere you will see it.



## 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!

Attention is an important part of being able to remember things, as well as being able to take part in conversations, watch TV etc. Often what appears to be a difficulty with memory is actually a difficulty with attention. This may be due to ARBD affecting the part of the brain that helps people focus.



## Tiredness

Try to plan activities that require your attention at times when you feel at your best.



## Time Pressure

It is harder to pay attention to details when we are in a rush. Slow down and allow plenty of time to complete tasks.



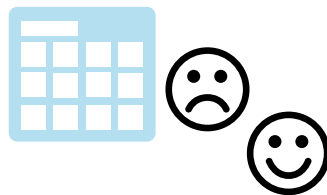
## Busy Environments

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 if you can.



## Avoid Distractions

A quiet room is best to pay attention to important discussions or tasks. If you are struggling to complete a task because of distractions, write down your task and try it again later.



## Emotions

### Emotions can get in the way.

Feelings such as anxiety or depression can seem to demand your attention. Try and let people know if you are feeling this way. Use some of the techniques mentioned in the sections to reduce these feelings (pages 40–44).



## Focus

**Focus** on one task at a time. Trying to multi-task can be difficult.



## Set time periods

**Set time periods** for tasks and then have a “**brain break**” before continuing.



## Let people know

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. You can look at the ‘Know Your Rights’ section (page 60) for details of an identity card that you can show to people that says that you have a Brain Injury.



# Coping Strategies

## Problem Solving Exercises

Problems crop up all the time, and it can sometimes be difficult to see what your options are. Try to use this procedure to understand what the problem is, and what you can do about it. If you need help in coming up with solutions, don't be afraid to ask.



What is your goal?



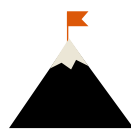
Identify the problem



Develop solutions




Choose one



Do it!

## Here's an example:







● ● ● STEP	Q QUESTION	A ANSWER
Goal 	What am I trying to achieve?	Pay my bills
Problem 	What's getting in the way?	Keep forgetting
Solutions 	What can I do about it?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direct debit <input type="checkbox"/> Reminder on the calendar <input type="checkbox"/> Ask a family member to help
Choose One 	What's my best option?	Direct Debit  <b>Do It!</b> 







If the first solution doesn't work,  
you can go on to the next one.









This process can be also be used for coping with urges, or getting into “red flag” situations:





Here’s some blank tables you can use yourself:



●●● STEP	Q QUESTION	A ANSWER
 Goal	What am I trying to achieve?	Don't take a drink
 Problem	What's getting in the way?	Strong urges
 Solutions	What can I do about it?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Go to a recovery meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Go for a walk <input type="checkbox"/> Use relaxation techniques <input type="checkbox"/> Watch a DVD
 Choose One	What's my best option?	Go to a recovery meeting  <b>Do It!</b> 

●●● STEP	Q QUESTION	A ANSWER
 Goal	What am I trying to achieve?	Don't take a drink
 Problem	What's getting in the way?	Friends are drinking right now
 Solutions	What can I do about it?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leave the situation <input type="checkbox"/> Drink lots of water <input type="checkbox"/> Ask them to stop <input type="checkbox"/> Distract myself
 Choose One	What's my best option?	Leave the situation  <b>Do It!</b> 

STEP	QUESTION	ANSWER
 Goal	What am I trying to achieve?	
 Problem	What's getting in the way?	
 Solutions	What can I do about it?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 Choose One	What's my best option?	

 **Do It!** 

STEP	QUESTION	ANSWER
 Goal	What am I trying to achieve?	
 Problem	What's getting in the way?	
 Solutions	What can I do about it?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 Choose One	What's my best option?	

 **Do It!** 

# Dealing with Difficult Emotions

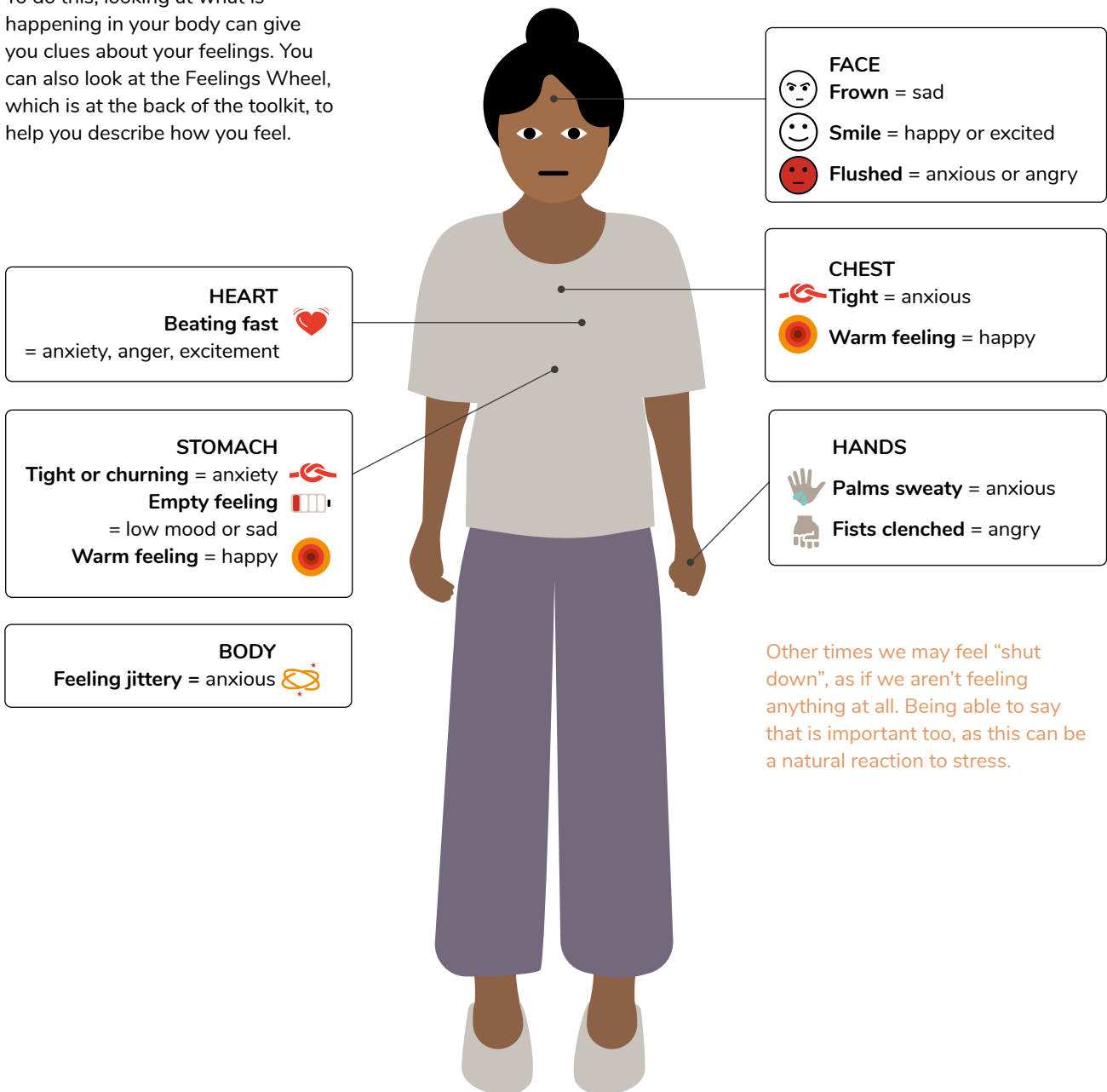
Emotions can be difficult and hit at unexpected times.

Sometimes it seems easier not to talk to people about challenging feelings.

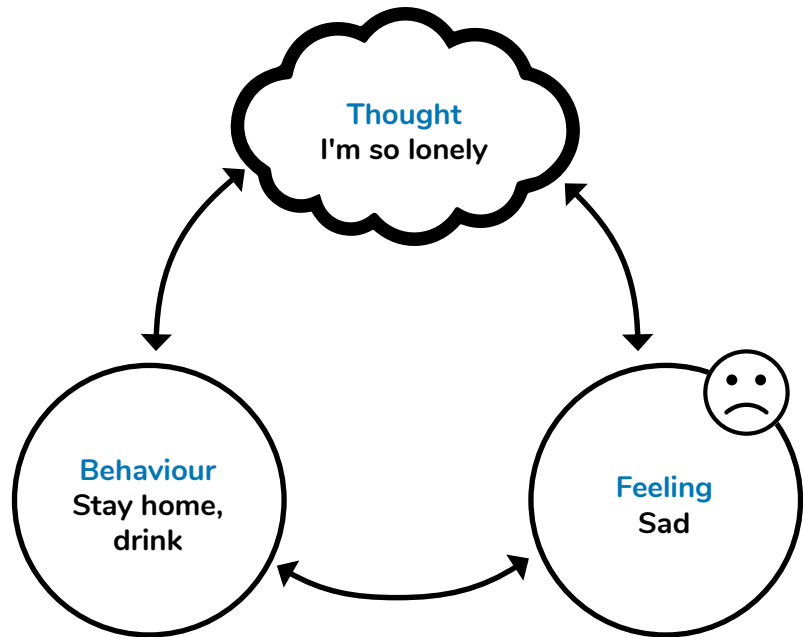
But difficult emotions can lead to drinking as a way of blocking them out.

**The first step in managing difficult emotions is to be able to say what we are feeling.**

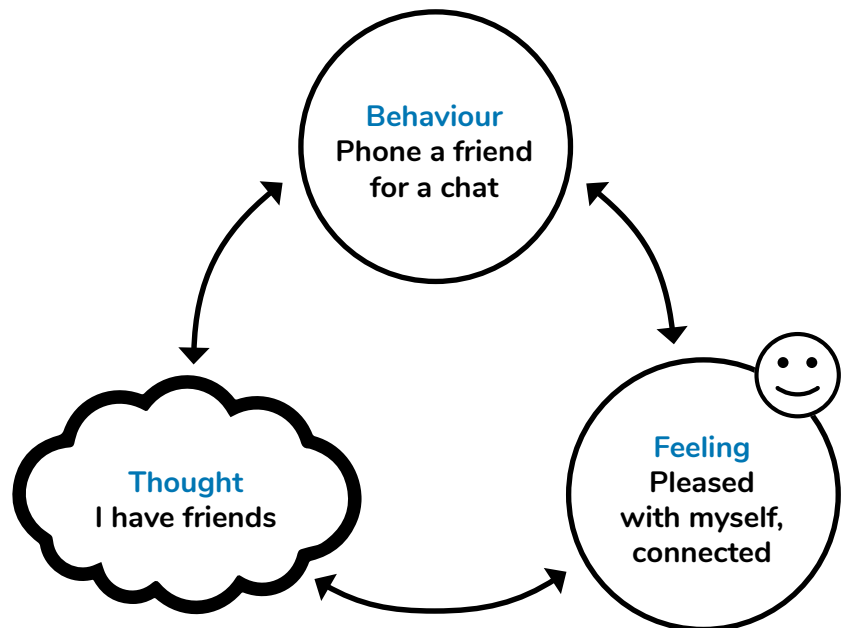
You might be able to tell how you feel right away, but sometimes it can be hard to pinpoint feelings. To do this, looking at what is happening in your body can give you clues about your feelings. You can also look at the Feelings Wheel, which is at the back of the toolkit, to help you describe how you feel.



Our emotions influence how we think and what we do to cope with them. Thoughts, feelings and the things we do all interact with each other. So, we might see something like this:

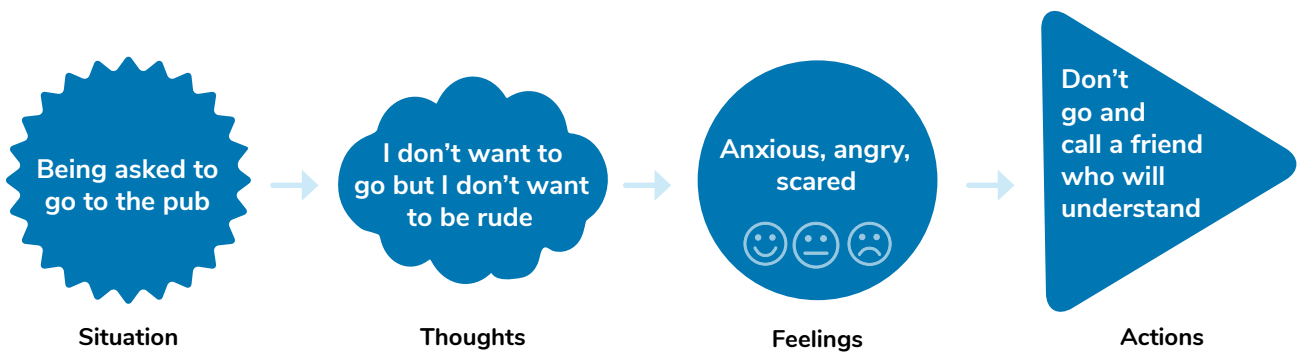
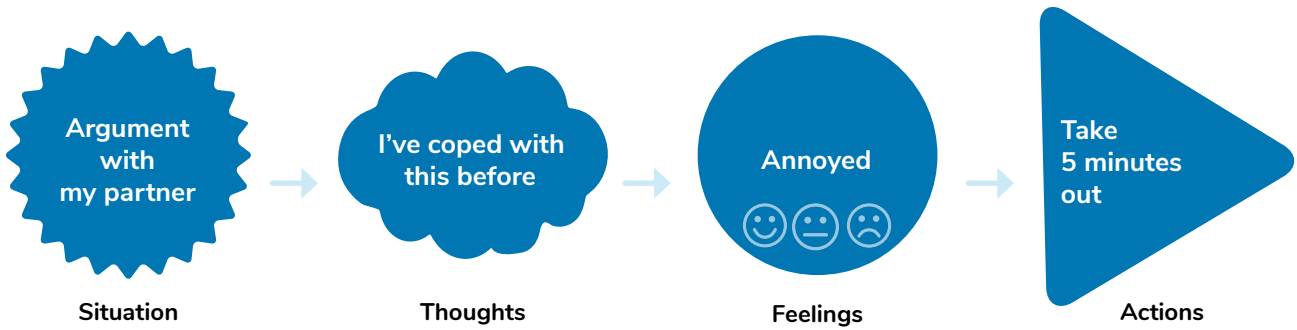


In other words, someone might feel sad and think “I’m lonely”, but not feel like going out because they feel sad, which makes them feel even more lonely. Once that happens it can be easy to turn to alcohol to help cope with loneliness. However we can do something different that doesn't include drinking.



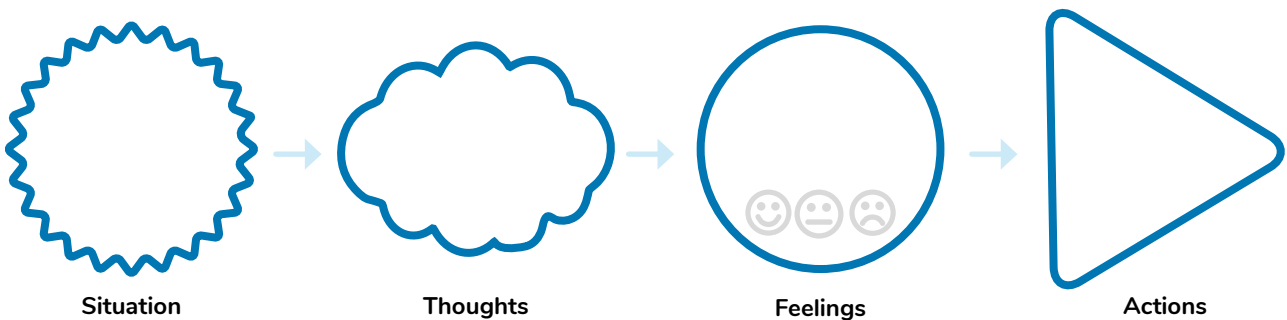
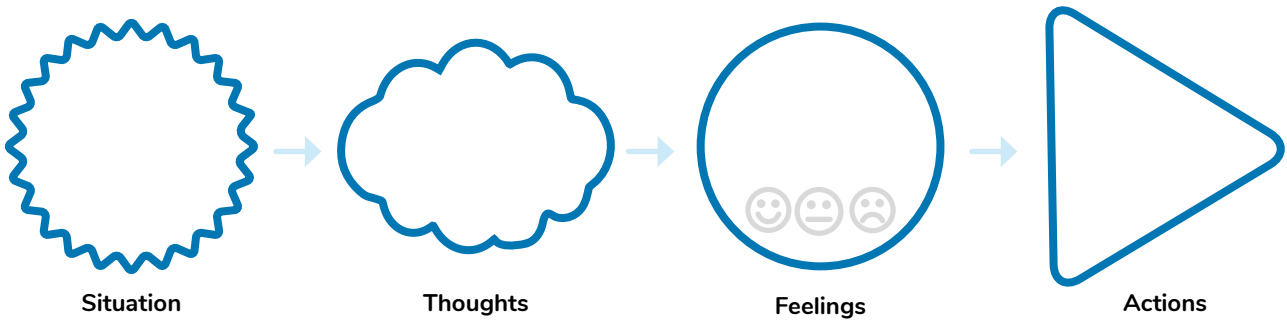
So, by doing something different (phone a friend), you can have more positive thoughts and feel better about yourself.

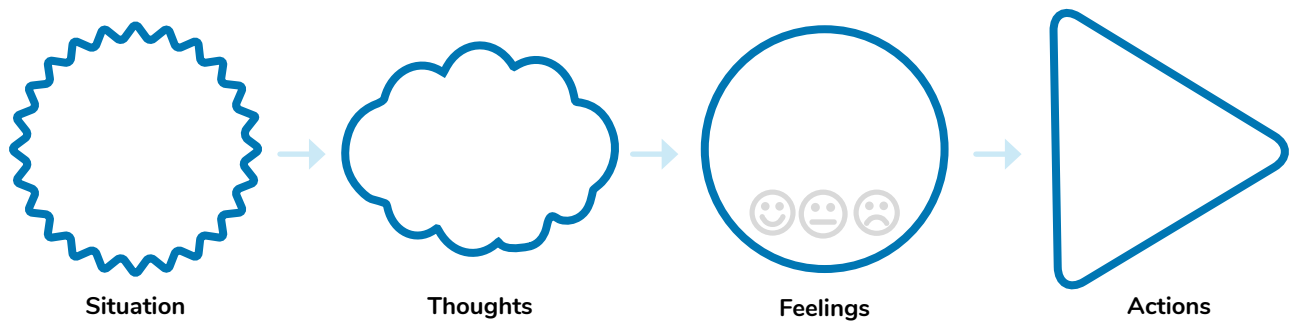
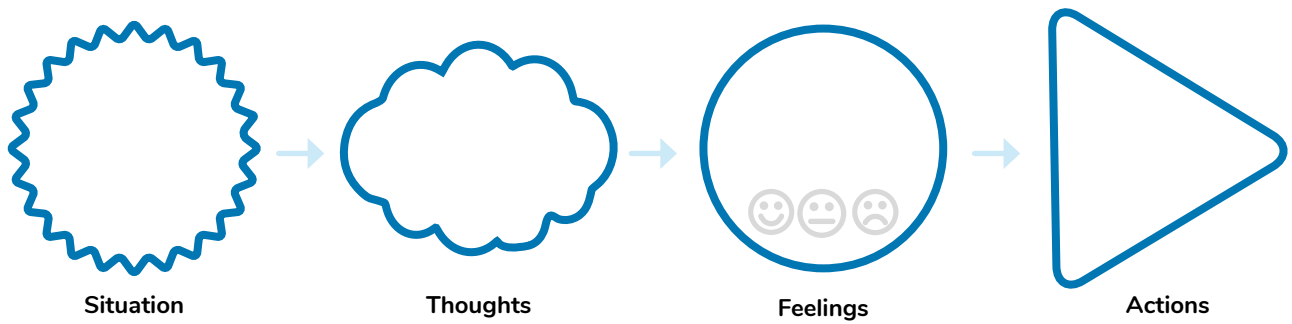
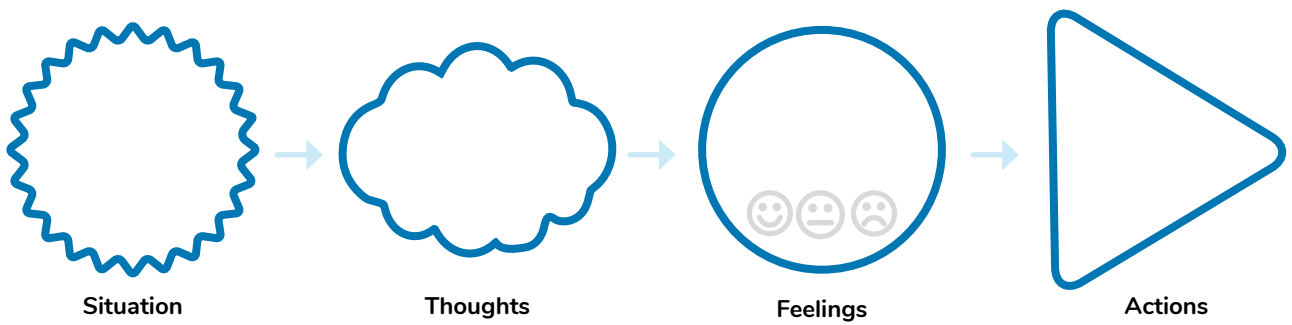
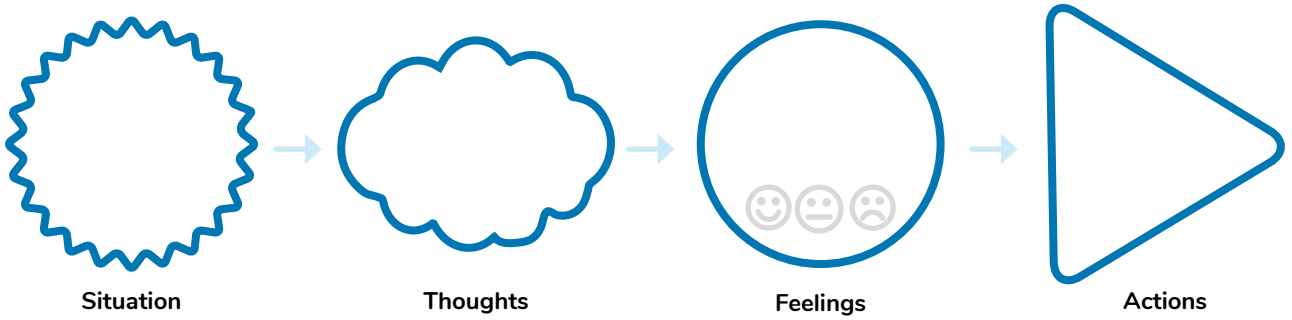
The most important thing to understand is that it is possible to change your feelings by the actions that you take. Like this:



Use the shapes to record what you can do differently.

Remember, for new "Actions" you can use the "Relaxation" section from earlier (pages 20–28).





**Here are some other suggestions for things you can do when you're experiencing difficult emotions.**



Talk to someone



Sing a song



Read a book, magazine, leaflet



Watch TV or a film



Hug something soft



Have a shower or bath



Drink ice cold water



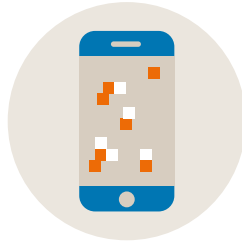
Splash cold water on your face



Listen to music



Count to 30



Play a game on your phone or laptop



Take a walk (avoid shops where you could buy alcohol)



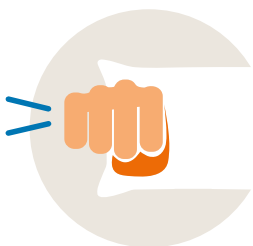
Eat something tasty



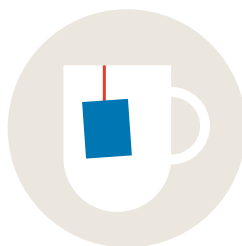
Say out loud 10 good things about yourself



Make a plan for tomorrow



Punch a pillow 3 times



Have a tea or coffee



Draw something








# Opportunity

# Healthy Living

## My Physical Health

Keeping physically well can help maintain recovery, as feeling well physically has positive benefits for our mental health as well.

Sometimes it is challenging to remember the details of medical conditions and appointments. You can use this space to write down the names and numbers of medical services that you attend, so that you can refer to them when you need to get in touch.

 <b>Name of medical professional</b>	 <b>Where do I see them?</b>	 <b>What is their phone number?</b>
E.g. Dr Stewart	E.g. Diabetes clinic	E.g. 0141 XXX XXXX



You may want to use a diary or journal to write down things that your health team tell you, so you can go back and look at these details next time you see them.



## Medication

If you take different medications throughout the day it can be difficult to keep track.

You can ask your GP or pharmacist about getting prescriptions in blister packs. A blister pack contains all your medication for the week. It shows the day of the week and the time of day the medication has to be taken.

If you can't get a blister pack then pill dispensers are available from most pharmacists. Each day is made up of small boxes that you can store your medication in. You or someone who supports you can fill this with all the medication for the week.



There are lots of ways to help you remember to take your medication, including using Smartphones or Smart Speakers.

You can find out how to use these and other tips on how to remember and record things on pages 56–57.



Make sure that you keep medication out of reach of children, for example in a cupboard at adult height.

## Smoking

Research has shown that smoking can mean slower recovery from ARBD, as it can affect how blood flows through the brain. If you smoke and you feel you would like to stop, then there is plenty of help available including free patches and gum as well as counselling. You can speak to your doctor or visit the NHS Stop Smoking website [www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking](http://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking)



# Keeping Active

By being active or exercising, our heart rate increases, improving the circulation of blood around the body. Exercise strengthens our muscles and bones, allowing us to do more, for longer, over time. Exercise also improves our mental state and sense of well-being due to the natural production of endorphins – our ‘feel good’ hormones trigger a positive feeling in the body.

You don't have to run a marathon to get fit. Gentler forms of exercise such as walking and swimming count just as much as strenuous exercise. There are always day to day opportunities to get fitter and stronger, for example, taking the stairs instead of the lift when out. Cleaning the house, gardening, and carrying your shopping are all physical tasks (and can be classed as exercise).

Small changes to your daily routine can make big differences to your health and wellbeing.

The recommended amount of exercise for adults is **150 minutes per week**



If you have physical issues that could limit what exercise you can do, try and speak to a doctor about the best exercise for you.



**Remember: if you want to exercise, use the Weekly Planner to plan your time.**



**The NHS supports increasing activity and exercise levels and provides information on how to get more active at: [www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/free-fitness-ideas](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/free-fitness-ideas)**

# Eat Well, Live Well

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

Food can be especially important for recovery, as it gives the body and the brain the fuel it needs to function well.

## Here are a few suggestions to help:



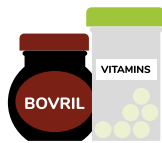
### Drink Water

Our bodies need roughly 2 litres of fluids every day and the more of this that is water the better.



### Fruit & Vegetables

Try and aim for five portions of fruit and veg per day. Make a list of your favourite fruits and vegetables, (frozen is as good as fresh) and make sure you have them on your shopping list.



### Vitamins & Minerals

Essential vitamins and minerals help our bodies to work properly, and if we don't have enough we can become ill. Eating enough fresh fruit and vegetables will ensure you get enough vitamins and minerals.

It is particularly important in early recovery to eat Thiamine (vitamin B1) as the brain may not have had enough for a long time. You can also take supplement tablets, or drink Bovril which is rich in Thiamine.



### Carbohydrates

Our bodies need sugar in the form of carbohydrates. Eating brown rice, brown bread and nuts are good ways of getting the right sort of sugar. There's nothing wrong with having some chocolate or cake. They can provide an energy (and mood) boost. However, try to eat them in moderation.



### Protein

Protein helps our bodies to maintain muscle and provides us with nutrients that prevent us getting tired. Chicken, red meat, fish and eggs are all good forms of protein.



### Eat Slowly

Slowing down whilst eating can help you digest better, which helps to get the most out of the vitamins and minerals in the food.



**Remember: put your meals into your weekly planner**

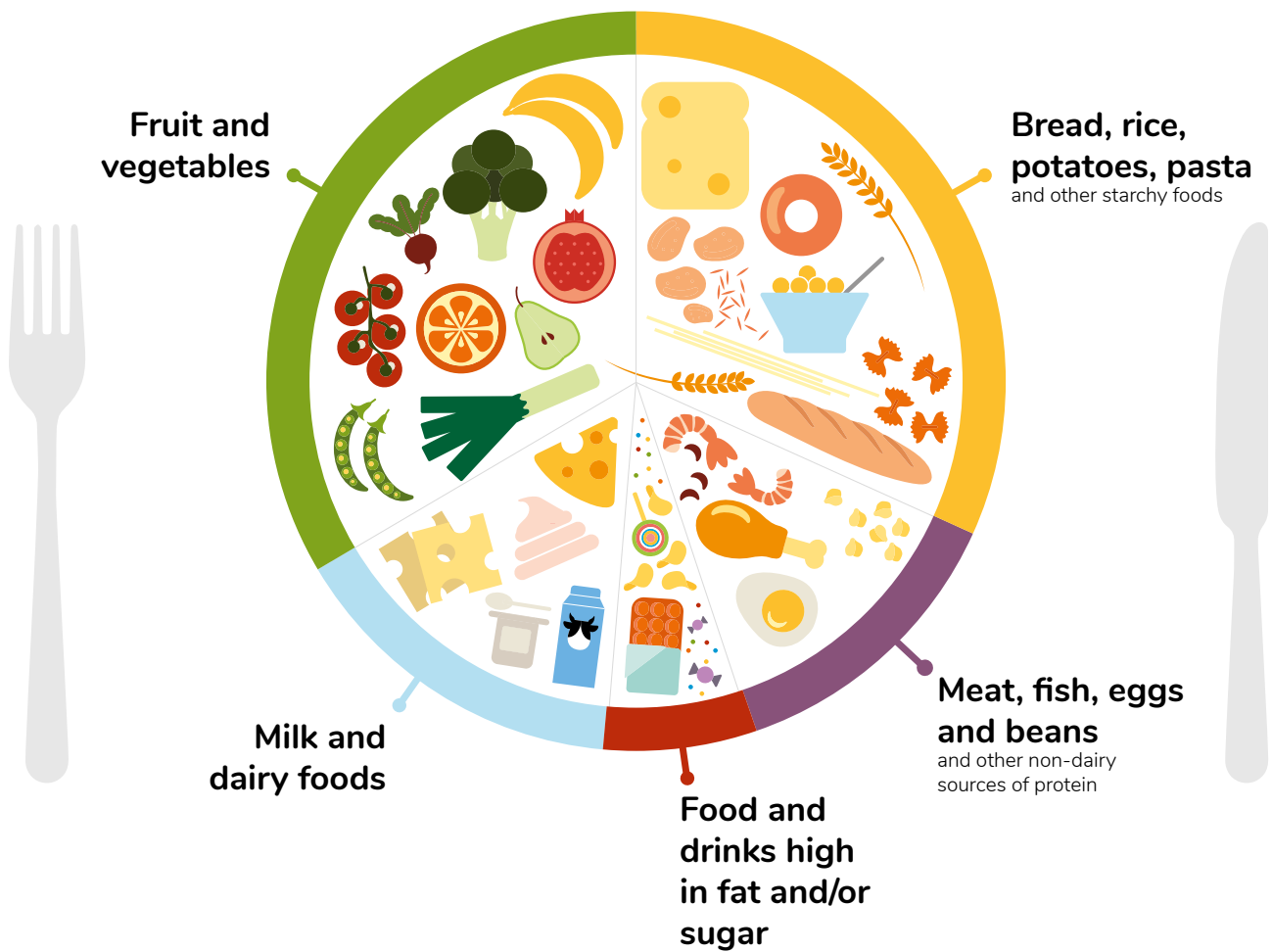


### Eat Regularly

Our bodies prefer a regular pattern of eating. Try to make sure you have a good breakfast, a decent lunch and a regular time for dinner. This will stop you getting too hungry.

# The Eatwell Plate

Use the Eatwell Guide to help you get a balance of healthy food. It shows how much of what you eat overall should come from each food group.



# Sleep Well



Sleep is very important for our wellbeing.

People's brains can struggle to sleep in the early months of recovery. The good news is that it will generally improve. And there are lots of things you can do to help.

## Top Tips for Good Sleep



### Routine

Our brains like routine, so decide on a regular time to go to bed each night, and a regular time to get up in the morning. If you're able to get out for a walk soon after you get up, it has been shown that being outdoors in daylight can help with getting to sleep at night. Exercise is also good for sleeping.



### Bedroom

Your room should be tidy, quiet and dark for sleeping.



### Reduce caffeine

It is a stimulant and stops you from sleeping. Try not to have a tea or coffee after 6pm. Tobacco can also keep you awake, so don't smoke just before bedtime.

It can take around **three weeks** to get your brain and body used to a new routine. **Keep working at it and it will usually improve.**

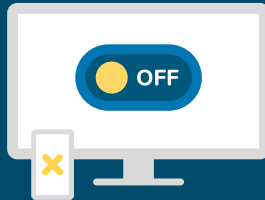


The average person needs  
**7 to 9 hours**  
 of sleep per night  
 to get the rest that the body needs.



**Try not to take naps**

Sleeping during the day can make it harder to sleep at night.



**Reduce stimulation**

Switch off the TV and stop using a Smartphone around 30 minutes before you'd like to be asleep.



**Worry Box**

We sometimes struggle to sleep because of all the worries from the day. Try writing any worries down and put them in a box. You can then tell yourself you will deal with them tomorrow. Try and pick a short period of time – e.g. 'I will think about my worries tomorrow, between 9 – 9.30am.'

When you look at the contents of the Worry Box, you can use the Problem Solving exercises on page 36 to help you work out what you can do.



**When it doesn't work**

If you are not asleep after about 30 minutes of trying, then get up out of bed.

- ✓ Stay warm
- ✓ You could try to read a book or do a jigsaw
- ✓ Do one of the relaxation techniques on pages 20–28.
- ✗ Try not to have tea or coffee or a smoke
- ✗ Don't turn on the TV if you can avoid it.

**Wait until you feel sleepy again then return to bed.**



# Home Safety

There are a number of things you can do to help you stay safe at home and this section will give you some tools and tips.



## Fire Safety

There are a number of things you can do to prevent a fire in your home including:



Having working smoke alarms can save your life and your home. Test your smoke alarms regularly to make sure they still work.



If you smoke, take care to put out your cigarette carefully.



Take care when using candles and make sure they are out before going to bed or going out.



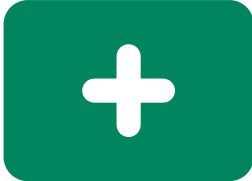
If you have an open fire, always use a fire guard.



Do not overload sockets or adaptors.



If you are unsure how to keep your home safe from fire, ask your landlord, loved one or support worker about a home safety visit from Scottish Fire and Rescue. This can include fitting smoke alarms for free and helping you to learn how to test them.



## Medication and First Aid

You can get a small first aid kit from a pharmacy or supermarket to help you look after minor cuts and bruises.

**If you have an accident at home and you are struggling to breathe, or cannot stop bleeding from a cut, always call 999 and ask for an ambulance.**

## Housekeeping Plan

Keeping the house clean and tidy can be a real mood booster and help with feeling safe and secure. Something that can help as a reminder of the housekeeping tasks is a housekeeping plan. A plan helps prevent feeling overwhelmed. Pacing the housekeeping tasks throughout the week can also be useful for staying occupied.



? What task?	M T W Th F S Su What day will I do it?	🕒 What time?



**Remember: if you plan to do your housework at certain times during the week – put it in your weekly planner.**

# Practical Opportunities

## Computing and Digital Skills



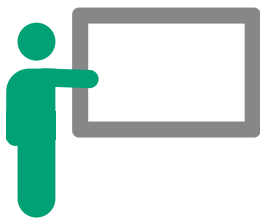
Developing computing skills can make the recovery process easier, as these skills can help you find out about local recovery organisations in your area, order shopping, and help you stay connected to others in online groups or video calls. This could be particularly important if you have physical issues that mean it is challenging to get out of the house.

### Learning new skills takes time.

If this is new to you try to take small steps to enhance your computer skills. Try not to put too much pressure on yourself to learn everything at once.



Devices such as laptops, tablets and Smartphones can be expensive, but are a good investment. There may be funding available for a computer, tablet or Smartphone via local charities or your local council. If you need help with funding, speak to a support worker or loved one for help researching where you could apply for it.



## Training

There are lots of training opportunities available for improving your computer skills. Your local council may run computing or Smartphone skills workshops at your local library. These hands-on sessions are a great way to understand the basics with someone who can help you. You can ask a support worker or a loved one to find out about these opportunities, or you can go into your local library to find out.



## Internet resources and training:

If you are able to perform a basic search on Google, then you can find many YouTube information videos about how to use digital devices which can talk you through set up and getting started. If you're not able to search the internet, your support worker or a loved one can help you with this first step. Searching for the name and model of your device in the Google search engine (e.g. iPhone 5) will bring up information on the video site YouTube.

If you have the ability to access information online already you could do some online training.

### GCF Learn Free

GCF Learn Free is an organisation that provides free online training on basic and advanced computing skills. They also provide free certificates once you have completed the training if these are helpful for you.

You can access their computer basics course at:

<https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/computerbasics>

You can access their training on Smartphones and tablets at:

<https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/topics/smartphonesandtablets>



Remember:

if you want to improve these skills, then put time to do this into your weekly planner.

## Main types of digital device



### Computer/laptop

A computer or laptop has features that allow you to perform everyday tasks and connect to the internet.



### Smartphone

Smartphones are a combination of a phone, a clock and a computer.

With a Smartphone you can download apps to help you with tasks. You can also set yourself reminders of things you need to do.



### Tablet

e.g. Kindle Fire or iPad. A tablet is a cross between a computer and a Smartphone, though you can't make phone calls with a tablet. You can also use it to read books.



### Smart Speaker

e.g. Alexa or Google Home. Smart speakers are connected via a Smartphone to the internet. These can be very helpful for setting reminders and appointments. These are voice activated, so you just speak to them.

Have a look at the table below to see exactly what you can use each device for.

BROWSE THE INTERNET	✓	✓	✓	-
WRITE LETTERS	✓	-	✓	-
EMAIL	✓	✓	✓	-
ORDER SHOPPING	✓	✓	✓	-
MAKE PHONECALLS	-	✓	-	✓
MAKE VIDEO CALLS	✓	✓	✓	-
SEND TEXT MESSAGES	-	✓	-	-
SET REMINDERS	✓	✓	✓	✓
READ BOOKS	-	-	✓	-
VOICE ACTIVATION	-	-	-	✓
LISTEN TO RADIO/MUSIC	✓	✓	✓	✓

There are different ways you can set reminders for appointments you have, and for tasks you want to do. Here are a few suggestions:

New technology can be really helpful for daily tasks. A Smartphone or a Smart Speaker is a bit like having an external memory that can remind you of important dates/times and help you with reminders about everyday tasks.

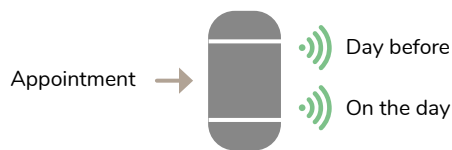
If you are unsure how to use your Smartphone or Smart Speaker, ask your support worker, friend or carer to help you set it up.

It would be useful to ask them to write the instructions down so you have them for the future reminders.

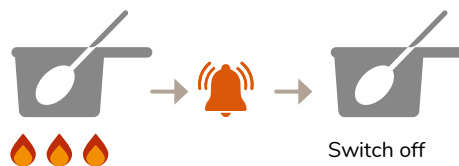
**SOME TIPS INCLUDE:**



Put appointments in your phone calendar with an alarm to remind you when the appointment is getting close. You can set a reminder alarm for the day before the appointment and one on the day of the appointment.



You can tell your Smart Speaker about the appointment and ask it to remind you the day before and the day of the appointment.



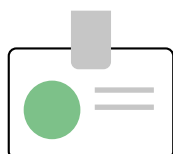
When cooking, you can set alarms on your Smartphone or Smart Speaker to remind you to take things off the cooker, or out of the oven.



Your Smartphone or Smart Speaker can be also be used to store telephone numbers and names of people you meet, or other important information you want to remember.

# Know Your Rights

When you have a diagnosis of ARBD, many people may be involved in your life. Sometimes they may become involved in important decisions about your life and more often than not they will be people looking to be supportive and helpful. It is important to remember also that within this, you have the same rights as anyone else does. In addition, having a diagnosis of ARBD is likely to offer enhanced rights against discrimination on disability grounds.



## Employment

If you are in a job, or are seeking work an employer cannot use the fact that you have ARBD as a reason in itself either to dismiss you or to not offer you a job. This would be classed as disability discrimination. This does not mean that an employer can never take action if they feel that someone having ARBD is affecting their ability to do their job.

However, for those already employed, employers must make sure they are doing everything possible to make what are known as “reasonable adjustments”. This means they must try to find ways to allow you to be supported to continue in your job if there are reasonable changes that would make this possible.

In recruiting for a job, an employer cannot use a disability as a reason not to employ you unless they can demonstrate clear reasons why they could not make reasonable adjustments to allow the disabled person to do the job.



## Housing

If you have a disability such as ARBD then you have the same rights as anyone else when it comes to housing.

There are a few different options when renting a property – you can register with your council and/ or a housing association for social housing, or you can find privately rented accommodation (where you rent from the person who owns the property). If you have ARBD, you cannot be evicted or denied housing just because you have ARBD.

If any physical adaptations to the property need to be made due to your disability, then your landlord must look into whether this is possible and can't refuse your request unreasonably. This applies to social housing and private rentals, however you would need to check who would be liable to pay for the adaptations. In some cases your council will pay, in others you as a tenant may need to pay.

For more advice, see the Useful Resources section on page 75 for organisations that can help you find out about your rights in more detail.



## Health

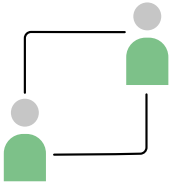
Providers of health care such as GP's, hospitals and pharmacists cannot discriminate on the grounds of someone having ARBD. As with employment, they must make reasonable adjustments to try and resolve any difficulties a person with ARBD may have in allowing them to access the service.

If you find yourself in situations where you could get confused in public then you could carry a Brain Injury card.

Headway is a Brain Injury charity. Their Brain Injury Card is a wallet sized card that you can show to people if you are getting confused, or you need support. Each card is personalised to show the main things you might struggle with. It explains the effects of ARBD, but it will not say you have ARBD on it – it will say you have a brain injury.

You can apply online for a Brain Injury Card online on the Headway website.

**[www.headway.org.uk/supporting-you/brain-injury-identity-card](http://www.headway.org.uk/supporting-you/brain-injury-identity-card)**



## Social care support

If there are areas of life that you are finding more difficult, such as practical things like looking after yourself or managing areas such as money, you have the right to request an assessment to see if you qualify for social care support.

You or a loved one would need to contact your local authority to request an assessment for this. Your GP can also help with a referral.



## Mental Health and Incapacity laws

There could be times people believe that you need extra help with decisions. There are laws such as the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 that can allow others to take decisions for you if there is evidence you cannot safely do this for yourself. This should only happen when there is strong evidence it is absolutely necessary, and your views should always be taken in to account.



## Advocacy

An advocate is someone who can represent your views and ensure your voice is heard. In certain situations, you may have a legal right to an advocate. In particular, if you have been treated under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 you will likely have the right for an advocate if you want one. There are many other situations where an advocate can be very helpful to ensure your rights are upheld, and that people involved in your life are fully listening to your views. Even where you may not have a legal right to an advocate, many organisations can still provide advocates where requested. Details can be found on page 76.

Times an advocate could be helpful include:

- DWP assessments (e.g. for Universal Credit or Personal Independence Payments)
- If you have debt
- If you face issues with your medical treatment



# Benefits and Debt

Looking at money can be quite stressful, and it might feel easier to avoid thinking about it. However, getting your finances in check can lead to real peace of mind. Here you will find some suggestions for organisations that can help you manage your money, and a budget plan so you can see your money at a glance.



## Benefits

If you have a disability such as ARBD, there are benefit options that may be available such as Universal Credit, Employment and Support Allowance or Personal Independence Payments (PIP.)

Everyone's circumstances will be different, so Penumbra isn't able to offer personalised benefits advice. If you have a social worker they will be able to help you with this, or if you live in a housing association property, often they have benefit advisers to speak to.

There's also lots of independent organisations that may be able to help. The best place to start is with the Citizen's Advice Bureau.



Citizen's Advice is a national organisation that offers independent help with issues relating to benefits, debt, legal and housing issues amongst others. The Citizen's Advice website has a self-help section, but you can also arrange a telephone call or a face to face appointment in one of their 60 offices across Scotland.

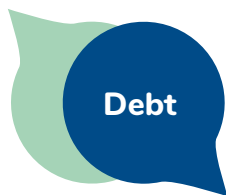
To find details of your local branch, you will need to search the Citizen's Advice website at [www.cas.org.uk/bureaux](http://www.cas.org.uk/bureaux) where you will find the number for your local area. Your local council may also offer a benefits advice service. This will vary by region, so contact your local council to find out about services in your area.



## Bus travel

In Scotland people with disabilities or who are over 60 may be entitled to free bus travel using a National Entitlement Card. Depending on the nature of the disability, you may also be entitled to take a carer with you for free. The card also offers discounts on leisure activities which vary by your council area.

You can find details about the National Entitlement Card on their website: [www.entitlementcard.org.uk](http://www.entitlementcard.org.uk). You will need to contact your local council to check how to apply for the card in your area.



## Debt

Facing debt can feel quite daunting. It may be helpful to find someone that you trust that you can talk to and ask for help.

**If you feel overwhelmed at any time, you can use some of the relaxation techniques on pages 20–28 to help you to resettle.**

Debt can be anxiety provoking, however there is lots of support available to help you manage your finances in your recovery if you have debts. Penumbra cannot offer debt advice, but it is worth contacting the following organisation:



Step Change is a Scottish charity that can support you when dealing with the people you owe money to – they can create payment plans and give advice on potentially writing off debt. The service is free. You can find information on their website [www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org) and you can call them on 0800 138 1111.

For your appointment with either Citizen's Advice or Step Change it will be helpful to get together the following information so they can help you. Remember that you can always ask for help if you need it.

- Details of any benefits you already receive
- Your current incomings and outgoings
- Housing details – tenancy agreement and council tax
- Medical information (such as if you have a disability)
- If you have debt including rent arrears: details how much you owe, and to who/which organisations

You can use the My Budget Plan to work out your incomings and outgoings.

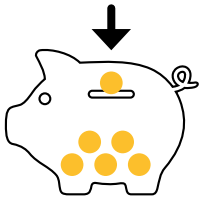




## Income and expenditure summary

Total income		£
Total spend	-	£
Difference	=	£

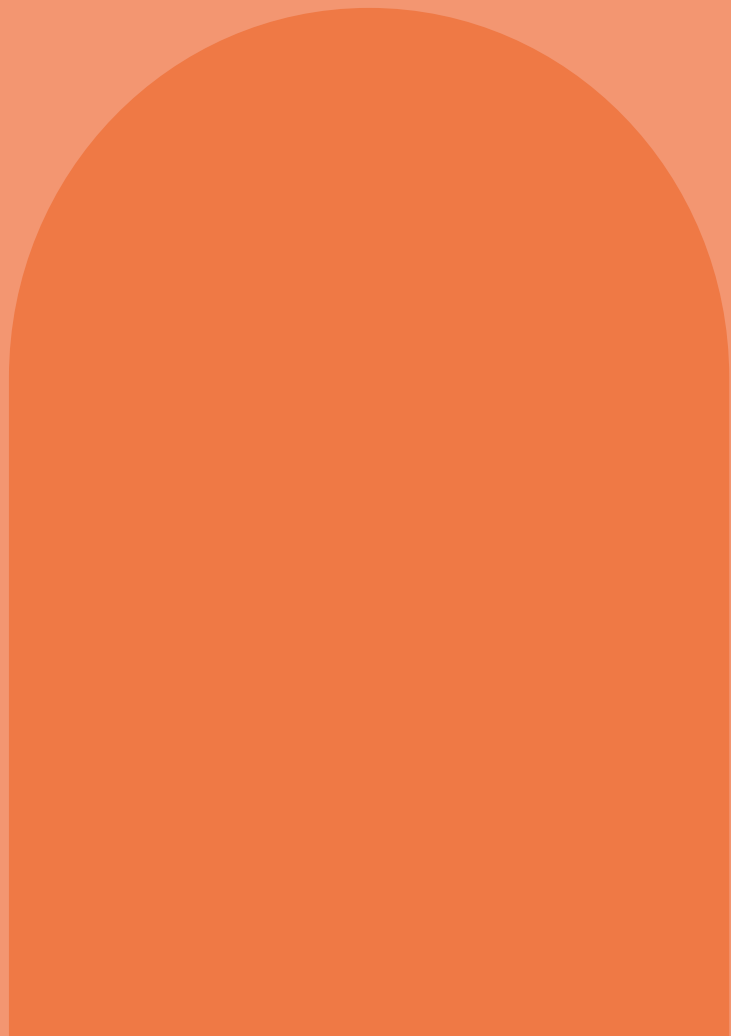
Saving		£
--------	--	---



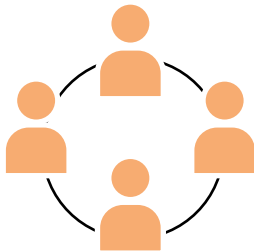
## Savings

I would like to save for:	Each week I will set aside:

# People



# Mutual Aid



## Getting support from others who have similar experiences

Recent research has shown that something that is important for recovery is connection with other people. The chemicals our bodies create when we feel connected to the people around us can help us feel physically and mentally well. As problems with alcohol can be stigmatised, many people in recovery seek out confidential groups where they can discuss issues with people who understand.

Everyone is different, and one group will be helpful for one person, and a different group will work for another. Give them a try to see what helps you.



## Alcoholics Anonymous

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is a group where people come together to help each other stop drinking.

AA is free, however groups take donations for meeting rooms, tea and coffee etc. AA promotes stopping drinking for recovery. AA is what is known as a 12 Step fellowship, as the programme of recovery uses 12 steps to help people stop drinking. However, you don't have to do the 12 steps to attend the meetings. AA is not a religious organisation.

You can volunteer to help run meetings. You can find out more by looking at the website [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk) or by calling the helpline on 0800 917 7650.



## SMART recovery

SMART (Self-Management and Recovery Training) is a group programme that provides training and tools for people who want to change behaviours, including using alcohol.

Guided by trained facilitators, participants come to help themselves and help each other using a variety of cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) and motivational tools and techniques. SMART recovery is free however some groups take donations for meeting rooms, tea and coffee etc.




You can contact SMART Recovery on their national helpline number 0330 053 6022 to find out details of meetings in your local area, or look on their website <https://smartrecovery.org.uk>

## Peer Support

Peer Support means people who have been through mental health or substance use challenges coming together to help each other. Studies have found that helping others who have faced the same experiences can be a boost to recovery, and to help prevent feelings of isolation.

There are a number of places that you can get involved with Peer Support, both in relation to alcohol or mental health more generally.

The best place to find out about opportunities in your local area to get involved are substance use organisations, which vary by region. Some of these are Turning Point, Change Grow Live or We Are With You – however check which organisation operates in your area. If you have a support worker, or a loved one to help you then you can ask them for some help with this. Your GP can also help with information about mental health groups for people experiencing issues such as depression and anxiety.

 Which meeting	 Where it is	 What day and time
E.g. SMART Recovery	Turning Point, 5 Leith Links, EH6	Friday at 1pm



**Remember!**  
Put the meetings into your weekly planner so you don't forget.



# Relationships in Recovery

Some people may bring us a lot of joy and happiness and can help us through our lives. Other people may be more challenging to connect with.

Strong relationships will be important in recovering from ARBD. At times some relationships may work well, at other times they could feel strained. This may be because family or friends feel strongly about you not drinking, or what you should be doing for your recovery. There may also be a history of difficulties or tension that can come from drinking. If this is the case, it is useful to remember that you cannot change your past. What you can do is focus on building a positive future.

**Finding ways to communicate well with family and friends can make it easier to get by without alcohol. Here are some suggestions.**

## What can I do?



If you're struggling to follow a conversation, let the person know. You can ask them to repeat what they said or explain it more simply.



If a loved one is upset, it may be helpful to try and understand what is causing them to be upset. It may just be that they are concerned about you. Try and ask them why they are feeling that way. If you know why they are concerned, this may help you put your point across in ways they will understand.



Try and be clear about what you need, or what you are doing. For example, if a family member disagrees with what you are doing, you could say something like: 'I don't think I need to go to a recovery meeting every day, but I am planning on going twice per week. Please can you let me try this for a few weeks and we can talk about it then.'



If you are struggling to find time to yourself for your recovery, you could ask: 'I need some time to write in my journal, would it be OK if I have an hour alone?'



5 MINUTES

If you find yourself getting upset or overwhelmed, you can take yourself away from the conversation for five minutes to get some breathing space. Using the relaxation techniques on pages 20–28 could help.



If you have a friend in recovery, or someone you can trust, you can talk to them about how you are feeling.

## Situations involving alcohol

Alternatively, there may be people who are upset that you are no longer drinking, and who may want you to drink with them.

### What can I do?



If you are attending a social event or a place where you know people will be drinking alcohol, it can be useful to have an 'escape plan'. Checking out how to get home in advance can reduce the risk.

---



Don't feel obliged to stay if the situation becomes uncomfortable and could trigger the desire to take a drink.

---



Do a 'cost/benefit analysis' about drinking before you go – you can find this on page 78.

---



Practice what you will say if someone asks you if you want to drink – e.g. 'Thanks for the offer but I'm not drinking at the moment' or 'I'd really like to spend time with you but I don't want to drink.' Saying things out loud can help you remember what you want to say.

---



Make sure you know which glass is yours to prevent you taking a drink by mistake.

This can be difficult at first but will get easier the longer you remain drink free.





# Volunteering and Community

Volunteering can be very rewarding for people in recovery. Feeling part of the local community, building up new contacts and positive relationships can really help boost self-esteem. If you're not able to volunteer, then joining in with local activities such as art groups can help you make connections with other people.

## Volunteering

It's important to enjoy any volunteering you may want to do. Have a think about some of the activities you most enjoy or enjoyed in the past. Write a few options down here, then have a chat with friends, family, or a support worker about where you can do it. Have a think about how much time you can commit to as well. It's a good idea to bear your own health in mind when thinking about this to make sure you're able to keep well whilst volunteering.

You can also look at Volunteer Scotland's website for some ideas. Volunteer Scotland are a charity that help people find volunteering opportunities in their local area. The website has links to contacts within all of Scotland's local authorities. [www.volunteerscotland.net](http://www.volunteerscotland.net)

 <b>What do I like to do?</b>	 <b>How much time can I commit to?</b>	 <b>Which organisations offer volunteering in this area?</b>	 <b>Who do I need to contact?</b>
E.g. Gardening	E.g. two hours per week	E.g. Community Garden Centre	E.g. Angus Mill (phone number)

## Hobbies & Interests

Reconnecting with previous hobbies and interest is a great way to have an enjoyable recovery. Have a think about the things that you most enjoy or used to enjoy and find out where in your local area you could take part in these. These could be things such as football, drawing, creative writing etc. If you need to speak to anyone to arrange taking part, write down their numbers here.

 What do I like to do?	 Where can I do it?	 When does it happen?	 Who do I need to speak to?



## David Y's Recovery Story

I collapsed in the street, an ambulance came and I spent the next three months in hospital. Fortunately, the length in hospital was a saving grace as it gave my body time to withdraw from alcohol. I'd been a heavy drinker for a long time.

It was at this time I was informed I have Alcohol Related Brain Damage (ARBD).

I was shocked.

I was having trouble recognising people and the simple task of walking had increased in difficulty by a hundred. It took about eight months in total before I got back to something resembling normal. There was still a long road to recovery ahead however.

I now have something called peripheral neuropathy. I accept it now for what it is. I live with it without retreating back into alcohol. I manage with painkillers, but the constant aches are reminders of the hard years of toil and strain I made my body endure.

After hospital, I spent some time in supported accommodation and staff were on site, to help whenever I needed support. I have my own flat now, it's nice and I'm doing really good. I'm eating, not drinking and have disposable money at last. It's reassuring.

I've always been interested in the arts, so now I indulge in it to help me on a day to day basis. I use art as therapy and have painted many pictures. I speak five languages, some fluently, some not so fluent. I'm improving some of them by putting subtitles on when watching movies. I've also amassed a considerable book collection and I sometimes read two a week.

Finding something you enjoy is really important, but that in itself can be a challenge. If you do have something you like to indulge in, then my advice would be to go for it and immerse yourself.

Managing health conditions can sometimes seem to require an external intervention, usually medical in nature. Looking after yourself plays a big part too.

My last drink was 11 August 2013 and I work all the time on feeling better.

# Empowerment





# Useful Resources



## Alcohol Related Recovery

### Alcoholics Anonymous


The helpline is available 24 hours per day.

 [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)  
 0800 9177 650


### SMART recovery

 <https://smartrecovery.org.uk>  
 0330 053 6022


### Drinkline Scotland

A confidential advice and information line.  
 0800 7 314 314

### NHS inform

Provides information on alcohol misuse and local support services.  
 0800 22 44 88

### Alcohol Focus Scotland

Provides information on alcohol issues.  
 0141 572 6700


### Recovery Hubs

Recovery hubs are available in many areas. Recovery hubs are centres where you can find a wide range of professional and informal help. You can take part in groups such as creative writing, cooking and alternative therapies. Hubs often host recovery meetings and are a good place to meet other people in recovery. You can find out more about where you can access a hub by speaking to NHS inform or your GP.

## Physical Health

### NHS 24

Provides health information and self-care advice for people in Scotland.

 Call 111 for help.

### Your GP

Your first point of contact for all health-related issues.

### IN AN EMERGENCY

Go to your nearest **Accident and Emergency** department or **dial 999** if you need an ambulance.



## Mental Health

There are a range of organisations that support people with their mental health. Your local Emergency Department and your GP can also provide you with advice and support.

### GENERAL HELP:



#### Breathing Space

A confidential Scottish phoneline for anyone feeling low or depressed, or just needing someone to talk to.

 [www.breathingspace.scot](http://www.breathingspace.scot)  
 0800 83 85 87



#### Samaritans

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

 [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)  
 08457 90 90 90

#### Anxiety UK

Charity providing support if you experience an anxiety condition.

 [www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)  
 08444 775 774


#### Penumbra

Penumbra provides recovery focussed mental health support all over Scotland. For further information and location details, visit:

 [www.penumbra.org.uk/services](http://www.penumbra.org.uk/services)



#### SAMH

Scottish Association for Mental Health  
SAMH services offer mental health support in a number of locations.



 [www.samh.org.uk/about-us/our-work](http://www.samh.org.uk/about-us/our-work)

## Housing

### Shelter Scotland

For independent housing advice,  
 <https://scotland.shelter.org.uk>  
 0808 800 4444



### Housing Options Scotland-

For housing advice for people with disabilities.  
 <https://housingoptionsscotland.org.uk>  
 0131 247 1400

You can also contact your local council for housing advice and support.

## Support for Family and Friends

### 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.  
 [www.sfad.org.uk](http://www.sfad.org.uk)  
 08080 1001011

### Al Anon

Al Anon is a 12-step fellowship that provides support to the family and friends of people who use alcohol. Like AA, it is based on a group coming together to offer help and support to each other.  
 [www.al-anonuk.org.uk](http://www.al-anonuk.org.uk)  
 0800 0086 811

## Multimedia Resources

There's a wide range of podcasts, videos and guides on the internet that can help you on your recovery journey. These are a few suggestions but have a look to find what appeals to you.

All the resources are available at the time of press.

### PODCASTS

Podcasts are much like radio shows. They are available for free on Smartphones and Tablets. There are a few podcast providers - the main ones are Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts. Enter the titles below into the search function on the app to find the podcast.

### Breath Work


This podcast is a series of 5–10 minute breathing exercises, which are recorded at various natural locations throughout the USA.

### Mindful Recovery

This is a podcast that helps people recover from trauma and alcohol or drug use by finding ways to develop self-understanding and empathy.

### WEBSITES

The NHS has a dedicated webpage for mental health support tips. There are audio guides on these pages to help with several mental health conditions.

 [www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression)

### APPS

Apps are 'applications' that you can download onto your Smartphone or Tablet. They contain information, chat forums or links to audio files. To download apps you will need to go into the 'App Store' if you have an iPhone or iPad, or Google Play if you have an Android phone or tablet.

### The Mindfulness Association



This app has guided mindfulness sessions that you can listen along to.

### Pocket Rehab

This is an app that helps you to connect with other people in recovery to get help and support. It has a chat forum and you can also speak to people if you feel like you might want to take a drink.

## Advocacy Organisations

You can find information about advocates and advocacy in your local area on the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance website.

 [www.siaa.org.uk](http://www.siaa.org.uk)  
 0131 510 9410



# Emergency



# Help!!!

## I'm having a craving!

Cravings are common in the early days of recovery and can hit at unexpected times, as you may be in the habit of drinking or meeting others who drink. The good news is that cravings become less frequent and easier to deal with the longer you stay away from alcohol.

Cravings can feel intense, but they do pass after a short while if you can distract yourself.

**Try to think of the word 'STOP' if you have a craving.**



**S**tay still

**T**hink

Is this really what I want to do?

**O**ptions

What can I do instead?

**P**lay safe

If in doubt, opt out

—  
**When the craving hits, do one of the relaxation exercises that is helpful to you.**

For example the controlled breathing exercises that you will find on page 20. This will help you calm yourself down, which helps with thinking about whether drinking is the right choice.

—  
**When you feel a bit calmer, have a look back at page 13 at the start of the toolkit, with your vision for your life.**




This can give you reasons to avoid drinking. For most people with ARBD, drinking again will likely move them further away from the life that they want for themselves.

—  
**Try completing a cost/benefit analysis of drinking.**


This is a good way to strengthen the choice to remain drink-free.




## Who can I call who will understand how I feel?

 Who	 Where do I know them from?	 What is their phone number?

## Reflections after a craving

<b>Did my plan work?</b>
 If yes, what was it about my plan that worked? Would I do anything differently?

 If the plan hasn't worked – then simply move onto the next section to find out more about a slip/relapse and what you can do to stay safe.

# What is a Slip vs. a Relapse

Recovering from long-term alcohol use can take a while and may take a number of goes to get to a point of long-term sobriety.

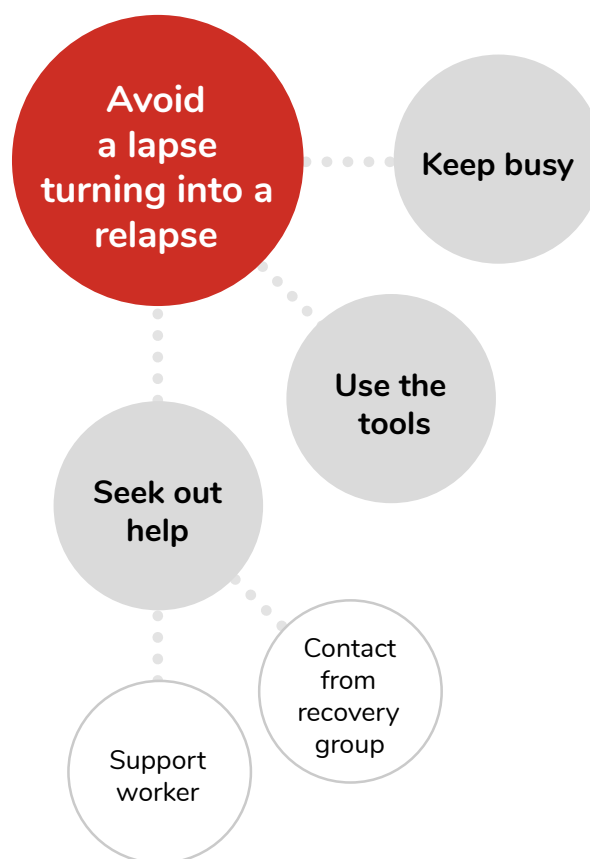
When you're not drinking it may seem like a relapse is the last thing that could happen to you, but the truth is that relapse is common for people in recovery. People often have a feeling of shame, or the thought "I've failed again so why even try". However, what is important isn't that you had a relapse – it's how quickly you can start your recovery again.

## Slip/lapse vs. Relapse

It may seem that "relapse" and "slip" or "lapse" are used as if they are the same thing. However, there is a difference between the two. If you have picked up a drink then this may be a small lapse, which can be an unplanned one-time use of alcohol. One slip doesn't necessarily mean a full relapse into longer term drinking.

Do not feel ashamed if a lapse occurs. Seek out help straight away – either from a support worker if you have one or through contacts from recovery meetings. There are ways to avoid a lapse turning into a relapse, such as practising good self-care as shown in this toolkit. Try to understand that your progress was important and is still useful. You have already learned to use many of these tools, and it might be easier this time. It's also helpful to recognise that a small lapse doesn't have to be a reason to continue drinking – try to catch it early. If you have a small lapse you won't be physically dependent.

**One of the things that is very common in early recovery is feeling a bit empty or bored. One of the best ways to avoid a slip turning into a full relapse is to keep busy – without tiring yourself out.**



## Relapse

Relapse comes in stages. The first stage is often an early 'emotional relapse' prior to actual drinking. This might sound odd – how can I relapse before taking a drink? This is because often people drink when their emotions or thoughts are overwhelming. In the 'emotional relapse' stage, someone may stop prioritising aspects of their recovery such as self-care (eating, sleeping well etc) or attending recovery or counselling meetings.

**A relapse can sneak up on you if you don't know the warning signs. So keep an eye out for these things:**



Eating too much or too little



Problems with sleep



Extreme tiredness



Greater levels of irritability and anger



Feeling emotionally isolated from people



Looking for company with people who drink a lot of alcohol



Thinking less rationally



Missing recovery meetings and/or counselling

# Harm Reduction

It is a good idea to plan for harm reduction should relapse occur.  
Remember that tolerance levels to alcohol will have weakened during recovery.

## Tips to help you manage your alcohol intake:



**Try to drink lower strength drinks.**

e.g. replace high strength lager with a standard strength lager.



**Measure out your drinks.**

It is easy to drink more than you think.



**Alternate soft drinks with alcohol.**

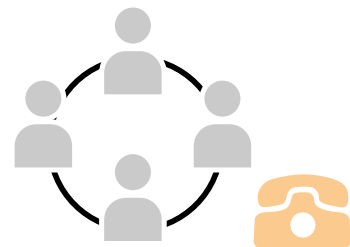


**Make sure that you eat.**

Limit your sugar intake, eat brown rice and wholemeal bread as thiamine needs are likely to increase.



**Drink at least two litres of water per day.**



**Stay connected to recovery meetings or speak to a support worker if you have one, even if you are still drinking.**



If you are ready to try and stop drinking, make sure that you speak to your doctor to find out how to do it safely.



If you experience withdrawal symptoms such as shaking, sweating, nausea or headache after several hours without a drink, please do not stop drinking suddenly as these signs mean that you might be physically dependent.

If you are seriously unwell and/or experiencing any of these symptoms, then you should seek treatment at a hospital straight away.

- Hallucinations  
- seeing or hearing things that aren't there
- Fever
- Rapid heartbeat
- Confusion
- Vomiting
- Extreme anxiety



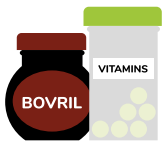
If you have been able to stop drinking, find ways to get back on track over the next page.



# Getting Back on Track After a Relapse

Sometimes relapse happens along your journey. Try to avoid feeling ashamed or punishing yourself for taking another drink – many people experience relapses. However, it can be helpful to think about why you might have taken another drink to prevent it happening again.

## First things first



### Food and drink

Eating well will help you recover, so make sure you eat plenty of nutritious food that will help your body and brain mend itself. Don't forget to take thiamine (B1) tablets or drink Boveril to make sure you get enough thiamine. You can find lots of information about healthy eating on page 50. Try to drink two litres of water or non-sugary soft drinks per day.



### Getting Connected

If you've had a relapse you may not have had social contact for a while. Isolation can be really challenging when feeling down. Try to give someone who will understand a call to chat about how you are feeling. If you can make it out of the house, try and meet someone in the fresh air and get some gentle exercise.



Don't forget you can go to the 'Useful resources' section on page 75 to find places you can contact for support. Some of the organisation run support meetings that you could attend to make some connections and talk about how you feel.

### Make a plan

Go back to your weekly planner and have a think about what to plan for your time. Keeping busy, whilst not getting too tired can help by distracting you from alcohol.

A 'Weekly Planner' template with a blue header and a yellow sun in the top right corner. It features seven vertical columns for the days of the week: MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY, and SUNDAY. Each column is divided into three horizontal sections: Morning, Afternoon, and Evening. At the bottom of the planner, there are two sections: 'Useful phone number' and 'Things to remember', each with a small icon and several lines for text. At the very bottom, there are small logos for 'perinetics', 'NHS.uk', and 'NHS.uk'.

## Thinking about relapse

It can be useful to have a think about what was happening and how you felt in the run up to taking a drink. This is so you can learn a bit about what might have been behind the relapse. But remember taking another drink is not the end of your recovery journey. Remember to be kind to yourself, and that you can use the Relaxation Exercises on pages 20–28.

**Did something happen in the run up to the relapse?  
What were your feelings and behaviours?**

E.g. Missing recovery meetings, feeling sad

If you need help thinking about how you were feeling, you can refer to the Feelings Wheel at the back of the toolkit.

**When feeling low, sometimes we focus on the negative, so it is important to also think about the things that you are good at. What are the positive steps you've taken so far in your recovery from ARBD?**

E.g. I have made friends with people in AA, I have started to exercise

**If this is not your first relapse, what helped you get through it the last time?**

E.g Talking to a friend, writing a diary

**What can you do over the next week that might help you?**

Re-read the HOME section if you need to.  
Remember its ok to ask for help if you need it.

E.g. Eating well, going to a recovery meeting

Now that you have a plan, try to put it into action as soon as you can.



**Remember!**  
Use your weekly planner to plan out your activities.



## David R's Recovery Story

I'm in supported accommodation at the moment. I'd let myself go with alcohol which I thought wasn't a problem until the last stages.

I took a seizure. Between my sister in law's house and the hospital I'd passed away. They resuscitated me. I stayed in for 13 weeks. I had pneumonia, TB and, I didn't know but I had Alcohol Related Brain Damage (ARBD).

I was disorientated, I didn't know the place I'd grown up in. I couldn't recognise the road. I was looking at the buildings and it was as if I was in New York, because I thought I'd never seen these big buildings. I didn't know how to get up or down the road.

I got support from We Are With You and the ARBD team at Penumbra. They explained that a part of my brain had been wiped clean and that's why I was disorientated.

I started building up, going to things. Being abstinent, eating better food. My brain started learning things. I was going to cooking class and doing other courses.

I got the opportunity to move into supported accommodation. After all the difficult times I thought 'I would die for this', I just burst out greeting. For weeks and weeks after I was thinking 'when are they taking this off me?'

My brother died of a massive heart attack. I went to see him in the mortuary, and I kissed him, and I went 'I promise you I'll never drink again'.

Now, it's the best I've lived all my life, these last nine years since I got my wee house. I'm doing my voluntary work, I'm doing Peer Support work, I'm looking after myself.

What I would say is that there's help there and you can get better. A wee bit of guidance, a wee bit of support from the right people and you can do it. I've achieved so much.

You'll never be back where you were, but you can still live a brilliant life.

Everything I do  
now is enjoyable.  
I don't need  
anything.  
Just laughter.

# In Conclusion....

We hope that you have found help and guidance on these pages. The more that you use these tools, the easier it will be to maintain your recovery and to live a fulfilling and happy life.

Recovery is a continual process, and sometimes you may feel very motivated in your recovery, whilst at other times you might struggle. If this happens to you, just simply pick one tool and get started again. Small steps lead to big gains, and you can start again at any time.

And don't forget: there is lots of help available to you. You don't have to travel on your journey in recovery alone. You just need to ask.

# Acknowledgements

This project is supported by the Self Management Fund for Scotland provided by the Scottish Government, administered by the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland.

## Authors

Penumbra and Dr Stephen Smith to whom we give our thanks for his valuable contribution.

## With further thanks to:

- Penumbra's Supported People at Glasgow and Edinburgh ARBD services
- David Young, William Welsh and David Richardson for sharing their stories
- The clinical team at Penumbra's Milestone service
- Daniel Mushens

## In memory

Penumbra dedicates this toolkit to the memory of David Richardson, who contributed his recovery story, but sadly passed away before publication. David accessed Penumbra ARBD support services and worked as a Peer Volunteer with the Glasgow Supported Accommodation team. During this time he was able to help and support people living with ARBD through insight from his own lived experience. By kindly sharing his lived experience with Penumbra, he was able to contribute greatly to our learning and practice around ARBD. David was also nominated in the 2019 Alliance Self-Management Awards as Volunteer of the Year. He will be sadly missed.





© Penumbra 2021 all rights reserved.

Penumbra is a charity (SC 010387) and a company name limited by guarantee (SC 091542) registered in Scotland.

