

# Coping Skills

## Ways of Responding

The Stress-Strain-Coping Support Model (Orford, 1998)

Living with and/or caring for a loved one who uses alcohol or drugs is stressful.

The impact on everyone's lives can vary, but generally family members can become anxious or depressed. Constant worry can impact your physical health, sleep can be disturbed, even your appetite can be affected. All forms of coping may be linked to feelings of guilt and worry and a sense of powerlessness. There is no right or wrong way to cope and you need to find the best way for you and your situation. Some ways of coping are more likely to reduce the strain, whereas others can increase it.

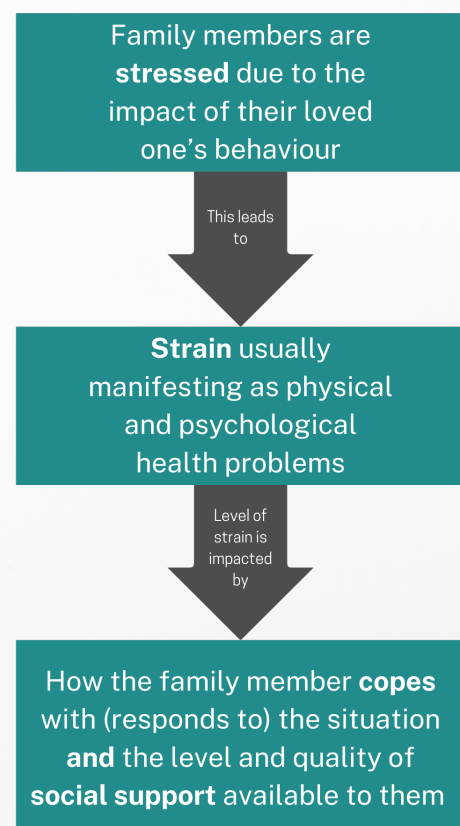
### Ways of Coping

The three ways of coping are:

- Engaged coping involves you trying to stop or reduce your loved one's substance use and can include attempting to control their behaviour, being assertive and confronting the issue whilst trying to support them.
- Tolerant (or inactive) coping involves accepting your loved one's substance use and protecting them from the negative consequences of their behaviour, e.g. giving them money when you know they will spend it on alcohol and/or other drugs.
- Withdrawal coping involves putting some emotional/physical distance between you and your loved one.

Helpful support can  
contribute to reducing the  
stress and strain in your life.

The table on the next page highlights the advantages and disadvantages of different ways of coping. All the ways of coping are valid and can have both positive and negative aspects. There is no right or wrong way to cope. You learn coping strategies that are effective for you and they can often change or vary over time.





# Coping Skills

## Ways of Responding

	Engaged Coping	Tolerant Coping	Withdrawal Coping
<b>Description</b>	Standing up to the problem: Engaging in trying to change a loved one's behaviour in many ways that may be emotional, assertive, controlling and/or supportive.	Putting up with the problem: Involves acceptance, however unhappy you may be about the situation. Accepting their behaviour can encourage them not to take responsibility for their actions.	Withdrawing from the problem and gaining independence: Attempting to put some distance between you and your loved one, in order to look after yourself.
<b>Thoughts</b>	'I ought to be able to change them.'	'Other people do not understand them.'	'Things can't go on like this, I need to put myself first.'
<b>Feelings</b>	Angry, hurt, responsible	Powerless, guilty	Defensive or hurt
<b>Actions (Examples)</b>	Watching their every move; not giving them money when it may be spent on drugs/alcohol; voicing frustrations and concerns that lead to arguments.	Giving them money even though you knew it would be spent on drugs/alcohol; covering up evidence of their drug/alcohol use.	Distancing yourself from them because of their drug/alcohol use; limiting the amount of time spent with your loved one.
<b>Possible Advantage</b>	Helps you as you feel you are doing something positive.	Conflict can be avoided (sometimes for personal safety reasons).	May stop you becoming over-involved.

As highlighted there are different ways of responding to a situation and you may find the following exercise helpful. Note down an example of a difficult situation, how you responded, how you felt about your response, and how you could respond differently in the future.



Difficult Situation	How I Responded	How I Felt	Future Response