

A pocket guide to using the 5-Step Method and Steps to Cope


What is the 5-Step Method and Steps to Cope?

The 5-Step Method is a structured, evidence based brief intervention for family members affected by a relatives' alcohol or drug misuse.

Steps to Cope is an adaptation of the 5-Step Method for young people aged 11-18 years old.

The intervention guides a worker through five key steps to support family member/young people (referred to in this guide as family members).

 Step 1: What is living with this like for me?

 Step 2: What information do I need or will find helpful?

 Step 3: How do I tend to cope or respond?

 Step 4: What social support do I have?

 Step 5: What further help might I need?

While the intervention is straightforward in its approach its skilful use will influence how the family members or young people benefit.

This pocket guide is a reminder of the key principles for delivering the 5-Step Method or Steps to Cope after you have completed training.

The 5-Step Method and Steps to Cope should only be used after completing appropriate training.

What makes the 5-Step Method and Steps to Cope different from other interventions?

- Based on theories of stress-coping, they recognise family member/young person are affected by a unique and complex set of stressful circumstances and need help *in their own right*.
- They do not see family members as pathological, dysfunctional or to blame in some way.
- They do not focus on individual and family deficits.

Family members/young people are normal people caught in highly stressful situations that can have an adverse impact on them.

Workers are strongly advised to follow the 5 steps in order and deliver the intervention as designed.

As Forrester & Harwin write:

“Using an evidence based intervention is not like buying a ready-made meal. It is more like learning to cook following a recipe. It requires systematic focus on developing skills needed to ensure that the intervention is delivered as intended”.

In no way are family member/young people to blame for what is happening in their family. They can be part of the solution and have needs in their own right.

Delivering the 5-Step Method and Steps to Cope

When delivering both the adult 5 Step Method and Steps to Cope with young people, workers should follow the steps but there is flexibility to account for individual need, and the number, length and frequency of sessions needed.

A professional handbook and a self help book are available for the 5-Step Method and a shorter workbook or web based platform can be used for Steps to Cope. (The web based intervention is currently only available in Northern Ireland).

Key skills

There are number of core skills required for effective delivery of the intervention:-

1. Create a relationship of **trust, warmth, genuineness and empathy**
2. Careful listening, giving minimal prompts, asking appropriate questions, reflecting both verbal and non-verbal content and summarising
3. Allow for periods of silence and the expression of emotion
4. When beginning the work discuss the purpose, evidence base, structure of sessions, confidentiality and limits to confidentiality

5. Introduce the purpose of each session and create a relaxed atmosphere that encourages the exploration of what can be an emotionally charged subject
6. Safety planning if needed and safe practice.



Other issues to keep in mind are:-

- The family member/young person should do most of the talking
- Do not let the session turn into too much of a 'chat' or a general conversation about the situation. Keep the session structured by re-summarising and focusing on the purpose of each Step
- Ask the family member/young person to think of options, particularly in Steps 3 & 4. Do not try to fix things but guide the family member/young person to explore the dilemmas and options they face and come up with their own solutions. Ask for specific examples rather than generalities

- Sessions should always end by:-
 - Summarising the main issues discussed
 - Asking the family member/young person whether they found the session helpful
 - Acknowledging and affirming their efforts in what can be an emotional area to explore and offer realistic hope
 - Arranging the next session
- An option is to offer a brief relaxation session or diversionary activity at the end of a session.

The evaluation tools discussed during the training are available and can be used before and after an intervention to measure its impact. They also serve as a means to communicate progress as the work comes to an end.





Step 1: What is living with this like for me?

“The purpose of this first step is for you to tell me your story and talk about your concerns and fears, how it affects you and other people in your family”

- **Step 1 is important. Don't rush it**
- **Allow the family member/young person to tell their story and describe what living with someone's substance use is like.** Listen and ask about their concerns and fears
- **You are not trying to change or fix anything in Step 1: just listen.** (You may have to go beyond listening and respond if you hear emergency situations ie. safeguarding needs, threats of violence, housing issues etc.)
- **Identify relevant stresses and how the family member/young person has been affected**
- **Encourage the expression of emotion and normalise feelings. Communicate that many and often conflicting feelings are common**
- **See how these (or other) stresses have affected others in the family**

- **Normalise their experience** giving a clear indication that they are not alone with their experiences nor are they to blame. These are very common problems which globally affected very large numbers of people
- **Offer realistic hope that the 5-Step Method / Steps to Cope can be helpful for them.**

You are helping a family member talk about an emotionally charged situation possibly for the first time.



Step 2: What information do I need or will find helpful?

“The purpose of this step is to look at what information would be helpful to you. What do you think would be useful?”

The process to follow in this step has 5 parts to it:-

1. **Establish what the family member/young person already knows**
2. **Find out what information the family member/young person wants or needs** (you may have started this during Step 1)

- 3. Provide targeted and relevant information.**
You could also work with the family member/young person to help them source information for themselves
- 4. Discuss the information with the family member/young person.** Find out whether it is what they wanted; ask “what do you think of that”?
- 5. Help the family member/young person see how they could find such information. Build their skills so that they can find future information without needing you**



- Explore whether the family member/young person has any other needs in relation to knowledge and information
- Check with the family member/young person if the session has improved knowledge, understanding or awareness, and/or reduced stress and anxiety.

Knowledge is power. Relevant information can reduce stress.



Step 3: How do I tend to cope or respond?

“The purpose of this step is to look at how you currently cope with your situation and how your respond to various situations with your relative”

- **Ask about their coping responses** (this may include discussion of different styles of coping, engaged, tolerant, withdrawal from the adult handbook or the 4 ways from the young people’s workbook). Coping strategies may vary between adults and young people
- **Encourage the family member/young person to identify specific, concrete situations rather than being general**
- **Explore advantages and disadvantages of current coping responses**
- **Facilitate family member/young person to see that there is no right or wrong way of coping** (may include further exploration of ways of coping). It can be helpful to understand more clearly how they are responding and why

- **If relevant help generate alternative ways of coping** and explore advantages and disadvantages of them
- **Concrete situations can be role-played** of how the family member/young person could respond in the future.



How to respond can be a major dilemma for family member/young person. There is no rule book and no right or wrong way of coping.



Step 4: What social support do I have?

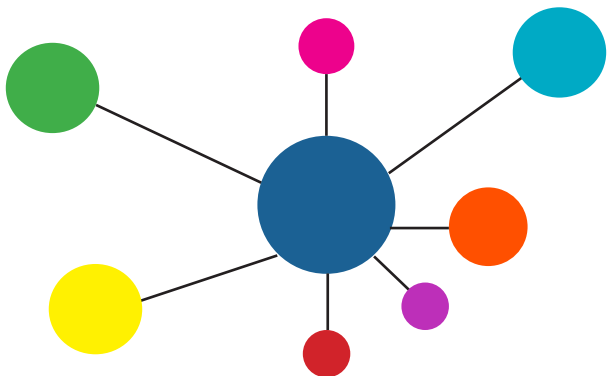
“The purpose of this step is to look at your social support and what you find helpful or unhelpful. Lots of people find it helpful to draw a diagram so shall we look at this in the handbook and then draw one for you.”

- **Explore who is supportive to the family member/young person.** A network diagram may be used to guide the discussion – this should be as comprehensive as possible – think about family, friends, work, communities, professionals, activities and even pets
- **Discuss who/what/why is helpful and unhelpful in terms of social support**
- **Explore how to develop/continue to develop positive social support**
- **Explore potential new sources of support** (this could be linked to the network diagram or filling in gaps in social support)
- Consider what might prevent the family member/young person from seeking positive support

- Think about how support can be used to improve communication within the family
- Some people can find it helpful to think about (and practice) the conversations that they might have with people in order to increase their positive support.



Family member/young person often have a lot more support than they realise.





Step 5: Further help

“The purpose of this final step is to think about what further help you might want and to review the work that we have done over the last few sessions”

- **Discuss with family member/young person the need for further help** and (if relevant) how this can be actioned. Use questions and reflections as necessary after the family member/young person has described what is helpful/unhelpful
- **Discuss help needs of key other family member/young person** and (if relevant) how this can be actioned
- **Discuss help needs of the using relative** and (if relevant) how this can be actioned (the using relative may not want support now but you can leave contact details of treatment services if that changes)
- **Review the work that you have done, think about whether goals have been achieved, what changes have occurred etc.** Explore what the family member/young person has found helpful about the sessions
- Use the evaluation tools that you used at the start of the intervention.



Skills in delivering the 5-Step Method

There are four skills which guide the effective delivery of the 5-Step Method and Steps to Cope: engaging, open ended questions, summarising and reflective listening.

A further skill is eliciting specific examples of behaviour as opposed to what they generally do.

All are deceptively easy but can improve with practice.

Engaging

The relationship of trust and empathy starts at the beginning of the work and carries on throughout.



- Allow time to develop a trusting relationship
- Listen, understand
 - How comfortable is this person in talking to me?
 - Do I understand this person's situation and concerns?

Open-ended Questions

- Open-ended questions can't be answered with a "yes" or "no." Rather, they invite a person to tell their stories. Open-ended questions allow a person to give spontaneous and unguided responses, which help build rapport and trust. Open questions often include what, where, how, when
- Open questions encourage people to talk about whatever is important to them
- Closed questions focus on the practitioner's agenda and thus place the person in a more passive and less engaged role.

Summarising

Summarising is a form of empathic reflection where you collect statements from a part or the whole of the conversation and feed them back to the family member/young person to check that you have heard and understood correctly.

Reflective listening

To listen reflectively, it helps to think reflectively. It shows an interest in and validates what people say. Workers can reflect both verbal exchanges but also non-verbal behaviour.

Reflect with each question if possible:-

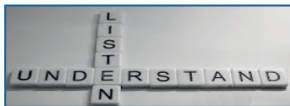
Encouraging the other person to elaborate, amplify, confirm, or correct.

A Simple Reflection

may use different words but stays at the same meaning.

A complex reflection

adds something close to what the person says reflecting implicit meaning or feelings.



At the end of each session ask yourself what did I do well.

Where could I improve?

Use variety in your reflections:-

Sounds like...

What I'm hearing is...

So you're saying that...

You're feeling like...

For you, it's a matter of....

From your point of view,...

I'm hearing that you...

I'm really getting that you...

I get the impression that you...

You are...

I would imagine you...

Must be...

I would think you...

Through your eyes,...

Your belief is that...

Your concern is that...

Your fear is that...

It seems to you that...

You're not much concerned about...

The thing that bothers you is...

The important thing as you see it is...

Working with young people

There are a number of things to consider when working with young people using Steps to Cope.



- Young people have many of the same struggles and emotions as adults
- Not all young people are negatively affected in the same way(s) by their experiences. It is important to understand the balance between exposure to risk factors, and the potential for creating resilience through targeting the individual/family/environmental protective factors and processes that we covered in training
- Building resilience in young people is central to Steps to Cope
- When working with a young person
 - Engaging them in a structured intervention can be difficult but it may be just what the young person needs

- Make sure you take time to engage the young person on their level
- Know your agency's child protection procedures.

There is a web site to support workers and young people: www.stepstocope.co.uk.

The information section of the website can be used by anyone

Reviewing your practice

- It's really important that you keep on reviewing and reflecting on your delivery of the 5-Step Method and Steps to Cope. This is necessary for your own professional development but also to ensure that you are maintaining fidelity to the intervention and its theoretical foundations
- Refer regularly to the skills template, and discuss your work as part of regular supervision processes
- Feedback from recorded sessions during the validation process will help you build your confidence and competence.

- For every piece of work you could ask yourself the following questions.
 1. Did I seek to understand this person and their experience?
 2. What was my ratio of questions versus reflections like?
 3. Did I encourage this person to talk about his/her options with concrete examples rather than being general?
 4. Did I ask permission to give information or feedback?
 5. Did I normalise what the family member/ young person was experiencing?
 6. Did I avoid using loaded language that could be interpreted as blame or dysfunction?
 7. Did I ensure I was not trying to “fix “anything but help the family member/ young person come up with their own solution?

What did I do in this session that was consistent with the 5-Step Method or Steps to Cope?

Is there anything that I would like to do differently?

How some young people benefited from Steps to Cope

“Since I’ve started working with [Jane] I’ve become more open. I know that I have to learn to trust people because not everyone is going to let me down. I can talk about my problems more easily and this has had a very positive impact on my life. I have also learnt to sort out my problems because avoiding them does not help the situation. I think the booklet is the main reason I have progressed so much, in my own state of mind” (Girl, 14, maternal alcohol and mental health problems)

“I understand the different way people cope with it now and which way I cope with it.....and dealing with feelings and how I deal with it and the things I do to block it out and stuff like that.....for me personally I just concentrate on my school work...I put all my concentration in to that instead of the house” (Girl, 14, maternal alcohol and mental health problems)

How some adult family members benefited from the 5-Step Method

'It was about the first time I felt somebody had listened to me....someone was interested in how I was feeling.'

Many family members said that they felt less guilty about what was going on as they realised that the problems were not their fault and that they could not change their relatives and their behaviour 'I can't solve the problem; I've got to stand back.

'I realise I am not alone and there is help for **me**.'

Key references

1. Copello A, Templeton L, Orford J & Velleman R (2010). The 5-Step Method: principles and practice. *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy* 17 (S1): 86-99.
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4. Templeton L (2010). Meeting the needs of children with the 5-Step Method. *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy* 17 (S1): 113-128.
5. Templeton L & Sipler E (2014). Helping children with the Steps to Cope intervention. *Drugs and Alcohol Today* 14(3) 126-136.

The 5-Step Method and Steps to Cope

The adult 5-Step Method and associated training courses (on which Steps to Cope is based) were developed by the UK Alcohol, Drugs & the Family Group (now AFINet UK).

Steps to Cope is a Northern Ireland partnership between ASCERT, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, Barnardo's and AFINet UK.

www.afinetwork.info
www.stepstocope.co.uk

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