



# Members Handbook

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# Self Management And Recovery Training

## Handbook

### Welcome to SMART Recovery

SMART Recovery's Programme has been developed by professionals based on the best research available and reviewed by an international panel of experts.

#### Introduction to SMART Recovery

Addictive behaviour can serve a purpose – to cope with life's problems and emotional upsets. However, many problems arise from heavy drinking, drug using, gambling, overeating, and other excesses. To help reverse your self-destructive behaviour, SMART Recovery concentrates on the thinking and feelings that lead to your actions. The focus is on the present and the only role that your past plays is to learn from it.

#### SMART Meetings

SMART meetings are held in a friendly and confidential setting. Meetings last from 60-90 minutes. The meetings are free, although any donations will be gratefully received. There is a short welcome and introduction given by a SMART facilitator. Members then have the opportunity to introduce themselves or to let the group know how they have been coping since their last meeting. If it is your first meeting then you are welcome to listen or to join in if you prefer.

When the introductions are finished the facilitator sets the agenda for the meeting. This gives the facilitator the chance to introduce you to some of the tools and methods that SMART uses to combat addictions or addictive behaviour.

Finally, members are given the opportunity to comment on how they feel the meeting went and if they found it helpful. This is also the time for members to plan how they are going to promote their recovery until the next meeting.

SMART meetings are a good place to meet and chat with people who share a common goal. There are exercises and worksheets available for members to take home with them and the SMART facilitator will be able to give you information about any other SMART groups that meet in your area. There is also a recommended reading list of self-help books and SMART meetings and materials are available online.

For more information  
Phone 0845 603 9830  
or visit [www.smartrecovery.co.uk](http://www.smartrecovery.co.uk)

## Gaining control of your addiction

SMARTRecovery uses the latest scientifically tested techniques and methods to help you to help yourself combat addiction and addictive behaviours such as (alcohol, drugs, gambling, etc...) SMART uses evidence based Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy in a practical, informative, and easy to understand way.

SMART views addiction as our own responsibility. Substances do not have the power to force us to use them and after the physical effects of using are gone the struggle to remain substance free is purely a mental one.

### How do I know if I have an addiction?

It is sometimes very difficult to admit to having an addiction and the thought that you may never be able to use again can be quite hard to come to terms with. Most people who use do not have a problem and it may seem unfair that you can't do what they can. Using becomes a problem when your addiction or addictive behaviour is becoming more important than the other things in life. The majority of people do not have to think about using because, for them, it is not a problem and most can take it or leave it. This is not the case for people with addictions as using has become the most important thing in their lives and everything they do is geared towards attaining their desired substance.

People use substances because it makes them feel good but if you need more and more to achieve the same result it is probably a sign that you have a problem. It is always a worthwhile exercise to take stock of your life and look at how your using is affecting you and the people around you. If your using is affecting your health, family life, work, friendships, or getting you into trouble then it is time to take action to stop this. Man is the only known creature that continues to use substances even though the consequences are harmful to themselves or others. Taking responsibility and choosing not to use is the first move towards your recovery.

### Can't I just cut down on my using?

Some people feel that they can lower their intake so that they can still use or that they can learn to control how they use better. SMARTRecovery is an abstinence based programme although the decision on whether to use again or not is up to you. The problem with controlled drinking/drug taking is invariably where to set the limit and before long you can find yourself using the same or more than you previously did. SMART believes that remaining substance free is the best option.

## Smart's Four Point Programme

 Building and maintaining motivation

 Coping with urges

 Problem solving

 Achieving a more balanced lifestyle

Stopping using is easy it's staying stopped that is hard! Once the decision has been taken to stop using, recovery or continued recovery takes a lot of hard work. Think about the amount of time, money, and effort that goes into maintaining your habit. Recovery takes an equal effort but by using and learning the tools that SMART makes available recovery can become easier to achieve and maintain.

SMART believes that it is our self-defeating thoughts that are the main obstacle in remaining substance free. Once the withdrawal symptoms are completely gone it is our mental state that determines our further actions. A low frustration tolerance is common with most users as they are used to getting what they want as and when they want it. SMART teaches us to recognise and change the thinking that leads to continued substance abuse and addictive behaviour.

Staying substance free does not mean that you can't have a full and happy life. It is important to replace the enjoyment that you got from using with other activities. Some people use to escape life's problems. SMART teaches problem solving techniques that help us face up to and manage our problems rather than adding to them by using.

Substance abuse can take over your life and leave you feeling worthless or a failure. It is common for people to think that as they have failed to kick the habit previously that they will always fail. Rating oneself as a failure or success is often unhelpful. Just because you failed before does not mean you will fail this time. SMART encourages its members to challenge their unhelpful thoughts and replace them with more positive ones. Staying in control over your addiction is difficult and requires hard work but with practice it will become easier.

## Building and maintaining motivation



When we really want something badly enough we will usually go to any lengths to get it. If you see something in a shop you would like you save up for it. When you want to go to a football match you have to get tickets and plan your day. Holidays take a lot of preparation and planning. Meeting friends and getting that job you want all require motivation.

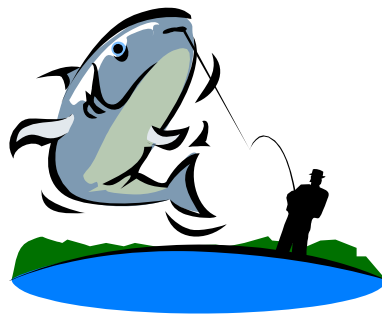
When someone gives up using or stops their addictive behaviour they usually find that they have a lot of time on their hands. It may be difficult to break from their normal routines and find the energy or desire to change. The thought of having to interact with other people or even leaving the house to go shopping can be overwhelming. Family and friends can be a great support and help you to feel secure in the early stages of recovery. It takes time to build up confidence during recovery and it is important to accept any help if it is offered.

In the initial stages of recovery it is helpful to keep yourself occupied. Distraction is a good tool to use to combat the cravings and urges that come with remaining substance free. Planning for the week ahead can be fun. Try to plan your day so that you have no time to get bored. Think about hobbies or pastimes that you used to like or plan to do something you have always wanted to do. Taking regular walks is a good way to keep fit and healthy, help clear your thoughts, and fill any spare time you have. Attending SMART meetings or similar groups can be beneficial and help you to socialise and meet with other people who share a common interest.

Try to avoid people and places that are likely to remind you of previously harmful behaviour or putting yourself in situations that will tempt you to use again. Write down your weekly schedule and make time for recreation and things that you enjoy doing. When you notice that you are having cravings write down when you are having them and who you were with when they occurred. This should then give you the opportunity to avoid similar situations.

## Setting long-term and short-term goals

Now that you have decided to stop using or indulging in addictive behaviour and you have your week organised you can start to think of some short and long-term goals that you feel you would like to achieve. Try to be realistic and make your goals attainable.



You don't have to go straight for the big one. Staying substance free is a goal in itself and in the early stages of recovery you may feel that not using is sufficient motivation.

Short-term goals can be attending SMART groups, applying for jobs, taking up a new hobby, sitting your driving test, saving up for a short break etc... Try to aim for things that are not too demanding to begin with and be prepared for failure as well as success. Not everyone gets their dream job or passes their driving test first time but this does not stop them from applying for other jobs or having several attempts to pass their test.

Long-term goals can be building relationships, moving house, training for a new career etc... These goals take more time and effort to achieve and require long-term commitment. Setting your sights high is a positive thing to do but be careful not to set unrealistic or impossible goals. Your goals do not have to be set in stone, if your situation changes you might need to set new targets. Stay focused and reward yourself when you succeed. If you have been able to save some money since you have been in recovery treat yourself to some new clothes or a nice meal. You don't have to spend money to reward yourself just give yourself a big pat on the back.

Unfortunately life does not suddenly become perfect just because you have stopped using or changed your behaviour but by setting short and long-term goals you can gradually improve your life in general and at the same time make recovery more bearable.

## Coping with cravings and urges

Every urge that you have ever had up to now has gone!

People often have unrealistic beliefs about cravings or urges. They think that they have to give in to their urges, that life will be unbearable if they don't have what they want, or even that they will die if they don't use again. Cravings and urges are common in early recovery and can continue for months or even years after you have stopped using. The main thing to remember is that eventually they will go away and with time the cravings and urges become less intense and occur less frequently.

SMART groups are a good place to discuss how you are coping with cravings and urges and it also gives you the chance to meet other people and learn how they have managed or are managing to overcome their cravings.

### Thought/Trigger

This can occur when you pass a place or meet with people that you normally associate with using. At this point it is only a thought!

### Cravings

If you allow the thought to continue it will become stronger and you will start to have cravings.

### Urges

If you allow the craving to continue then it eventually becomes an urge. This is when you feel that you absolutely must have what you desire.

There are several ways to stop your thoughts or cravings from becoming urges.

Convince yourself that you don't have to give in to your thoughts or cravings. They may be uncomfortable but they are not unbearable, you will not die if you don't use, and they will eventually disappear. It may help you to keep away from people or places that will encourage you to use. Try and find something to do to keep your mind off them or just go for a walk to clear your head. Telephone a friend or invite someone to call and visit. If there are no SMART groups available when you are suffering from cravings and urges then try and talk to someone who will understand how you are feeling, try talking to a member of your family or a close friend.

Keeping busy or finding something to distract you from your urges is often the best way to easing the discomfort that urges cause. You can eventually control your urges and feelings or even forget them over time

## Problem solving

Building and maintaining motivation and learning to understand and cope with urges will help you to stay focused and aid your recovery. Once you have been abstinent for a while you may find that there are certain aspects of your life that you feel need to be changed. Stopping using or altering your behaviour does not eliminate all the other problems that life brings.

**Trying to solve all life's problems at the same time is impossible and leads to self-defeating thinking. You might have unrealistic thoughts such as;**

I have tried hard not to use I deserve a better life.

People should respect me now that I have changed.

My friends and family should trust me now that I have stopped using.

I should have got that job everyone deserves a second chance.

It would be nice if life was problem free but the reality is everyone, regardless whether they have addictions or not, must work hard to achieve the things they want in life. It may seem unfair if people do not trust or respect you even after you have changed. Trust and respect have to be earned and people rate you on your previous actions. In time you can regain most people's trust and respect but in the early stages of recovery you may find that people may question your commitment. An employer does not have to give you the job and some people may never give you a second chance.

**Having a more positive outlook and accepting things for what they are can save you a lot of trouble and worry. For example;**

My life is not the way I want it to be but I can work to make it better.

Some people don't respect me, I hope they can in time but my existence does not rely on their trusting me.

I may have lost the respect of some of my friends and family but most of my family have been very supportive and with a little effort I can make new friends.

I really wanted that job but I am only one of several applicants who must have been disappointed not to be chosen, there are plenty of other jobs that I can apply for.

**By stubbornly refusing to get upset problem solving becomes easier!**



## ABC's

Using an ABC is a useful technique to help you to learn how your self-destructive thinking can cause you to make the wrong decisions in life.

### A is for Activating event

You meet an old friend and he/she suggests you both go for a drink.

### B is for Beliefs

He/she won't understand that I no longer drink.

He/she will think I am a weak person because of my problem.

He/she will no longer enjoy my company.

Everyone will make fun of me if I have a soft drink.

### C is for Consequences

You get upset, feel embarrassed and go for a drink.

### D is for Dispute your harmful beliefs

There is no reason to think he/she will not understand my situation.

He/she might support my staying clean.

We have met before and had a good time without drinking.

Why would I look out of place? Lots of people have soft drinks instead of alcoholic beverages.

### E is for Effective change

You decide to go with your friend but have a soft drink.

You tell your friend that you don't feel like an alcoholic drink and suggest going for a coffee instead.

It is not the consequences that make us use but the harmful beliefs we have about the situation we are in. In this example we can clearly see that by changing our beliefs we can avoid upsetting or embarrassing ourselves and make better choices.

## What's the problem?



It is a good idea to break a big problem down into smaller more manageable problems. Try to be specific and avoid using generalisations like, my life stinks, life is boring, things will never change etc...

What is it about your life that stinks? Where and when do you find you are getting bored? What exactly are the things in your life that you would like to change?

Make a list of what you don't like about your life and a list of what you can do to change it. Come up with as many alternatives as you can. Keep your solutions as realistic as possible. It may help to discuss it with friends or family. If you find that you are not happy with the outcome find another solution.

SMART groups are a good place to meet and discuss with other members how they manage to solve their problems. You may find members who share similar problems or who have ideas that might be of use to you.

Encourage yourself to keep trying. You have not failed if your first solution does not work. Give yourself some praise for trying and then use this as opportunity to try something else. There is usually more than one solution to a problem so find the one that best suits your situation.

Having a positive attitude and refusing to upset yourself if things do not turn out the way you wanted them to can help you stay focused on your goals. Problem solving can be stressful but if you can learn to accept that not everything you try will work and you are prepared to search for alternative solutions your persistence will usually pay off.

## Cost/Benefit Analysis

This is a good tool to use for any decisions you are about to make. You can use it to decide about smoking or not smoking, using or not using drugs or alcohol, going or not going to a party etc... By writing down a list of all the possible outcomes you are able to see the benefits or pitfalls of what you are trying to decide. This will give you a more balanced view and make it easier to choose the best option in any given situation.

Should I continue to drink/use drugs?	
<u>Benefits</u>	<u>Costs</u>
Using makes me feel good (S-T)	I will spend money (L-T)
I will feel more relaxed (S-T)	My health will suffer (L-T)
I can socialise better (S-T)	I eventually lose my friends (L-T)
I can forget about life (S-T)	I can get into debt (L-T)
	I might lose my job (L-T)
	I get into trouble with the police (L-T)
	I could lose my accommodation (L-T)
	I could have marital problems (L-T)
	I could fall out with family members (L-T)

In this example it is noticeable that the benefits are all short-term and the costs long-term and harmful. The costs outweigh the benefits so the most reasonable action or decision is not to drink/use. This exercise is easy to use and can be adapted to almost any situation or dilemma where you find yourself unsure of what you should do.

## Coping with lapses



Not everyone succeeds in maintaining their abstinence problem free. Addiction and addictive behaviour is often the result of years of abuse and it would be unrealistic to suppose that everyone will be able to kick their habit at the first attempt. Backsliding or occasional lapses is common to people who at first improve emotionally but find it difficult to maintain their abstinence.

SMART teaches us to accept backsliding or lapses for what they are. You are not infallible and it is not weak to seek help from others when you are finding it difficult to cope. There is no reason to feel ashamed or rate yourself or your actions. Use this as an opportunity to look at what went wrong with your decision making or what made you go back to your old behaviour. Accept that you made some wrong decisions then try to identify and eliminate the self-defeating thinking that you feel contributed to the undesired behaviour.

Forgive yourself and try not to feel guilty. Allow yourself to be human. Making mistakes is a natural process and helps you to gain more knowledge and understanding. By learning from your mistakes you can become wiser and more aware of the effort required to change your unwanted behaviour.

Try not to beat yourself up or get depressed if you feel you have slipped up. A lapse does not mean that you are back to square one. Think of it as a hiccup or a slight stumble. You can't learn to ride a bicycle without falling off occasionally! It is important to give yourself credit for what you have achieved so far. Stay positive and learn from your mistakes.

## Know your Enemy

When that little voice in your head is trying to coax you to use again it is time to get personal. Giving the urge a name is a popular technique that is used to identify and eliminate cravings and urges as soon as you become aware of them.



The name you choose should help you describe what your urge feels like in your own experience. The devil, the demon, the alcohol salesman, the brat, the enemy, etc... are a few of the more popular options but you can use your imagination and create an image and name that works for you.

By visualising your urge as something outside yourself it becomes easier to attack. When an unwanted salesman knocks at your door you refuse him entry to your home. Recognise your urge and immediately refuse it entry.

In the early stages of recovery urges can be quite frequent and their duration can depend on how you deal with them. You have already decided that you no longer want to continue using so there is no need for debate. Save yourself any unnecessary suffering. Whenever the idea to use comes to mind there is no need to reason with it you can just firmly tell it to go away.

## Stages of change

Changing your behaviour is a gradual process and takes time. Recovery requires effort and persistence. There are four main stages of recovery and SMART has developed some useful exercises to help guide you through each step.

### Thinking of quitting?

1. Write your life story, paying particular attention to how the choices you have made brought you to where you are now.
2. Make a list of the things that are most important to you.
3. Discuss a typical day in your life.
4. Calculate the amount of money you spend on the behaviour you are thinking of giving up.

### Preparation

1. Make a list of the good and bad aspects of your behaviour.
2. Write down how you think your life will improve by not using.
3. Develop some short and long-term goals.
4. Discuss the effects of using on your health, family, friends etc...

### Action

1. Make a list of the changes you could make in your life.
2. Write out acceptable standards of behaviour.
3. Get support from family and friends.
4. Look ahead to some of the problems you might face and plan how you are going to deal with them.
5. Prepare a plan of things you are going to do and carry out the plan.

### Maintenance

1. Keep doing the things that are making your behaviour more healthy.
2. Think through situations when you've not stuck to your plan-what happened and why?
3. Look at situations when your urges were triggered.
4. Continue to surround yourself with people who give you support and encouragement.

## Lifestyle Balance

Regaining your health and finding a lifestyle that brings you long and short-term satisfaction is an important part of recovery. Living a full life with lots of interests, fun activities, and friends can help you to avoid new addictions and cope with cravings and urges should they arise.

### Eat well

It may be that now you are in recovery you find that you are beginning to enjoy the simple pleasures in life like eating. Healthy eating and maintaining a balanced diet which supplies the nutrition and carbohydrates that your body needs is essential to good living.

Going out for an occasional meal with friends or family can be fun. Making a shopping list, going to the supermarket, preparing and cooking your meals, and washing up can be slotted into your daily plan and help to keep you occupied or fill in any spare time you may have.

### Exercise

Exercise does not have to be strenuous to be beneficial. A brisk 30 minute walk 5 days a week can be enjoyable and is known to help reverse the effects of depression. If it has been a long time since you have exercised make sure that you build up gradually.

### Relaxation

Relaxation can help you to cope better with urges. You may feel that when you are having urges that you tense up and get agitated. Deliberate, deep, slow breathing can help you to calm down and focus better.

Everyone needs some quiet time! Find yourself a quiet place, listen to some peaceful and soothing music or a relaxation tape, picture yourself on a deserted island and let your troubles float away.

### Sleep

Some people find that when they give up using that their sleeping patterns are disrupted. This is normal as your body needs time to adjust. You may find that cutting down on your caffeine intake helps. Take a short walk in the evening and read a book in bed if you are having difficulty getting to sleep.

## SMART Recovery groups

Smart recovery self-help groups can give you the support of others who have been through similar experiences with addictions and will also teach you useful and practical techniques to help you to stay off drink and drugs or change your addictive behaviour.

Taking responsibility for your own recovery and practicing what you learn at meetings on a daily basis reinforces your commitment and will help your progress. SMART groups can be used on their own or alongside other treatments designed specifically with a view to abstinence.

No formal sponsorship or buddy system exists within SMART Recovery but participants often find the friendships developed by attending meetings beneficial. Gaining independence from addiction or addictive behaviour can be a long and difficult process. SMART Recovery meetings are the ideal place to begin.

SMART Recovery self-help groups are not a lifelong commitment. It is hoped that by learning the tools and techniques SMART makes available that participants will gain the confidence and ability to achieve their independence from addiction. There is no time limit, participants are welcome to attend as many meetings as they feel they require and continue to use SMART Recovery for as long as they feel is necessary.

Some participants find it therapeutic to train to become SMART facilitators themselves. SMART Recovery relies heavily on its volunteers and although it is not essential to have had an addiction problem to become an facilitator, the experience that former participants can bring to SMART meetings is invaluable.

SMART Recovery is currently expanding throughout Scotland and the UK. If you would like to start a SMART group in your area, become part of a local steering group, can provide transport to and from meetings, assist with advertising, or would like to lend your support in any way please contact the SRUK Team at:

**SMART Recovery® UK**

**T: 0845 603 9830**

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