

Looking After Yourself

Being close to someone who has addictive behaviours can be very stressful. Family or carers often respond by doing more and more to try to "fix" the situation. Unfortunately, this can lead to physical and emotional exhaustion.

It is also common for people in a close relationship with someone who has a substance abuse problem to invest a lot of time and energy in the other person. This is usually at the expense of their own needs.

If you are not looking after your own needs and finding some balance in life it can be difficult to help anyone else. Although it may seem selfish, it is important to take some time out to look after yourself. You can think of it like being on a plane when the oxygen masks drop: you need to put your own on first, before helping the person next to you.

It might be something simple thing like making time to telephone a friend, buying yourself a bunch of flowers or taking time out by going for a walk. It might be more elaborate, such as having a night out with friends (and not talking about the other person's problematic behaviour), having a weekend away or going on a picnic or to the beach.

Whatever it is, you are going to need to plan ahead and make it part of your everyday life, otherwise it probably won't happen.



Exercise: Use the following worksheet to plan ahead for some self rewards.

1. In the space below, list some ideas for rewards/ self-nurturing activities. If you are stuck thinking of some, refer to the list of ideas for enjoyable activities below.

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2. Choose at least one that you think you could achieve in the following week. The activity is:

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3. Commit to a day and time when this could happen:

Day:

Time:

4. What do you need to do to make sure this happens?

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5. What might get in the way of it happening?

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The Lifestyle Audit

The Lifestyle Audit is a further step in the direction of making some positive changes to your life. This worksheet gives you the opportunity to have a think about the things you would like to do more of and the things you would like to do less of.

Exercise: In the "Things I would like to do less of" column, list things that are making your life worse in the long run - eg sitting around worrying or staying in bed all day. In the "Things I would like to do more of" column, list things that will improve your life and give it more vitality - eg exercise, catching up with friends. Try to make them practical, achievable things.

Things I would like to do less of...	How I could do this less...
Things I would like to do more of....	How I could do this more...