

Telephone delivery of Alcohol Brief Interventions



In the current coronavirus pandemic, lots of face-to-face interactions have been taken away by lockdown and social distancing. Alcohol Brief Intervention (ABI) delivery might still be possible via a phone conversation.

As with face-to-face discussions, remember first to ask permission to discuss someone's alcohol use. They may not be in a place to talk about this just now, depending on how lockdown is impacting on them and their friends and family. Unless your call is routinely to discuss alcohol, you'd need a cue from the person that they are perhaps drinking above the guidance (see images below).



We know many people are using alcohol as a coping mechanism just now. Once someone agrees to talk about alcohol, the usual messages of drinking less often, drinking fewer alcoholic drinks on each occasion, and drinking smaller amounts (glass size, strength, etc) should be used. Forms for recording can be retained and sent once lockdown is over.

Phone calls miss the cues from body language, but using **OARS** can help here.

Be sure to use:

O – open ended questions (allow them to tell their story)

- How are you being affected by the current coronavirus situation?
- How are you filling your time during lockdown?
- How are you managing just now with social distancing?

A - affirmations (show empathy)

- You're really concerned about your family (your money, your job, etc).
- It's good that you are talking about this.
- You are thinking about other ways you could spend the time.

R – reflections (let them see you have understood)

- You are worried about friends and family and miss them.
- You're wondering how you will manage if this goes on much longer.
- You realise you are drinking more at home than you used to do in the pub.

S – summaries (to sum up your chat)

- You are feeling....just now.
- You are going to try to have a few of days alcohol free this week (if that was volunteered, for example).
- We will catch up again next time and can look at your drinks diary (if that was volunteered, for example).

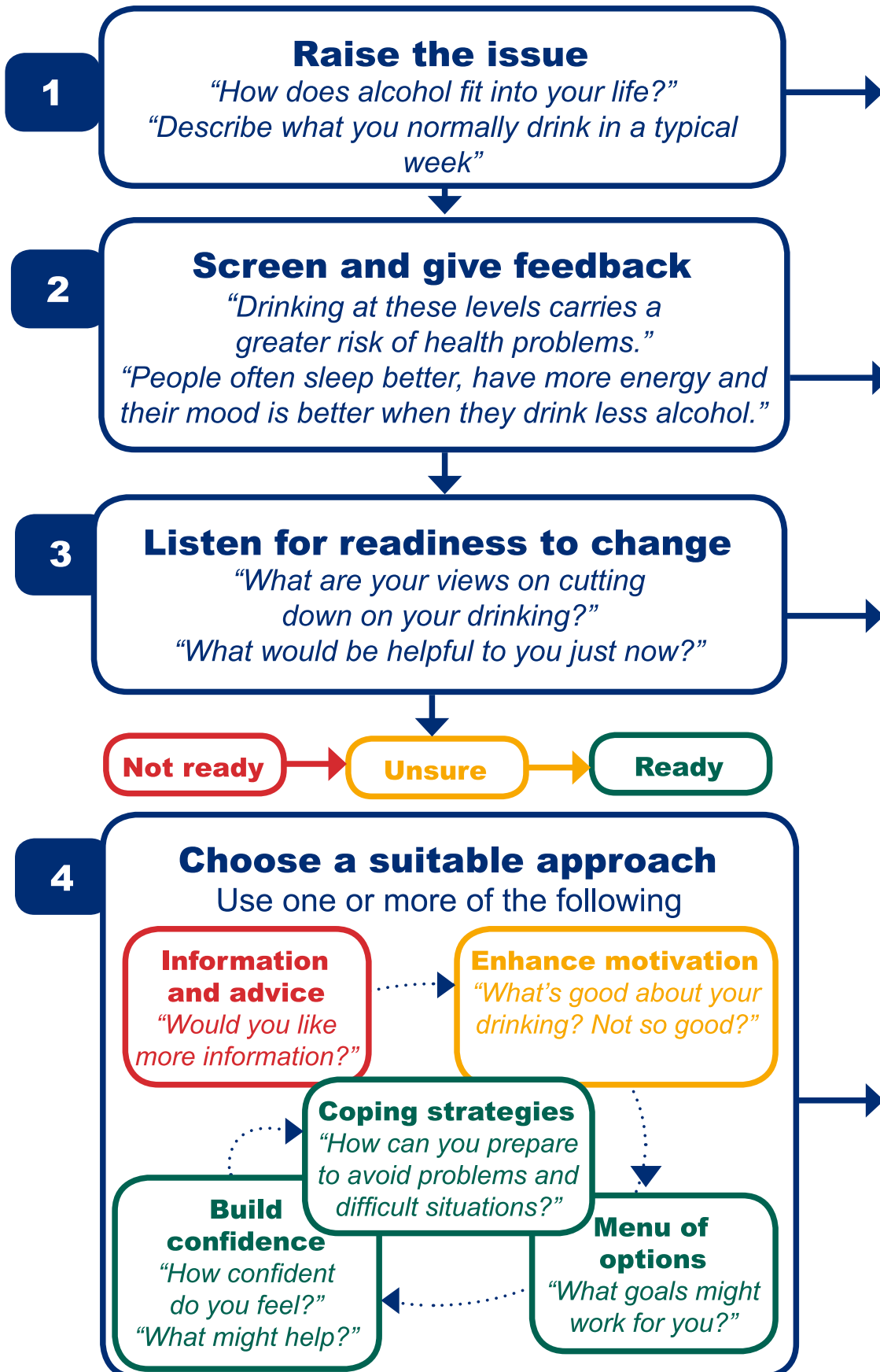
Other useful information could include:

- Alcohol is a depressant, so if you already feel low, it will make this worse.
- Alcohol has a negative effect on our sleep.
- Be sure to take your opportunity to exercise – a walk can really boost your wellbeing.
- Eating healthily will help get through this.
- Drinking alcohol can affect the immune system negatively
- www.count14.scot for more information and ideas.

Stages of a Brief Intervention

Throughout the brief intervention remember to:

- Maintain rapport and empathy.
- Emphasise the patient's personal responsibility.



Exit strategy - remember you or the person can choose not to continue at any point
Close conversation "It's fine if you don't want to discuss this now. I'll leave this leaflet with you."
Signpost and/or refer if appropriate