

Principle 8 SHARE

This month we introduce the SHARE tool, that helps you to look at the consequences of drinking in a different way.



Principle 8

In the previous principle we introduced you to HOPE an acronym describing the Bottled Up process. In this principle we introduce you to SHARE, the first of the tools to influence change.

SHARE is a tool that allows you to assess the consequences of the drinking. We know that you know the consequences all too well, that you live with them. However, this tool lets you look at them in a different way, a way that allows you to begin to create strategies to manage the consequences of the drinking.

This and the next few workbooks are important and we strongly, very strongly, suggest that you take the time out to do the tasks. **These workbooks could be the most important tasks that you will ever carry out.**

To complete the task you will need this workbook, a pen and somewhere quiet where you will not be disturbed for an hour.

You may also need a box of tissues, because, for many, this is an emotional experience, as they see for the first time the real damage that alcohol has done to their lives. If you feel emotional – You are not alone!

Now let's get started.

Exercise

SHARE is a new way of looking at your situation of living with a problem drinker. As you have probably found out from bitter experience, discussions focussing on the drinking behaviour has not been very productive. You have probably been met with one of two reactions (or maybe both) downright denial that there is a problem, or promises to change that are constantly broken and renewed and re-broken.

What SHARE does is to have you focus on the **actual effect** that the drinker is having on your life. Thus, you can see the way that his/her drinking threatens your livelihood, or your relationships or your health. SHARE is not a tick list that will give you a meaningless score at the end. This is a meaningful and personal look at and assessment of **YOUR** circumstances.

It is a powerful tool to give you a clearer picture of your circumstances and what you can do about it. It is not difficult, but it does require you to take time and to put effort into it. The more time and effort you put in, the more you will gain. This is probably the first time you have examined your life and circumstances in such detail and with such purpose.

Like all the other workbooks, there are no right or wrong answers. **This is a tool for YOU to look at YOUR life.**

SHARE

SHARE is an acronym made from the initial letters of the areas of our lives that can be affected by the behaviour of a drinker. These are as follows:-

Safety

Health

Ambition

Relationships

Environment

Safety

The first, and most important, area of your life that may be affected by drinking is your safety. It is possible that she/he may be violent and aggressive when drinking. So you may fear that you will be assaulted and beaten up, or you may feel that, although there has never been violence in the past, there is verbal aggression and you are frightened. Clearly this is a situation that cannot be ignored.

Even if he/she is not aggressive or violent, and many drinkers are not, you may still fear for your safety. She may smoke while drinking and you fear that she will fall asleep and start a fire. Or she may be hungry when drunk and cook late at night when you are asleep. He may drive when drinking and/or take the children with him. When drunk, he may bring people to the house that you would rather not have in your home. She may go out and leave the doors unlocked or the windows open.

There are many reasons that you may worry about your safety that are directly attributable to drinking.

Health

Although he may be the one who is drinking and he may say "Well who am I hurting, only me". This is not actually true. You may find that your health is suffering and suffering badly through his drinking.

You may find that your level of anxiety is high, that you can't sleep or eat. Alternately you may find that you are depressed and that you are tired and sleepy much of the time and/or that you are eating for comfort. So your weight may be dropping off or increasing rapidly. You may have high levels of anxiety, irritability, mood swings all of which can be linked to the uncertainty inherent in living with a drinker. Your self-esteem is probably suffering and you feel indecisive and unsure of yourself.

You may find that you have more colds, infections rashes and that generally you don't feel well. Or you may find that you do not recover from seasonal illnesses as easily or quickly as you once did.

Ambition

We all have dreams, ambitions and aspirations about our future as individuals and, if appropriate, as a family. These dreams and aspirations can be affected and even shattered by alcohol. The shared dreams of marriage especially are casualties of drinking and

perhaps also the dreams for the children.

Your ambitions may involve money, possessions, bigger house, clothes, car, holidays. As we know drinking can seriously affect earning power. Jobs can be lost through poor performance, absenteeism or disruptive behaviour. Promotions or career advancements can be closed to a drinker who can become more resentful as she sees 'inferior' colleagues get promoted over her.

Even if you have a regular income, it can be frittered away on alcohol. It can take a considerable amount of money to sustain heavy drinking and that cost competes with any other routes for your money or ambitions you may have.

Relationships

Unfortunately relationships are frequent victims of heavy drinking. As the drinking increases all relationships, for example marriage or partnerships, relationships with children, siblings, parents and friends often suffer. However, as she drinks more and her behaviour becomes more unpredictable you probably find yourself withdrawing from the very people who might help you most, your friends.

Embarrassment, shame even guilt may stop you talking to your friends. As you try harder to cover up his drinking it becomes harder to face your friends and lie to them, telling them everything is OK.

However, if the drinker is your partner, husband or wife, then the

biggest casualty of the drinking may be this relationship. You probably find your feelings of love, respect, pride evaporating and sometimes being replaced by contempt, fear, loathing, distrust even hate. You may feel guilty about these negative feelings, even try to process them healthily, but in the end feel overwhelmed by the frequency of his failures. You end up powerless to do anything about it as the relationship suffers.

Environment

Your environment is your immediate surroundings, your home. Do you feel that this is suffering due to her drinking. Is the fabric of the home suffering, for example has the hygiene deteriorated? Have the repairs not been done or old worn out items replaced? Is it being damaged carelessly or wilfully?

Also your home should be the place where you feel peaceful and safe. Does your home have a sense of peace and safety?

Safety

Now take a few moments to think about your life. Think about his/her drinking behaviour. **Does it make you feel unsafe in any way? Does it make you feel that it is unsafe for other members of the family, eg children?**

Spend some time thinking about the situation, about how drinking affects your, or others' safety. If you are having trouble thinking of things to write look at the SHARE prompts starting on page 14 of this workbook.

Health

Now take a few moments to think about your life. Think about his/her drinking behaviour. **Does it affect your health in any way? Does it affect the health of other members of the family, eg children?**

Spend some time thinking about the situation, about how drinking affects your, or others' Health. . If you are having trouble thinking of things to write look at the SHARE prompts starting on page 14 of this workbook.

Ambition

Now take a few moments to think about your life. Think about his/her drinking behaviour. **Does it affect/or has it affected your ambitions and aspirations? Does it affect/or has it affected your ambitions and aspirations of other members of the family, eg children?**

Spend some time thinking about the situation, about how drinking affects your, or others' ambitions/aspirations. . If you are having trouble thinking of things to write look at the SHARE prompts starting on page 14 of this workbook.

Relationships

Now take a few moments to think about your life. Think about his/her drinking behaviour. **Does it affect/or has it affected your relationships within or outside the home? Does it affect/or has it affected the relationships of other members of the family, eg children?**

Spend some time thinking about the situation, about how drinking affects your, or others' relationships. . If you are having trouble thinking of things to write look at the SHARE prompts starting on page 14 of this workbook.

Environment

Now take a few moments to think about your life. Think about his/her drinking behaviour. **Does it affect/or has it affected your environment, ie where and how you live? Does it affect/or has it affected the environment of other members of the family, eg children?**

Spend some time thinking about the situation, about how drinking affects your, or others' environment. If you are having trouble thinking of things to write look at the SHARE prompts starting on page 14 of this workbook.

Using SHARE to Change your Situation

When you have compiled a comprehensive list of the ways that alcohol is affecting your life then it is time to prioritise. Look at each category Safety, Health, Ambition, Relationships and Environment in turn. Score each issue on the list on a 1-10 scale where 1 is a small problem (more of an irritation) to 10 a big problem, life or relationship threatening. **As before, there is no right answer to this, remember this is your life and your judgement.**

When you have scored each of the items in each of the categories, select the 3 problems with the highest scores, in any category. These are the problems that you are going to tackle first. If there is a tie between 2 issues and you cannot decide which is more important, always give preference to the issue that most affects your Safety.

You are going to tackle these problems in a systematic manner but in manageable chunks. To attempt to tackle all of the problems at once is a step too far. It would overwhelm both you and the drinker and the process would get swallowed up in too much detail about too many things.

It is far better to keep this first discussion limited to only a few problems but agree that you will attend to each in turn. Before you tackle these issues we want you to complete the LOVE exercise which we will send you in the next mailing.

Prompts for SHARE

1 Safety

Think about his/her drinking behaviour. **Does it make you feel unsafe in any way?**

Here are a few examples, but this is not an exhaustive list. There are many more and your concerns may be quite different.

Aggression and violence are the most obvious examples as some drinkers can be very aggressive and/or violent when they drink. The majority of assaults that come to court and/or accident and emergency are fuelled by alcohol, as are most domestic disputes. Casual remarks, discussions or arguments can escalate dramatically when alcohol is involved. Of course by no means all drinkers are aggressive and/or violent and if this is not a concern for you, great.

Childcare under the influence. For those of you who have children leaving them with an intoxicated partner, or more likely one who becomes intoxicated while in charge of the children, is a real concern.

Driving while under the influence is also common in problem drinking. If your drinker tends to do this while alone then it is an obvious concern. It is an increased concern if there are children in the car, or yourself.

Cooking while under the influence is another problem. Many domestic fires are caused by frying pans or pans of oil being left on a stove unattended by someone cooking while intoxicated.

Smoking while intoxicated is another cause of fires that is fortunately reducing in frequency. Nevertheless if your drinker is a smoker it is probably a real issue particularly if he smokes in bed or falls asleep in a chair.

Your safety concerns may involve some or all of the above examples. Alternately none of these may be a concern to you and you may have quite different concerns entirely. Whatever your concerns write them down in the form of a list and **be specific**. The more specific you are the easier it is to start formulating a plan of action later.

2 Health

How is her/his drinking affecting your Health?

Someone drinking constantly or on a regular basis can take its toll on both the physical and mental health of others. How is it affecting you or others who live with you?

Some examples might be

High levels of anxiety are often associated with living with a problem drinker. The unpredictability of whether or not they will drink and whether or not they will get drunk and what they will do. Living with that sort of pressure can lead to anxiety and may even lead the partner of the drinker to asking their family doctor for sedatives.

You may find that your level of anxiety is high, that you can't sleep or eat.

Alternately you may find that you are depressed and that you are tired and sleepy much of the time and/or that you are eating for comfort. So your weight may be dropping or increasing rapidly.

You may feel worn out, especially if you have taken on extra work to cope

You may have high levels of anxiety, irritability, mood swings all of which can be linked to the uncertainty inherent in living with a drinker.

Your self esteem is probably suffering and you feel indecisive and unsure of yourself.

Finally your levels of concentration and attention are probably suffering.

However it is not just your mental health that may suffer, the problems can also be physical.

You may find that you have more colds, infections rashes and that generally you don't feel well.

Or you may find that you do not recover from seasonal illnesses as easily or quickly as you once did.

Your blood pressure may be raised and you may have occasional and worrying chest pains or breathlessness.

You may feel cramps and pains in your body or twitches and pins and needles in your limbs.

You may feel sluggish and have difficulty doing things that were once easily achieved.

Finally you may have sexual difficulties such as erectile dysfunction or loss of desire.

The drinking may be having an effect on the children's health

You may find that they are anxious, nervous, withdrawn

They may have started bedwetting

Their education may be affected

Their mood, and general behaviour may be deteriorating and they may be withdrawn

3 Ambition

How is her/his drinking affecting your Ambition?

We all have dreams, ambitions and aspirations about our future as individuals and, if appropriate, as a family. These dreams and aspirations can be affected and even shattered by alcohol. The shared dreams of marriage especially are casualties of drinking and perhaps also the dreams for the children.

In this section you should write down anything that you feel alcohol, or his/her drinking has robbed you of or denied you

Your ambitions may involve money, possessions, bigger house, clothes, car, holidays.

As we know drinking can seriously affect earning power.

Jobs can be lost through poor performance, absenteeism or disruptive behaviour.

Promotions or career advancements can be closed to a drinker who can become more resentful as she sees 'inferior' colleagues get promoted over her.

Even if you have a regular income, it can be frittered away on alcohol. It can take a considerable amount of money to sustain a heavy drinking career and that cost competes with any other routes or ambitions you may have.

It also takes time and energy to sustain heavy drinking, so the dream of starting a business, participating in a project, studying a course, emigrating to a new life can all be lost. Sometimes they are lost dramatically sometimes they just wither and die over time. Either way can be painful and bitter.

It is not only the drinkers dreams or shared dreams that suffer, your own personal dreams of hobbies, career, business, education and social status may suffer in the drinking.

4 Relationships

How is her/his drinking affecting your Relationships?

Unfortunately relationships are frequent casualties of heavy drinking. Often, as the drinking increases, all relationships, for example marriage or partnerships, relationships with children, siblings, parents and friends suffer. This is both common and unfortunate. Unfortunate, as the drinker starts to feel increasingly isolated and marginalised. This can lead to even more drinking to compensate, which leads to more relationship problems that leads to more isolation that leads to more drinking. However as she drinks more and her behaviour becomes more unpredictable you probably find yourself withdrawing from the very people who might help you most; your friends.

Embarrassment, shame even guilt may stop you talking to your friends. As you try harder to cover up his drinking it becomes harder to face your friends and lie to them, telling them everything is OK.

If you have children, you may feel that you have become more of a single parent as you become tied to the house looking after them. Even having baby sitters may not be the answer as the embarrassment of him getting drunk may prevent you from asking anyone.

However the if the drinker is your partner, husband or wife, then the biggest casualty of the drinking is that relationship.

You probably find your feelings of love, respect, pride evaporating and sometimes being replaced by contempt, fear, loathing, distrust even hate.

You may feel guilty about these negative feelings, and powerless to do anything about it as the relationship with yourself suffers.

So what relationships have suffered due to his drinking, your immediate family, children, your parents, her parents, your siblings, your friends, neighbours.

Write all these damaged relationships down in your list.

5 Environment

How is her/his drinking affecting your Environment?

Your environment is your immediate surroundings, your home.

Do you feel that this is suffering due to her drinking.

Is the fabric of the home suffering, for example has the hygiene deteriorated?

Have the repairs not been done or old worn out items replaced?

Is it being damaged carelessly or wilfully?

Is the drink staining the carpets?

Are things being broken?

Are there cigarette burns on the furniture?

Also your home should be the place where you feel peaceful and safe.

Does your home have a sense of peace and safety?

Have you had to move house because of his drinking?

Are you living the way you want to live?