

CRYSTAL

REDUCING • QUITTING

INFORMATION FOR THE GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNITY AND FRIENDS

INTRODUCTION

Thinking About Quitting Crystal or Reducing Your Use?

If you have decided your crystal use is causing problems in your life and have decided to do something about it, this booklet will give you some tips on reducing your use or quitting.

In this booklet we refer to both quitting and reducing. By quitting we mean stopping crystal use altogether, either permanently or for a specific period. By reducing we mean cutting down the amount of crystal you use and/or the frequency with which you use.

Depending upon how long, how much and how frequently you have used crystal you may find it difficult to stop or reduce your use. There can be both physical and psychological reasons for this.

- Physically, your body may now need crystal to keep functioning (also called dependence) or you feel you need to use more crystal to counter the effects of the use itself (eg you take crystal to get to work because you're tired from being awake all weekend).
- Psychologically, you may feel that you're more confident when using, that sex is better or you've got more energy. Life without crystal may seem less interesting or exciting.

Life on crystal can seem very intense and create vivid thoughts and memories about where and when you used. These memories and thoughts are called triggers. A lot of the effort of stopping or quitting is learning how to deal with dependence and triggers. They are automatic and inevitable but there are ways to control them.

Remember

Think of quitting or reducing as a process rather than an event.

Do what feels right for you and make changes where you can. Most of all: Don't give up! You will get there in the end.

PLANNING

Tip #1 Become aware of your using patterns

- Keep a diary or make a list of when, where, why and with whom you use crystal,
- Highlight any times when you use larger amounts or more often than usual (eg after a difficult week, when you're feeling upset),
- Review your diary or list to see if there are patterns.

Tip #2 Make a plan

First you need to decide whether you are going to reduce your use or quit. Then using your diary or list write down strategies for breaking your patterns. Be realistic and remember the list is flexible. If you find something doesn't work for you try something else.

Tip #3 Set small goals that are easier to reach

By setting small, achievable and realistic goals you will help increase your confidence and feel that each step is manageable.

These can include:

- If thinking in terms of 'forever' is too hard try weeks, days or even hours.
- Use one point instead of two or only use twice a month rather than every weekend.
- Leave town for a short period to focus on helping your body adjust to life without crystal.

Tip #4 Tell your friends

Telling your friends that you are going to quit or reduce your use can be difficult but it is important. If they know what you are doing they can offer you help and support and it'll make it easier for them to understand any changes in your mood or behaviour.

If there are friends you generally use with you may need to ask them to help you by:

- Not offering you crystal,

- Not taking it when you're around,
- Not talking about it in front of you, or
- Not being around you when they are on crystal or coming down.

Tip #5 Anticipate withdrawal

There are a number of physical symptoms of withdrawing from crystal use. These include severe mood swings, irregular sleep, depression, anxiety, boredom, irritability and feelings of hopelessness. These effects are very common and will ease up over time.

These symptoms may also make you want to use again, so remember to plan for how to deal with them before they happen.

TAKING ACTION

Tip #6 Get rid of or hide all your crystal as well as drug paraphernalia

Having drug paraphernalia around can act as a trigger.

- If you've decided to quit throw out all your crystal as well as pipes, deal-bags, spoons, bleach, needles etc,
- If you've decided to reduce your use put your drugs and paraphernalia in an out of the way place so you have to consciously think about getting them. This will give you an opportunity to reconsider whether you actually want to use it at that time.

Tip #7 Avoid places, people or situations that might trigger you to use

Triggers might include specific objects, places (saunas, streets, clubs, or friends' houses), specific events, types of sex or certain stressful or emotional situations.

- If you're quitting then delete or throw out phone numbers that trigger thoughts about using (eg your dealer).
- If you're reducing your use take those numbers out of your phone so you have to consciously find them when you want them.

- Change your phone number or make it hard for your dealer and drug acquaintances to reach you.
- If porn, the internet and/or gambling are triggers get rid of your DVDs/videos, disconnect the internet and/or seek professional support.

Tip #8 Schedule your day thoroughly

Boredom is enemy number 1 for quitting or reducing your use so try to keep yourself occupied all the time. You can choose from a range of activities including exercise, hobbies, shopping, visiting (non-using) friends or family, napping or volunteering to keep busy.

Tip #9 Look after your body

The combined effects of your crystal use and the physical and psychological stress of quitting or reducing can be hard on your body. To help your body repair itself and reduce the effects of withdrawal you should look after yourself by:

- Eating healthy food including fruit and vegetables and protein,
- Avoiding caffeine (coffee, cola, energy drinks).
- Getting lots of rest and sleep.

Tip #10 Exercise

Exercise helps to produce endorphins which help you feel good. It also stimulates your immune system, relieves boredom and improves energy. Almost any physical activity is good for you (eg walking, working out, swimming, yoga).

Tip #11 Be patient

Remember that it took time to get to where you're at and it will also take time to achieve your goals. If you haven't achieved all your goals, don't give up. Focus on the progress you have made and go on from there.

- Review your plan regularly.
- Give yourself credit for what you have achieved and keep making positive changes in your life.



GETTING HELP AND SUPPORT

Tip #12 Don't go it alone!

You don't have to do all of this alone. You could attend a 12-step or crystal support group, spend time with friends who don't use or see a counsellor. Check out the contacts list below for details.

Tip #13 Look after your health

Regular or frequent crystal use can be hard on your body. You might be able to help your recovery by:

- Seeing your doctor or community health centre for advice and a full check up.
- Getting a full check up for sexually transmissible infections (STIs).
- Exploring complementary therapies (eg acupuncture, nutritional supplements, herbal remedies) to help with cravings, balancing moods and sleeping.

Tip #14 Explore your treatment options

If you find it difficult to quit on your own you may need to find additional support. This is especially the case when crystal use covers other personal problems which resurface once you reduce or quit your use.

There are many types of treatment programs available and making decisions about which is best for you can be daunting.

It might be helpful to talk with a counsellor about your options.

Information about free and low-cost treatment is available from the resource list on the back of this booklet.



CONTACTS

ADIS (Alcohol and Drug Information Service)

ADIS is a 24 hour telephone based information and referral service. Call 9361 8000 in Sydney or 1800 422 599 (non-metro areas).

ACON (AIDS Council of NSW)

ACON offers a range of services to members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities including:

- Assessment, counselling and support.
- Referrals to treatment services, rehabs and other drugs specialists.
- Case coordination services that work with inner city GPs to assist people using crystal.
- Information on interactions between crystal and HIV medications.
- Free sterile injecting equipment and advice (NSP).

ACON (Sydney)

9 Commonwealth St, Surry Hills NSW 2010.

PH 9206 2000 or call 1800 063 060 (non metro areas for information on your nearest branch) or check out www.acon.org.au

CMA - Crystal Meth Anonymous (Sydney)

A 12-step fellowship group for people wanting to quit their crystal use. For more information call (M-F, 10-6) 9206 2052

NA

Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings follow an abstinence based twelve-step program.

For more information call (24-hrs) 9519 6200 24-hour or ADIS 9361 8000 or 1800 422 599

NUAA

The New South Wales Users and AIDS Association (NUAA) is a peer based organisation. NUAA provides information, referral and support. For more information call (M-F, 10-6)
Ph 8354 7300 or 1800 644 413

Rainbow Recovery

The Rainbow Recovery Club provides a meeting place, primarily for gay, lesbian and transgender people, in twelve step programs.

For more information:

<http://www.rainbowrecovery.com.au/>

mail@rainbowrecovery.com.au

Crystal SMART Recovery Group

Self Management and Recovery Training (SMART) groups offer support and strategies for people who want to quit their crystal use.

For more information call (M-F, 10-6) 9206 2052



ISBN 1-86356-045-9