

Do work between sessions

It's tempting to finish the session, breathe a sigh of relief and put it out of our minds until the following week. But it will make a much bigger difference if you spend some time between sessions thinking about what you talked about. Did you agree with everything the support worker said: Did anything they say surprise you? Maybe speak to other people about thoughts you have. The more you spend time thinking about what happened in your session, the more prepared you will be for the next one. You can do this.

Learn

Psychoeducation helps. It really, really helps. We give ourselves a hard time because we don't understand why we zone out have flashbacks or have so many relationship difficulties. Yet, almost all our behaviours and beliefs can be seen as logical once we understand them.

Our behaviour and beliefs are normal responses to abnormal events. The more we understand ourselves, the more we will value ourselves as survivors who are courageous and resourceful.

Your support worker can suggest books videos, websites or handouts to explain what's happening and how it's related to what happened to you. Just ask. You might want some practical resources, suggestions or activities – or just space to talk about what has happened.

First Step has a range of resources readily available in our reception area.

On our website we also have suggestions for further reading and there are videos and case studies readily available.
www.firststepleicester.org.uk



Making the most of your Emotional Support



... on your decision to come to First Step to start getting the help and support you deserve. Chances are it's taken you a long time to get here, so take a moment to pat yourself on the back. **You did it!**

We know there are things going on for you that other people don't have to deal with right now.

At the end of your assessment you have been told you are better suited to emotional support at this time, rather than counselling. What does that really mean, and what do you need to think about when you come to your sessions, to make sure you get the most out of the time you spend at First Step?

This is a short guide about what having emotional support at First Step means and how it is different from counselling.

Why emotional support rather than counselling?

Men who are offered emotional support at First Step are often dealing with complicated life issues when they approach the services. These may include:

In the midst of a crisis; homelessness; recent suicide attempts; current or recent misuse of drugs or alcohol; complex/multiple mental health diagnoses; receiving support from many different agencies; difficulty being in a room with someone else; struggling to attend sessions regularly; history of committing violent or sexual crimes.

We understand that these things happen and the emotional support sessions are there to offer you an anchor and a place to talk and think.

How many emotional support sessions will I have?

You will have 8 sessions of emotional support. If you cannot attend one of the sessions, please let us know. If you have let us know in advance you are unable to attend the session, this will not count as one of your 8 sessions.

If you do not let us know you are unable to attend, then this will count as one of your 8 sessions. Emotional support will end once you have completed 8 sessions.

If you feel the emotional support sessions are not for you, you are welcome to bring them to an end before the 8 sessions are complete. Just let us know.

Keep yourself safe

This is emotional support, not counselling, which means you will only have 8 weeks to work with your support worker. With this in mind, think about how you would like to use this time. You might not be able to talk about all the things you would like to talk about, so where do you want to start? To help you focus on what to talk about in the 8 sessions, you could:

1. Write a list of all the things that worry you and then put the list in order of most important to least important, maybe start at the top of the list with your first session and then work your way down the list.
2. Cut out 8 pieces of paper, write on each piece a topic which worries or concerns you. Fold the pieces of paper up and mix them up. Put them in an envelope. Pick a topic randomly from the envelope each time you go to see your support worker to decide what to talk about in that session.
3. Ask the support worker to help you think about how to use the 8 sessions in the best way. They will have some suggestions in the best way. They will have some suggestions and will be happy to support you with this decision.

What's the difference between emotional support and counselling?

Emotional Support and Counselling are equally important at First Step

Similarities

- You will enter into a contract with both
- Both expect you to attend regularly and take part
- Both are confidential
- Both are a place where you will be listened to and heard
- Both offer a quiet space for thinking things through
- You are expected to contribute in both
- Neither the counsellor or the emotional support worker can 'fix' you or change what happened to you
- Both have sessions that last for 50 minutes
- Both take place in a room at First Step or remotely via Zoom or telephone.

Differences

- Emotional support is for 8 weeks, not 26 weeks
- Support may include practical activities and information
- Support may be directed at a specific topic or issue
- Support is an opportunity to experiment with working with someone
- Support is a chance to 'have a go' at attending regularly and sitting a room with someone to see how that feels for you

Things that you can do to get the most out of your 8 emotional support sessions

Get in the Zone

Plan for your sessions. Give yourself plenty of time to get to First Step. You might even write a list before your session to focus on what you want to talk about in the sessions. Find a quiet space and imagine how talking to the support worker is going to feel.