

## 1 WHY ENCOURAGE CSO TO TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES?

- CSO tend to forget their own needs while taking care of those of their loved ones.
- They must learn to take care of themselves to maintain their ability to support their loved ones.

## 2 A BIT OF THEORY

Too often, CSO **blame themselves** for their loved one's use-related difficulties or for not being able to help them. Comments from those around them, as well as common **prejudices**, only reinforce this guilt. The responsibility for the development or persistence of their loved one's challenges related to use cannot be attributed solely to their actions. They are often too hard on themselves. However, considering that the consequences of use can persist, CSO must learn **to promote their well-being and put their own needs forward**.

### A MULTIFACTORIAL MODEL

The "stress-strain-coping-support" multifactorial model proposed by Orford et al. (2013) views CSO as individuals striving to cope with stressful circumstances for which **they are not responsible**. According to this model, having a loved one who struggles with use creates a stressful life situation that exposes CSO to various consequences that influence their reactions. It is important to avoid a stigmatizing perspective that portrays CSO as accumulating personal or family failures in response to the situation.

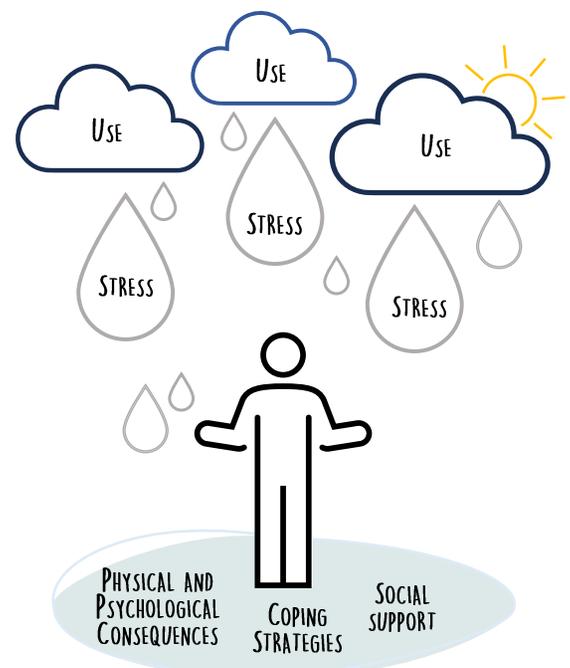
**Stress:** A loved one's use prevents CSO from fully playing their role and fulfilling their responsibilities. **This situation generates significant stress**, creating tensions and conflicts in their daily lives and confronting them with dilemmas on how to handle use and its associated consequences.

**Strain:** Regardless of CSO's health status before their loved one's difficulties with use emerged, the **stress caused by the situation leads to various physical and psychological consequences**, which put their well-being at risk.

**Coping:** To manage stress and mitigate the impact of use, CSO must **adopt various coping strategies**, some more effective than others. Although they often feel powerless, they have the power to take action to improve their own well-being, which may indirectly influence their loved one's use.

**Support:** A **supportive social network that helps CSO adapt and that positively contributes to their health is essential**. This support, whether formal or informal, can be received from professionals or their personal circles and may come in different forms, such as emotional, informational, and material.

### STRESS-STRAIN-COPING-SUPPORT MODEL



(Inspired by Orford & al., 2013)

## THE CSO'S DILEMMA IN SEEKING HELP FOR THEMSELVES

For CSO, it seems obvious to seek help when someone is struggling with use. This is precisely what they encourage their loved one to do. However, **the idea of seeking help for themselves as CSO is not as instinctive.**

CSO often believe that **their problems will be resolved once their loved one stops using.** In their view, it is their loved one who needs support, not them. However, their well-being does not solely depend on their loved one decreasing or stopping their use. **The wounds and consequences that use has inflicted on their lives are real and require attention,** regardless of whether their loved one stops using or not.

## 3 WHEN WORKING WITH CSO

### PROMOTING CSO'S PERSONAL WELL-BEING

To support CSO's well-being, focus on their **sources of stress**, the **consequences** these stressors have on their lives, the **coping strategies** they use to face them, and the **support** available to them. CSO need to take time for themselves, which does not necessarily mean neglecting their loved one. However, **self-care is the foundation for feeling strong and can have positive effects in other areas of their lives.**

Also, encourage the development of CSO's self-esteem and self-compassion. Help them let go of guilt and reconnect with their strengths and good deeds. They need to overcome the shame they feel. Support them in **putting forward their own needs** and **rediscovering what brings them joy.** Encourage reflection on what they have set aside and what they now wish to prioritize. However, just like their loved one's recovery, CSO's well-being and healing take time. Meeting with you is a significant first step in this direction.

### POSITIVE EFFECTS OF SELF-CARE IN VARIOUS AREAS OF CSO'S LIFE



### DEVELOPING CSO'S SUPPORT NETWORK

CSO are often **hesitant to talk** about their loved one's use. Breaking the secrecy surrounding their loved one's use and speaking out about the situation can be difficult. As they experience significant distress and isolation due to the circumstances, it is crucial for them **to build a support network** on which they can rely to share during tough times. Help CSO assess the quality of their current network and surround themselves with individuals who bring them comfort and with whom they feel safe opening up. The quality of a supportive social network is not measured by the number of people it includes, but by how effectively those people help CSO deal with the problem.

### A SUPPORTIVE NETWORK...

- Does not judge the CSO's situation, accepts them as they are, and helps reduce their feelings of guilt.
- Reflects a positive image to the CSO and shows empathy toward their circumstances.
- Is knowledgeable about the problem, allowing them to take a step back and offer a broader perspective.
- Is available to listen and understand, knowing when to offer advice.
- Helps CSO obtain support for themselves or their loved one and offers material, practical, or financial help when needed.
- Helps in managing stress, addressing the consequences of use, and solving problems.
- Cares about the CSO's well-being, promotes their sense of belonging, and shows them affection.
- Supports CSO in rebuilding their self-esteem and empowering them to take action.