Free mapping

Group and individual free mapping sheets

NHS
National Treatment Agency
for Substance Misuse

User guide

One of the most useful outcomes of using a free map with a client/prisoner is that it offers an opportunity to explore an area of their lives in an open and non-confrontational manner. It allows the worker and the client/prisoner to work together on creating a shared understanding of a particular issue.

As such, though the map contains suggestions on how to record a three month care plan review discussion onto a map, it is important to remember that the worker should not attempt to direct the map too forcefully in any particular direction, or to place too much structure onto it. Remember, it is a "free" map!

The symbols at the bottom of the free map are suggestions of how the client/prisoner may choose to structure their map. As you become more comfortable with free mapping, you may wish to try using these symbols in order to help the client/prisoner make sense of a particular topic.

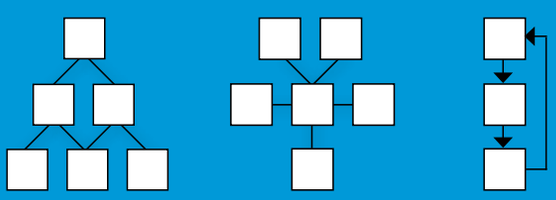
Structure types

This shows you ways in which different ideas can be connected to each other.

For example, if you are looking at an important issue in the client's/prisoner's life from which many consequences have arisen, then a spider diagram might be a useful way of displaying this with the central issue placed in the middle of the page.

A hierarchy structure might be useful if the client is considering how a range of feelings may, in turn, lead to a series of behaviours that eventually lead to one inevitable outcome, such as the use of drugs.

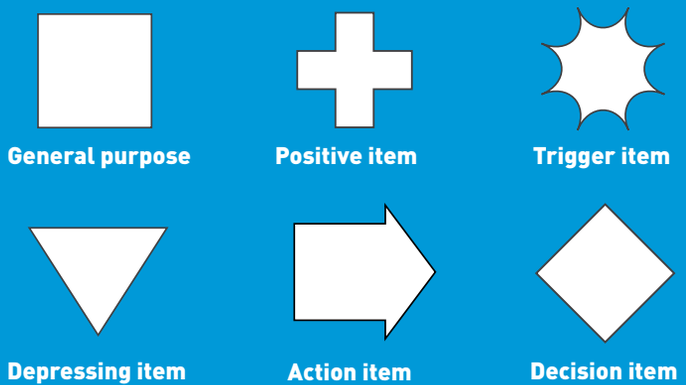
The chain structure is useful if you are describing a series of events/feelings/behaviours that tend to happen as a "chain reaction" – one after the other.



Hierarchy **Spider** **Chain**

General node types

"Nodes" are the boxes in which you place an issue or idea which you are considering. The client/prisoner may want to try altering the shape of the box to add structure to their map.



General purpose **Positive item** **Trigger item**

Depressing item **Action item** **Decision item**

For example, if they have noticed that seeing a particular car reminds them of a dealer they associated with and therefore encourages thoughts of using, they could label the car by placing it in a "trigger" node.

Node-link mapping

Node-link mapping is a simple technique for presenting verbal information in the form of a diagram. It has been shown to have positive benefits for counselling interactions with clients, such as three month care plan reviews.

NLM was first studied as a note-taking tool during lectures, where students were taught to place key ideas in boxes ("nodes") that were connected to other nodes with lines ("links") representing different types of relationships. The end result resembled a map or flow chart of the lecture. When other students took notes as they would usually take them and the two approaches were compared, the students who used NLM remembered more and felt more confident about their understanding of the lecture. Displaying information visually appears to helps us understand things better and recall key ideas (hopefully when we need them). This is summarised in the old adage 'a picture is worth a thousand words'.

NLM can also be used to enhance any counselling interaction with a client. Using an erasable board, flip chart, or paper and pencil, client(s) and keyworker can work together to create a map of the issue under discussion. The keyworker should take the lead in briefly explaining mapping to the client(s) and providing a starting point for creating the map. However, ideally both keyworker and client should have pens available to facilitate the joint creation of a map. The figure below shows an example of a free map created during a session.

Both research evidence and clinical experience suggest that an effective counselling session has four key elements:

1. Communication:

Drug working is often a problem-solving exercise, and so a clear, shared understanding of the issues is important to facilitate communication. Maps provide a summary of the issues, and have less word clutter than traditional oral or written material. NLM has been shown to be particularly helpful for clients with less education, and for those with ethnic backgrounds that are different from their worker's. Mapping also enhances clients' belief in their communication abilities, thus building confidence and self-esteem.

2. Focus:

Mapping provides a way to cluster information meaningfully, as well as providing a readily available summary to guide discussions. Evidence suggests that maps help counsellors and clients maintain their focus, and NLM has been shown to benefit clients with attentional problems.

3. Producing ideas:

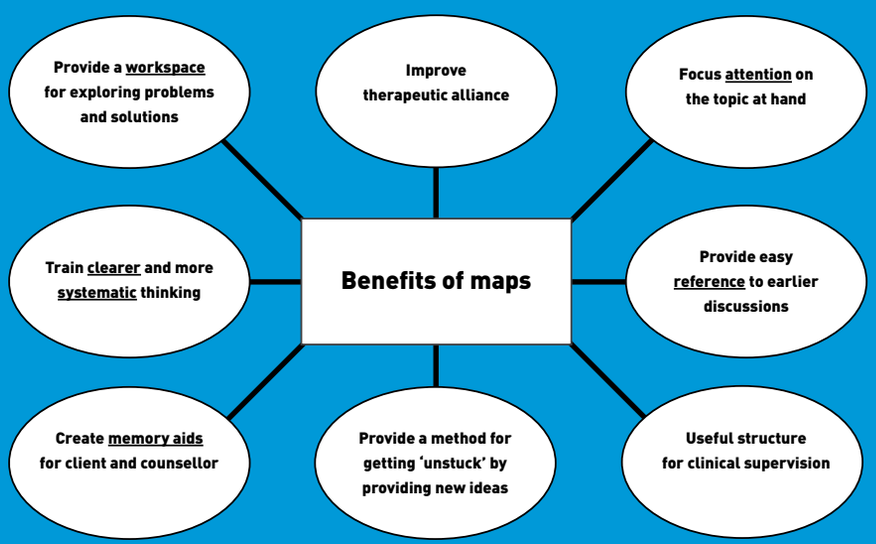
Maps can provide a strategy for idea generation, and may also help clients examine what influences their behaviour. This process is most useful when keyworkers and clients are struggling to remember details, or when a fresh approach is needed. NLM also leads to greater insights from the counsellor, helping him or her identify gaps in clients' thinking or other psychological issues.

4. Memory:

Memory for session information is related to the effectiveness of counselling. Node–link maps have been shown to enhance the recall of information in both educational and clinical settings.

Observations of mapping-enhanced counselling sessions suggest that NLM increases collaboration between client and therapist by taking the direct focus off the client and putting it onto a 'picture' of the therapeutic issues. For clients who are uncomfortable maintaining eye contact, NLM reduces anxiety by providing a relevant, alternative visual stimulus. Maps created during a session can be given to clients to assist homework between sessions. They may also be reintroduced by the counsellor to evaluate changes and progress, and used as a structure for clinical supervision sessions. However, it should also be noted that mapping can sometimes disrupt therapeutic rapport (e.g. by slowing the pace of the session). It therefore is important for individual counsellors to tailor their use of maps to fit both their own style and client needs.

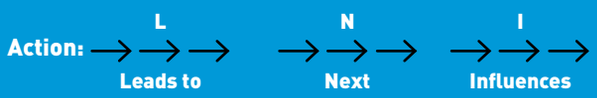
The map below summarises the key benefits of the NLM approach.



Link types

"Links" are the lines that are drawn between boxes/nodes to show how they are connected. You may wish to experiment with different kinds of lines to express the many different ways the "boxes" in someone's life are connected.

You can use **Action** lines to show how one thing leads to or is influenced by another.



Description lines can be used when the client/prisoner is describing a particular issue in depth. For example, the feelings that the client/prisoner gets when they are using drugs can be explored by using a spider structure with lots of description links coming off a central box marked "Using Drugs".

As the name suggests, **elaboration** links can be used to show that the client/prisoner is describing a particular issue in more detail. For example, if they were looking at their relationship with a partner they could use elaboration links to describe the relationship, give examples of the nature of the relationship or use an analogy to help explain what the relationship feels like, such as "stormy"!

Personal

This box is for the client/prisoner to make any comments that they feel are important to make. This box emphasises the importance of the work you have done in exploring an aspect of the client's/prisoner's life. For example, they may wish to record that a particular discussion was very distressing for them.

Comments about map

This allows the client/prisoner to comment on the process as does the "How useful was this map" number line at the bottom of the page. Both of these boxes may encourage ownership of the map and the process which the client is participating in.

Identification information

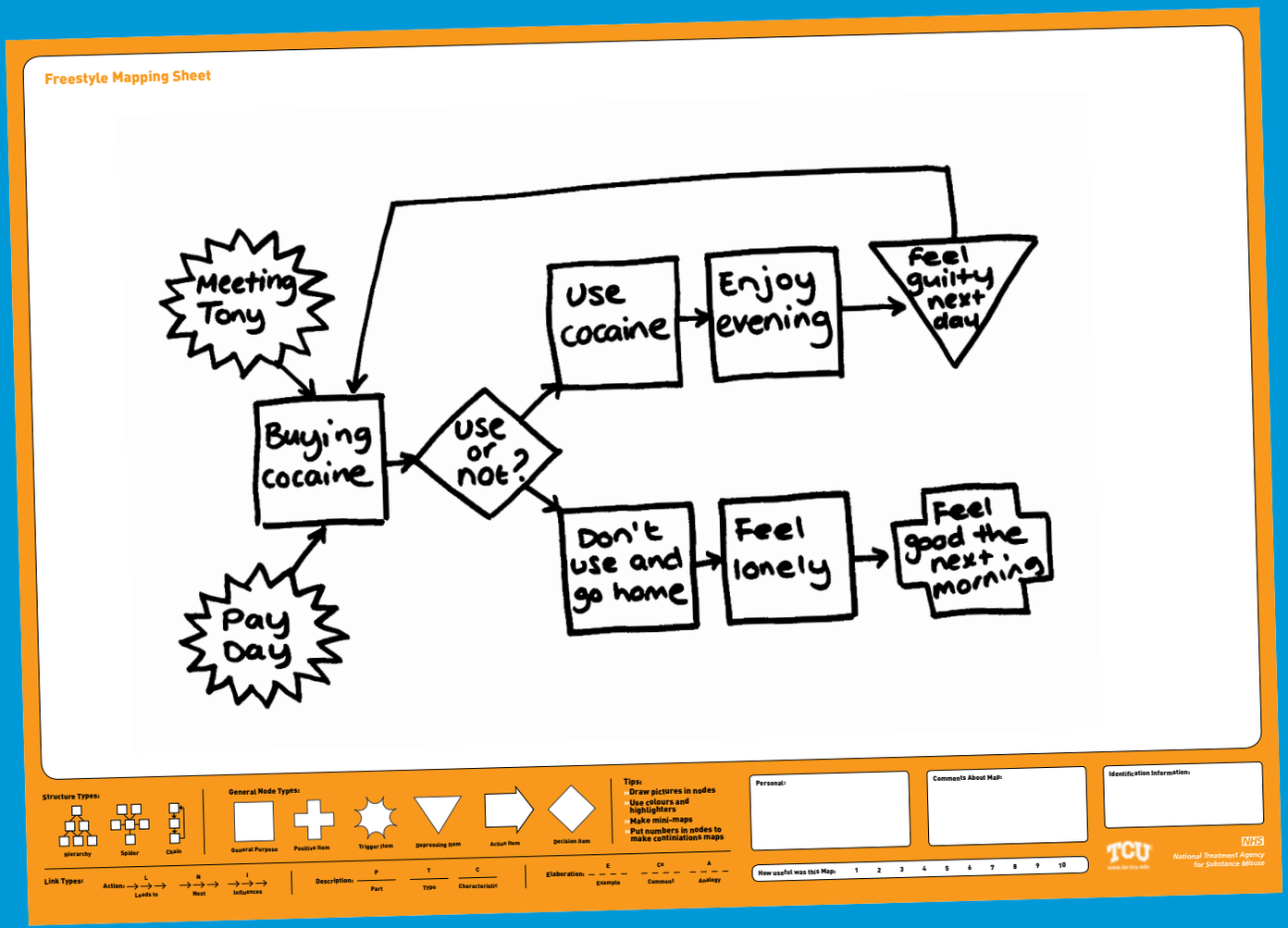
This section is a space for recording any administrative information that is required such as session number, client/prisoner identification etc.

Main points

The notes at the bottom of every free map are suggestions of how a client/prisoner can be creative with their map in order to accurately portray an important part of their life on paper. They should not constrict or hamper the flow of ideas onto the map.

Free mapping offers an ideal opportunity for client/prisoner and worker to work alongside each other and collaboratively produce a map that will help to explain the distress that the client/prisoner may be feeling and suggest possible solutions to their current difficulties.

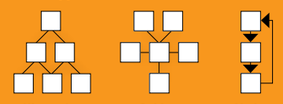
Free mapping example



Want more maps? Please call **01273 278 766** or email **freemaps@wilddogdesign.co.uk**

Freestyle mapping sheet

Structure types:



Hierarchy | Spider | Chain

General node types:

General purpose | Positive item | Trigger item | Depressing item | Action item | Decision item

Tips:

- Draw pictures in nodes
- Use colours and highlighters
- Make mini-maps
- Put numbers in nodes to make contiuations maps

Link types:

Action: L — Leads to | N — Next | I — Influences

Description: P — Part | T — Type | C — Characteristic

Elaboration: E — Example | Co — Comment | A — Analogy

Personal:

Comments about map:

Identification information:

How useful was this map: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Freestyle mapping sheet

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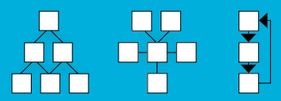

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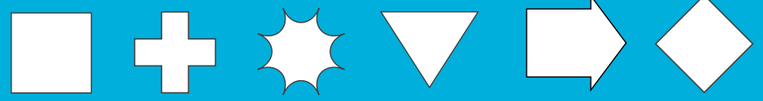

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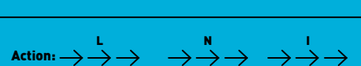

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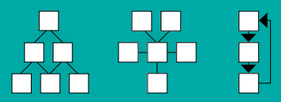

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Acknowledgements
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A wide range of node-link mapping materials are available for free at **www.ibr.tcu.edu**

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This manual is a development of material first produced by Texas Institute of Behavioral Research at TCU, Fort Worth (www.ibr.tcu.edu). TCU has granted the National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse permission to adapt their material for the purpose of producing and publishing this pack.

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