

## Let's Practise: 5Ps

Let's start with some definitions!

**Presenting issues:** The aspect of a client's presentation you are trying to understand/explain.

- Try to narrow it down to 1, and make it behavioural.

**Predisposing factors:** Factors that make the person *vulnerable* to developing the presenting problem (but that do not *cause* it).

**Precipitating factors:** Factors that *cause* the presenting problem to occur. There are 2 types of precipitating factor:

- Those that caused the presenting issue the very first time (distal). We don't always find this out.
- Those that cause an episode of the presenting issue now (proximal).

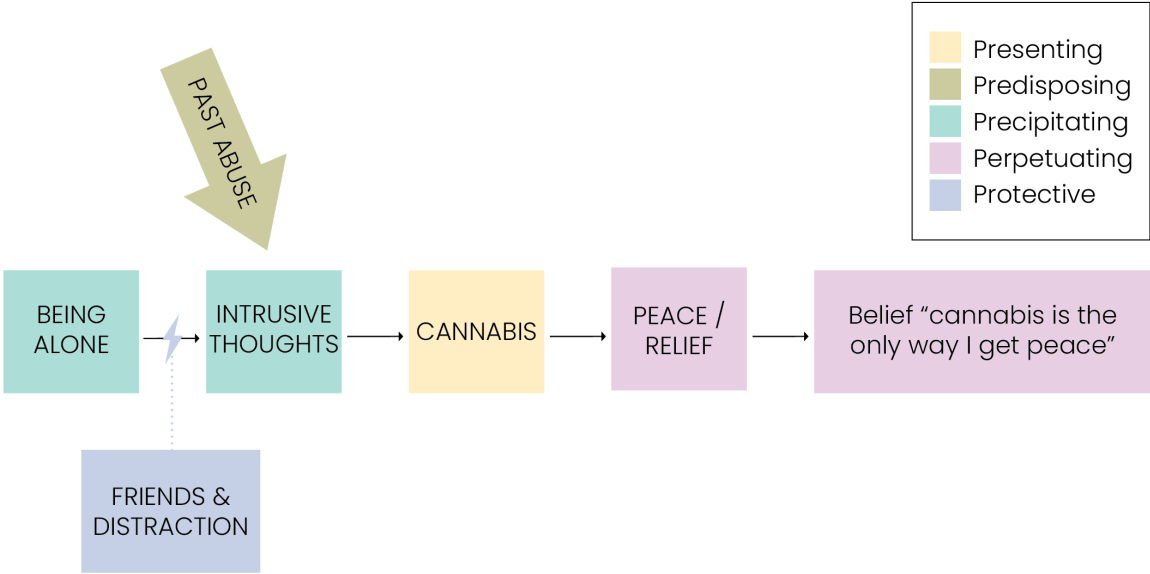
**Perpetuating factors:** Factors that keep the presenting problem going. Sometimes we can find these by asking "why hasn't the presenting problem gone away on its own?".

**Protective factors:** Factors that work in opposition to the presenting problem by making it occur less frequently or reduce its severity.

*What do I do if something seems like it fits in more than one P?*

- Make sure the presenting issue is clear
  - Writing a formulation is much easier if we start with a single presenting issue that is most pressing at the moment. If we are trying to explain too much at once, everything can get murky and blend together.
- Break down information into smaller chunks
  - Ask yourself whether information that is hard to categorise can be broken up to be understood separately. E.g., "cravings" can be hard to categorise (it could be precipitating or perpetuating), but breaking it up into withdrawal symptoms (precipitating) and neuroadaptation/tolerance (perpetuating) makes this simpler.
- Consider the different functions a single factor might serve
  - A single factor might impact the person in multiple ways. In this case, think about the functions, not just the factors. E.g., children may both motivate the person to make positive change (protective) and also be a source of stress which cues substance use (precipitating).
- Pick the "most right" option, and come back later to see if this needs to be changed.
  - Remember, a formulation is always a hypothesis that can be tested and changed!

Identifying the **relationship between factors** and articulating how these form **self-reinforcing** cycles is the key to developing high quality, useful formulations. Here's what this might look like visually:



## Meet Jude

Jude is a 48-year-old woman who works in a call centre handling customer complaints. Her charismatic and outgoing nature has helped her manage difficult callers and build many friendships in the past. Lately, Jude has started to feel that her alcohol use is causing her problems.

In the past three weeks, Jude was sent home twice for smelling of alcohol at work. Since being moved from the morning shift to the afternoon shift at work, Jude has needed to drink before starting her shift. If she doesn't, her headaches, nausea, and shakiness interfere with her ability to focus and function at work. She's received a formal warning and is concerned about being fired. The stress of this fear also triggers more drinking. Jude wants to keep her job and feels that her boss doesn't understand she needs to drink before work in order to perform better.

Jude began drinking socially in her 20s. At this time, she was known as the life of the party and her outgoing personality enabled her to quickly make friends with new people in social environments. As her close friends settled down and became less available, Jude continued going out to pubs and clubs alone. As she has gotten older, Jude has felt out of place at the venues she used to frequent and now mostly stays home (although she misses the social interaction that came with going out). When Jude began staying at home, she maintained her previous level of drinking as a way to continue having fun despite the quieter lifestyle. Over time, she began drinking earlier in the day, and now drinks whenever she's not working to fill stretches of time that aren't occupied with other activities. Jude used to delay her first drink until the afternoon, but this is getting harder to do.

Outside of work, Jude spends most weekends doing housework or watching TV. The busy nature of her work has prevented her from forming close workplace relationships. Her old friends are only available to catch up for dinner and drinks once every few months, however, they may be available for more low-key catch ups once every 3 or 4 weeks. A nearby RSL now offers a courtesy bus, and Jude is considering going there to socialise, though she's concerned that she'll drink more at the RSL and that it will cost her more money.

Jude's retelling of her childhood suggests it was largely normative. She reports no history of trauma or family substance use. Her academic performance was average, but she enjoyed socialising with friends at school. She reported disliking school holidays because, ever since she can remember, she has felt lonely when by herself and bored during unstructured time.