

How to support families and friends with a loved one using methamphetamine

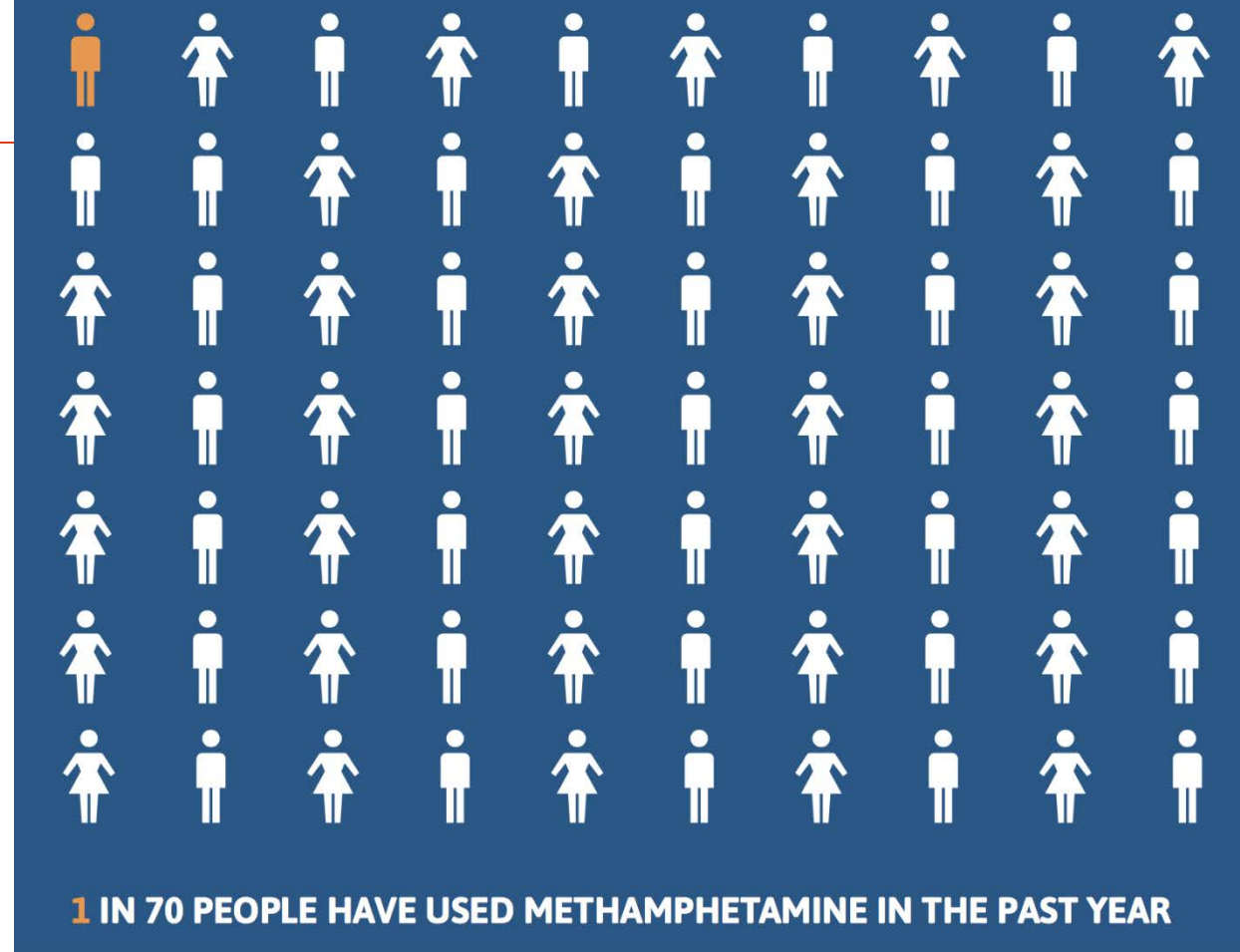
A/Prof Frances Kay-Lambkin

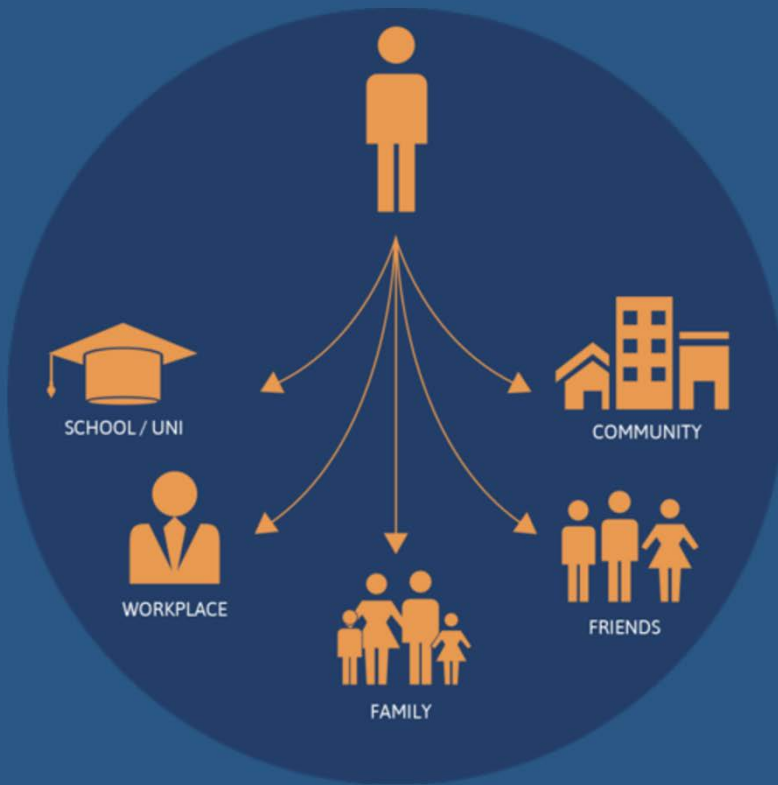
Financial conflicts

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The program and workforce development work described today is supported by a contract with the Australian Government Department of Health.

<https://cracksintheice.org.au>





...BUT THE IMPACT CAN BE MUCH GREATER

<https://cracksintheice.org.au>

“The first priority must be supporting families, workers and communities to better respond to people affected by ice.”

Final Report of the National Ice Taskforce, 2015



(1) Systematic review of the literature

- Identify effective evidence-based interventions for family and other caregivers of a person with methamphetamine use.
- PROSPERO database of registered systematic reviews (registration number: CRD42017056304). PROSPERO records can be accessed at <http://www.crd.york.ac.uk/PROSPERO>.

(1) Systematic review of the literature

- AFFM (e.g. family, family member, significant other, spouse, wife, husband, sibling, friend, and caregiver),
- Substance of use (e.g. methamphetamine, other stimulants, other non-stimulant substances of abuse), and
- Psychosocial intervention (e.g. psychosocial intervention/treatment/therapy/support, psychological intervention/therapy/treatment/support, counselling, self-help, and bibliotherapy).

What does the evidence suggest helps?

- BEST – drug education (Bamberg et al., 2008).
- Coping skills, self-evaluation and goal setting, positive self-esteem, relationship skills, and communication skills (Gance-Cleveland, 2004).
- Stepping stones - information sessions, participant sharing, development of effective coping, and a more hopeful and enjoyable life regardless of the substance user's actions (Gethin et al., 2016).
- Family and Friends Program education about drug use and how substance abuse affects family members (Platter, 2011).
- Web-based coping skills training for women whose partners have an alcohol use disorder - StopSpinningMyWheels.org, a 24-session, self-paced, online skill training (Rychtarik et al., 2015).

What does the evidence suggest helps?

- Overcoming family challenges, managing negative emotion, and improving coping skills (Li et al., 2014).
- Provision of information, individual coping skills training and group support (Hansson et al., 2004).
- CHES - Comprehensive Health Enhancement Support System - providing information, communication, and coaching and training, including identifying and overcoming obstacles (Gustafson et al., 2012).
- Moving Parents and Children Together (M-PACT) - group theory, attachment theory, motivational interviewing, cognitive behavioural therapy and person-centred ways of working, improving relationships, exploring communication (Templeton, 2014).

The 5-Step Method

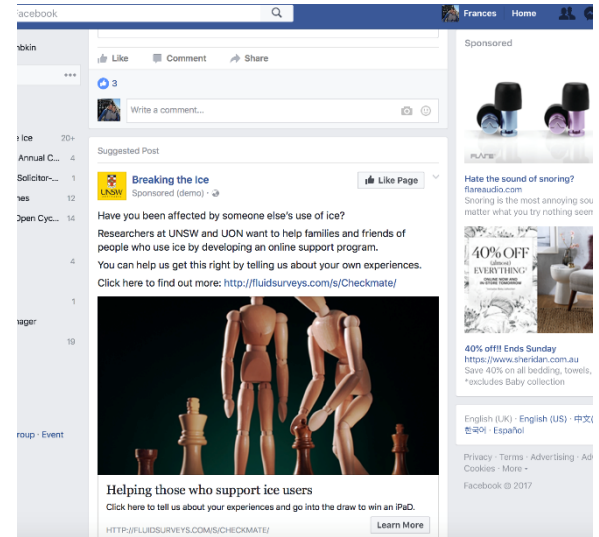
- A number of studies e.g. Aricidiacono et al., 2007; Aricidiacono et al., 2009; Copello et al., 2009; Ibanga, 2010; Orford et al., 2007; Velleman et al., 2008; Velleman et al., 2011).
- The five steps are: listening to the family member and learning about their problems; providing advice and information; exploring responses and coping mechanisms; exploring the family member's available social support networks; and clarifying if further help is needed.

What about for crystal methamphetamine?

- Nothing identified in the literature to specifically support families and friends of people using 'ice'.
- Principles of supporting family members and friends will still apply...but how?

(2) Quantitative online survey

- Open ended questions to 'tell the story'.
- Family Member Questionnaire – short form*.
- Recruitment via Facebook.



*Orford, J., et al. (2005). *Addiction*, 100, 1611-1624.

*Orford, J., et al. (2010). *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*, 17(S1): 75–85.

(2) Quantitative online survey

- 39 completed the survey.
 - 31 were female.
 - Average age of 44 years (range 18-64 years).
 - Mothers (n=18), partners (n=10), siblings (n=4), and the remainder were other relatives or friends. No fathers completed the survey.
 - Crystal methamphetamine did not always just affect one member in a network, with ten respondents indicating there were other family members or friends using ice.

(3) Qualitative interviews

- Volunteer at the end of the online survey.
- 17 interviews were completed.
 - 9 were mothers, the rest included siblings, fiancé, husband, brother, friend, flatmate and in-law.
- Interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes in length.
- More in-depth questions about coping, support, program needs.

What did we find...?

What concerns you about xx's ice use?

“The erratic behaviour and what she 'thinks' is going on. Her withdrawal from her friends and family and her preference to engage with just her Facebook followers who have no idea what she is doing.”

“The addiction turns Bella from an honest, reliable person to a liar and thief. I know that she loves and needs me but it causes her to say and do things that could potentially destroy our relationship.”



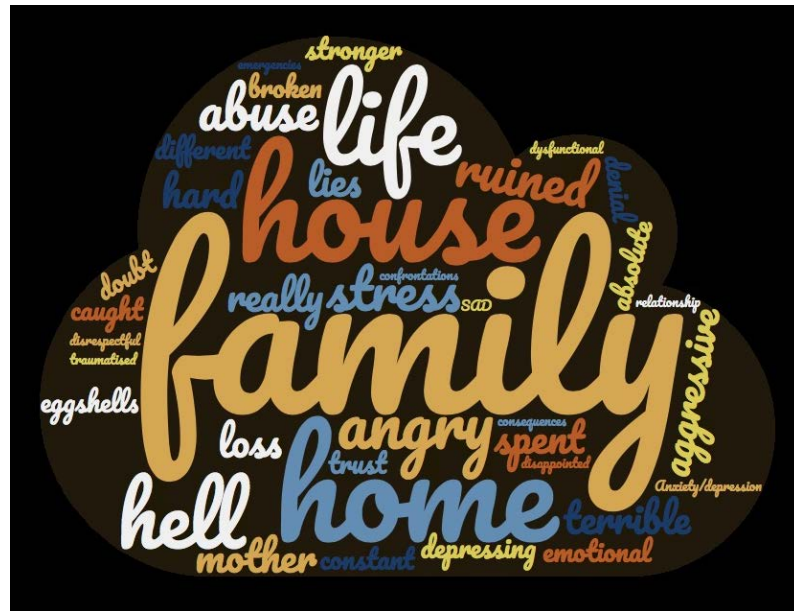
What do you think is the real problem for xx?

- The lack of self worth from not being able to secure a job and health issues.
- Lack of sense of belonging.
- Psychological reasons underneath their ice use.
- Genuine belief that it helps.
- Accepting life's challenges.

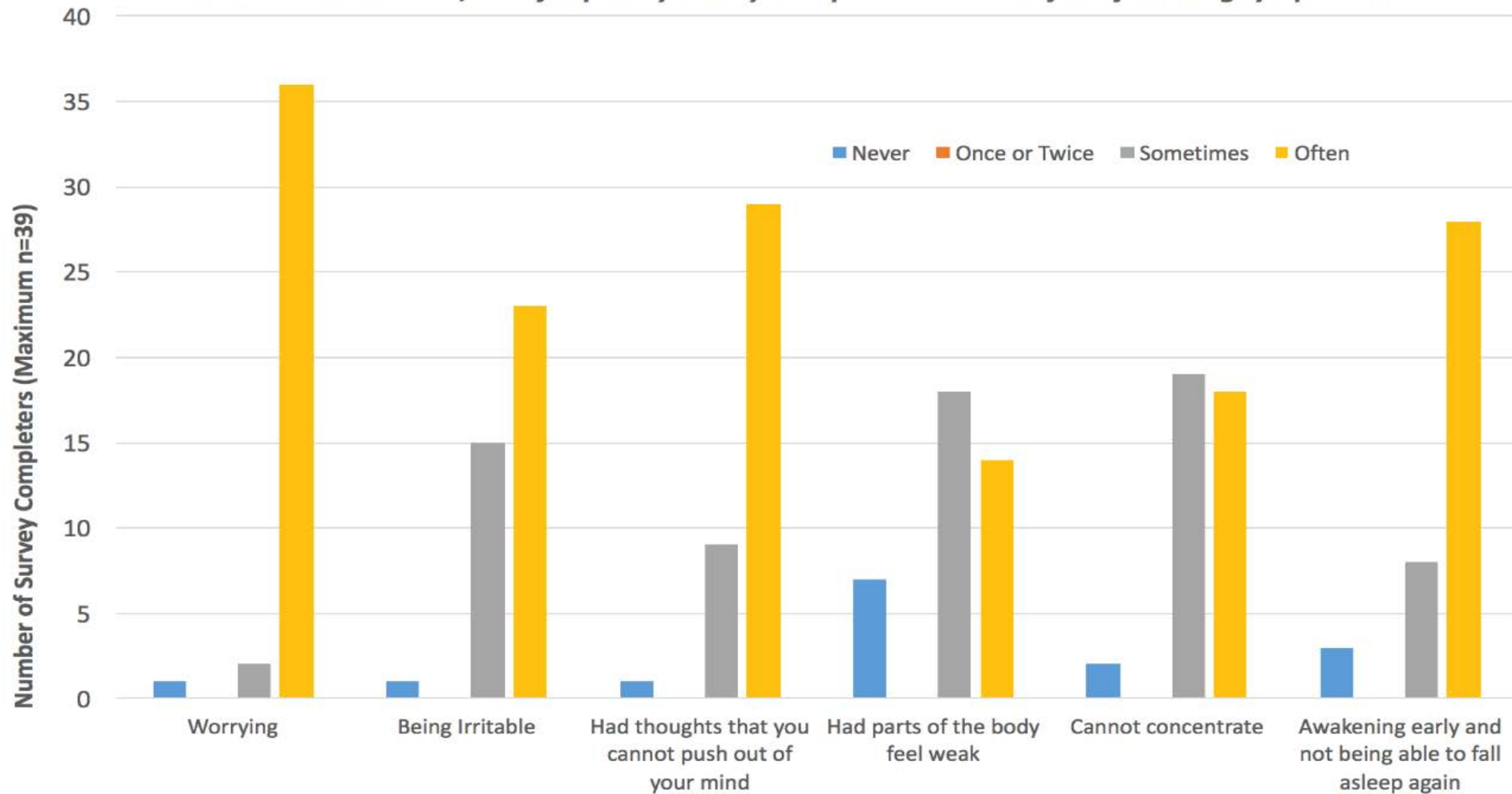
What has life been like for you?

"I constantly feel like I am not doing enough. I get angry at myself and my parents for not doing enough and making me feel like I am the only one trying to help her. I get angry at the mental health and drug and alcohol system for being such an absolute failure and offering nothing practical."

"A living hell for every member of the family and extended family. You can not discuss this with anyone else as people judge."



In the last 3 months, how frequently have you experienced each of the following symptoms?



“I’m always on edge hoping that she is Okay. It’s difficult to have boundaries with my time, if she wants me to drive to her house and sit with her, or even just go shopping with her, I feel that I have to cancel my plans because if I’m not there for her whenever she needs me I’m afraid that she will turn to her friends on ice.”

Do you think your situation could be improved?

“I really don’t know. After all these years of trying to find answers I do not feel very hopeful. It is such a lonely journey because of the shame and embarrassment.”

“I would be much more effective carer if I got training.”



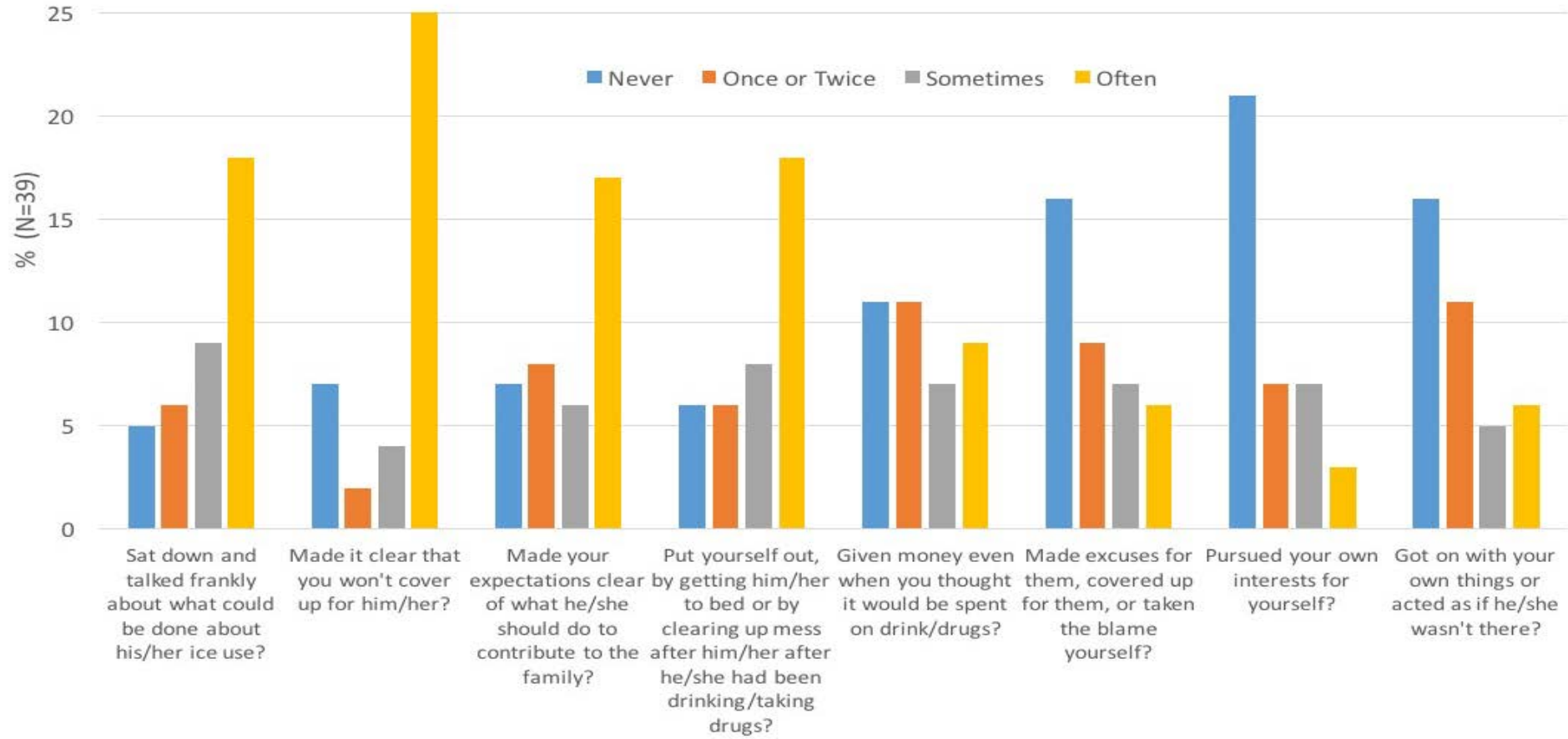
Do you think YOU could be helped in this situation?

“It would have been nice to have someone to talk to about what was going on. Someone who could give me strategies to help cope and to help the person with the addiction.”

“Easier to access support services.”

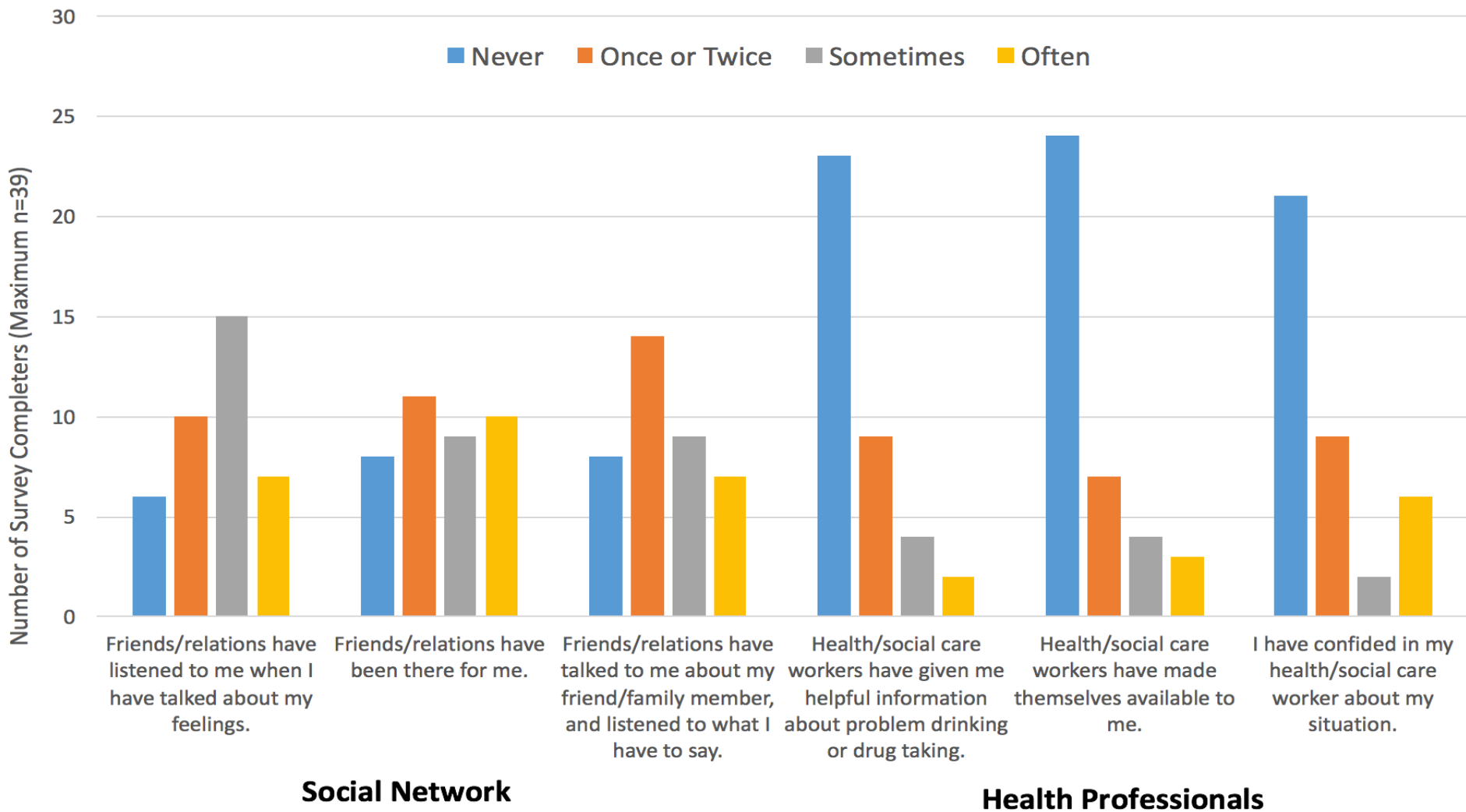
“I think an online support group would be good as could be anonymous and share strategies. It's hard to talk about your son's ice addiction to family friends and colleagues or explain the exhaustion and grief you feel.”

How have you attempted to cope?



How have you attempted to cope?

“My stability is everything to him, right or wrong it is what it is, when I have not coped with everything going on, it affects things greatly.”



Support...

“All wiped their hands of it.”

“I got help when it became a mental illness.”

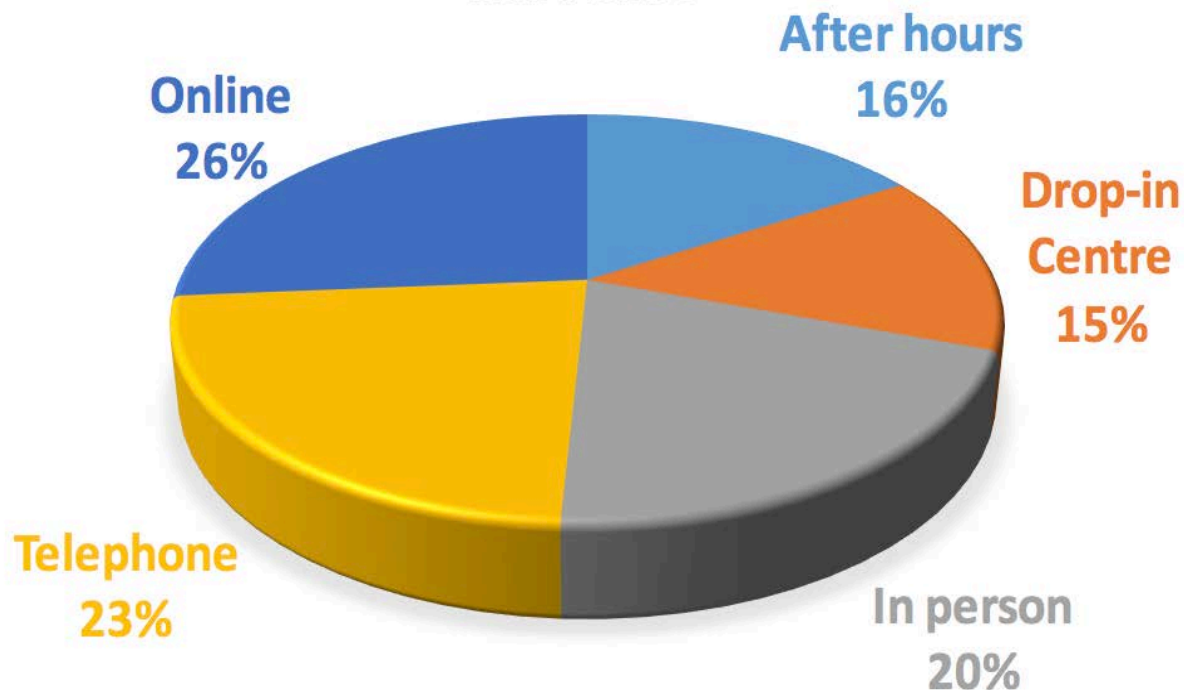
“Never sought help for myself, only my son.”

“People become exhausted and can’t continue to help.”

“I stopped calling people, and became selective in involving family, because of the toll on the family.”

“I’ve lost contact with friends over the years.”

WHERE (HOW, WHEN) WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE SUPPORT?



What do we do with all of this ... ?

Information...

“Any information is good information so as much as you could possibly get but I don’t know that somebody giving you a stack of literature is the way to go about it. You need to have one on one or group sessions to be able to understand exactly how this may affect because this, like any other drug, it will affect different people in different ways so I think a tremendous amount of information out there is a must do.”

“I am a fairly educated person and I felt very confused about the whole system so I thought it’s not an easy system at all....”



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So, from that very moment that something happened my focus was how can I help other people because there has got to be something good that comes out of a tragedy so you've got to look. I would not hesitate to be, and as I said, I don't know how much good I am."

"Well maybe it can help other people and maybe more people doing these surveys can get better community support. I honestly believe its community support that's needed, so not just for people like me that are caring for people but the kids themselves, or for young people themselves who are using drugs. You know, it should be in the health system

“Live with it, not in it.”



**CONCERNED ABOUT
SOMEONE USING ICE?**

**STARTING THE
CONVERSATION**



**HOW TO PROTECT
YOURSELF AND
OTHERS**

**WHAT TYPE OF HELP IS
AVAILABLE?**

A support program for families and friends of loved ones using crystal methamphetamine

- Story telling component.
- Stories and quotes from people with similar experiences.
- Lifestyle and relationships support.
- Values-based approach.
- Mindfulness, CBT, behavioural activation, motivation.

Scoping and Training Workforces for Pilot Testing of online support program

- Consistent with 5-Step approach to supporting affected family members and friends.
- Train willing workforces in the 5-Step method, and integration of the online support program.
 - Peer workforces, lay workforces, mental health workforces, alcohol/other drug workforces.



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Thank you

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Find out more at:

www.comorbidity.edu.au

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Next Webinar: Thursday 16th November, 11am (NSW time)

Effects of ice on the brain and body, and implications for responding

A/Prof Nicole Lee

Register

here: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7980895694567892993>



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