

Working Together to Manage Methamphetamine Use and Mental Health Issues

Barry is a 36 year old man who has been working as a truck driver in regional NSW since he was in his mid-twenties. He married his high school sweetheart Jess 14 years ago and is their family's sole income earner. They have a 13 year old son, a 10 year old daughter, and recently found out, quite unexpectedly, they have another baby on the way. While they are both happy about the impending arrival, money is a worry, especially as they are trying to save for their first home. Barry has not been socialising with his friends and often feels down, which is exacerbated by the many hours he spends by himself driving.

With the increased stress to provide for his family, Barry decides to tamper with his log books so he can earn more by working longer hours. It's common knowledge in the company that the bosses turn a blind eye to the practice and Barry knows another driver, Tom, well enough to ask how to go about it without getting caught. Tom is quick to suggest using a "pick me up" to keep Barry alert, "after all mate, if you're driving those extra hours, you wanna be on your toes". He assures Barry that he will know his limits "don't worry about it mate, you'll know when you have had enough" and Barry is confident he'll be able to keep it under control. Tom gives him some pills (speed) to use straight away. Barry finds it really helps him get through the additional long haul trips, however after taking the pills for a while he feels he needs something a bit extra. He talks to Tom again who suggests he smokes some crystal methamphetamine (ice). Barry finds this improves his levels of concentration, attention and memory.

After some months Barry notices he's using ice more often, from only a few times a week when he felt tired from work to feeling the need to smoke it every day. He's also finding it hard to sleep and fatigue sets in quickly when he is on the road. Jess, has talked to him about how irritable he's become. "I know it's a bit tough at the moment with the new baby coming and you working all hours to help us make ends meet," she says, "but it's not worth your health. I think you need to slow down. We'll be alright. We always manage to get through." But as time goes on Jess becomes more concerned about his behaviour - especially around the children, in particular with their son who is really pushing the boundaries with his parents. After months of pleading with him to talk to her about what's wrong, and the baby's due date fast approaching, she gives him an ultimatum - go to see someone or she would leave him and take the children.

With this on his mind, during a routine long haul trip Barry pulls over to a petrol station for a short break and to smoke a pipe. Only ten minutes later he is speeding his way through a small town and runs a red light. A car with the green light screeches to a halt just in enough time that he doesn't hit them, but as he sails past he sees the a very shaken young women in the front seat lean over the back to comfort a crying baby.

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Barry has a quick flash to his own family in the car but is still too high to fully comprehend the situation. Once back home and on a couple days break, he becomes increasingly irritated as he remembers the near miss and becomes paranoid the police will come knocking about the incident.

Things come to a head at home and after a long drawn out screaming match with Jess, Barry agrees to go see their family GP.

Jess waits in reception as Barry strides into the GP's consulting room. At the appointment Barry confesses *"I used to do a few recreational drugs in high school but nothing hard-core until recently I started using ice so I can work longer hours to earn more"*. He confides that he has previously felt very down but never like now.

He says, *"I thought I'd know my limits and stay in control but I find I need it more and more, to the point where it is now eating into the extra money I'm making"*. Barry explains that Jess is worried about his mood swings, particularly around their adolescent son, who he admits to recently nearly coming to blows with.

He says that he wants to stop using ice as he doesn't want to lose his family or job but doesn't know where to begin.