

Checking alcohol & drugs

Using alcohol or other drugs to 'self-medicate' stress and emotional problems is a widely accepted part of student (and wider) culture, but can often cause problems. Realistic strategies for addressing problematic alcohol and drug use are an important strategy for combating depression.

This worksheet will help you identify and plan to address any problematic alcohol and drug issues which may be contributing to your depression.

1. Keep an alcohol & drugs diary

Use the Daily Routines Diary to keep a record of your daily alcohol and drug consumption, including caffeine and nicotine, being honest with yourself about units and quantities. Record notes or comments relating to your thoughts or mood associated with or following this. Keep the diary for at least a week in the first instance.

Consider:

Read the info on the 'Checking alcohol and drugs' page and consider its relevance to you in relation to the record you have kept. What do you notice about your alcohol and drug consumption? Do you notice any patterns relating to your mood? How much do you spend a week on alcohol and drugs? What are the pros and cons of your alcohol and drug use? Would you be able to admit it to yourself if there was a problem with your alcohol and drug use? What would it take to show you if there was a problem? Is it likely that alcohol and/or drugs are contributing to your depression in any way?

My alcohol & drugs evaluation summary:


Brainstorm:

If your evaluation indicates that changes to your alcohol and drug use would be helpful, then what changes do you need to make? What would be the quickest and easiest change you could make? What would be a first step? Whose help could you call on for putting these ideas into practice?

My ideas for cutting down alcohol and/or drugs:

(eg. designating most week nights as alcohol free nights, with one 'alcohol pass' to join in with social occasions that come up; scheduling a different kind of social activity, like a sports club, for one or two evenings; on nights out using tactics like making every other drink a soft drink, assigning yourself as the designated driver, giving yourself a restricted cash budget etc; building up a new social group if your social networks are very drug or alcohol dependent)

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- _____



***"You can start drugs naively, because it's part of the hip scene or whatever, but it's all really about comfort, soothing your pain – self-medication, basically. I found that marijuana made the depression worse. I haven't used any drugs now for three years. It feels so good to wake up in the morning and be clear headed and focused."* – Tonya**



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2. My alcohol & drugs plan:

Decide which idea on your list would be the easiest to put into practice. Write an intention statement to help you plan what, how, when, and where you will do so.

Example:

I will ___ have at least 4 alcohol free nights each week.

Things I need to change/do to give me the best of chance of sticking to this plan:

___ Tell my friends that's what I'm going to do and ask them to support me ___
 ___ Sign up to the badminton club and go to the club night on a Wednesday, instead of going to the pub ___
 ___ Give myself a strict alcohol budget for the week, so even if I go out with everyone else on an extra night I'll need to stick to cheaper soft drinks ___

My alcohol & drugs intention statement:

I will _____ (what)
 _____ (when)
 _____ (where)
 _____ (how/long)

Things I need to change/do to give me the best of chance of sticking to this plan:

3. Evaluation

Don't set yourself unrealistic goals. Aim to cut down and moderate your alcohol and drug use. If you find that this is too difficult, then consider seeking professional help. Use the diary to check your progress after a while.

