



Welcome to the **Positive Choices Webinar Series**

positivechoices.org.au



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Australian Government
Department of Health
and Aged Care



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY
—
Matilda Centre



Acknowledgement of country

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, water and community. I am currently on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and pay my respects to Elders, past and present. I further acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which you are and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

I would also like to acknowledge any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us for the webinar today.

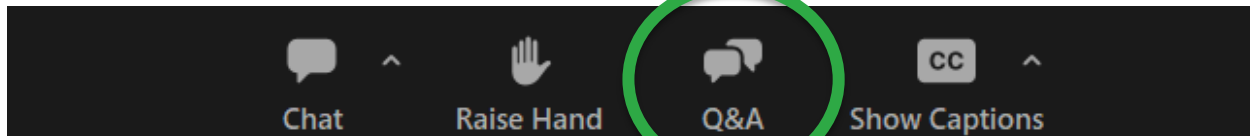


Housekeeping

1 Listen only mode.

2 This webinar is being recorded and will be made available on the Positive Choices website.

3 We will have a Q&A session at the end of the webinar. Please add questions to the Q&A box available.





What is Positive Choices?

positivechoices.org.au



Teachers & Schools

Evidence-based teaching programs and activities, webinars for teachers, and resources for your students



Parents & Families

Parenting advice and information to help you talk to your children about drugs and alcohol



Students

Facts, advice and interactive tools to help you find out information about drugs and alcohol and make positive choices



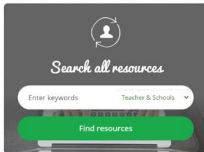
Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Peoples

Evidence based drug education resources for individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse communities



Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples

A collection of culturally appropriate resources based on research and consultation with people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities



- Central access point for trustworthy, up-to-date drug and alcohol information and educational resources.
- Developed by the Matilda Centre in consultation with teachers, parents and students. Funded by Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.
- Learning resources, factsheets, videos, webinars and games to engage young people with drug education.
- Access to classroom-based drug prevention programs that are proven to reduced drug-related harms.



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Anxiety and drinking: how to support teens and prevent the anxiety-alcohol cycle

Dr Katrina Prior, Research Fellow

Dr Lexine Stapinski, Associate Professor

Laura Wade, Research Assistant

The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, the University of Sydney

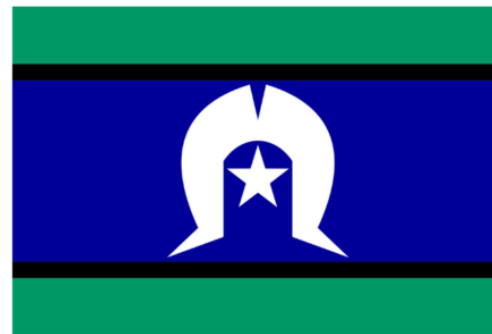
26th March 2024



Anxiety and drinking: how to support teens and prevent the anxiety-alcohol cycle

Acknowledgment of Country

I would like to begin by acknowledging and paying respects to the traditional owners of the land on which we are located, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. It is upon their ancestral lands that the University of Sydney is built. I would like to pay my respect to the traditional owners of lands across the country and from where everyone is joining us today.

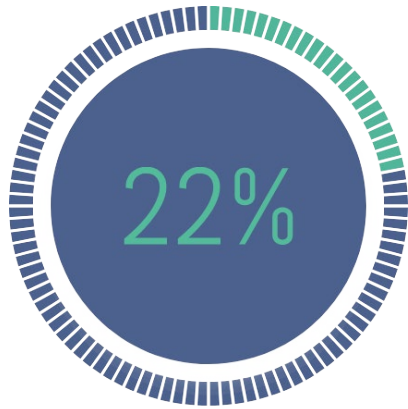




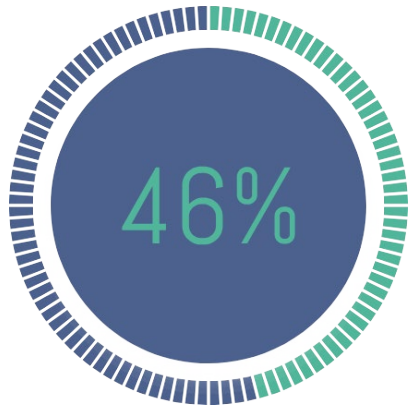
Outline

- Alcohol use patterns in teens
- What is the link between anxiety and alcohol use?
- How to help when you're worried about a teen
- Preparing for transition to adulthood
- Support options

How common is alcohol use in teens?



Of students aged 12-17 drank alcohol in the past month (2022/2023)



almost half of these students engaged in binge drinking (drinking 5+ drinks on a single occasion) in the past month.

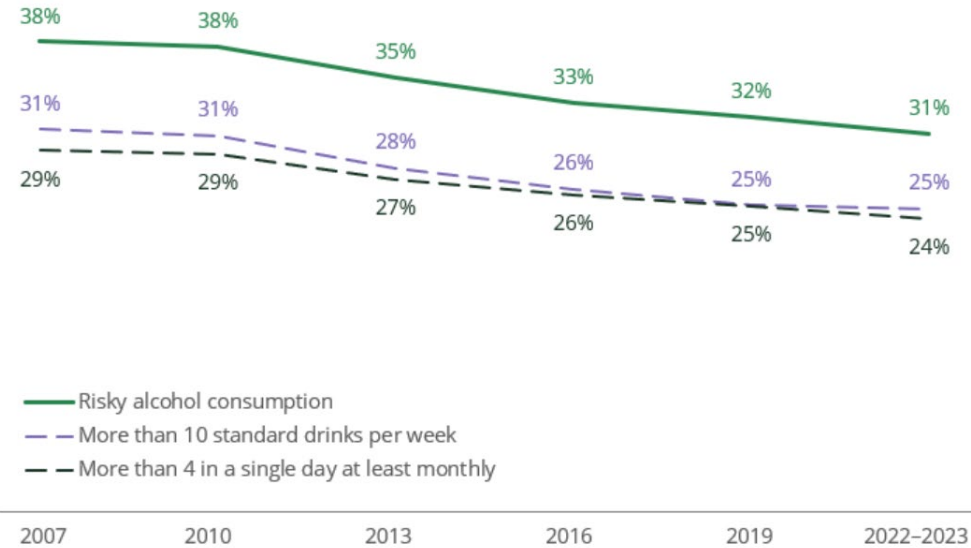
Under 18 years of age, The National Health and Medical Research Council recommends no alcohol at all.

(Source: Australian Secondary School Students Alcohol and Drug Survey, [2023](#)) (National Health and Medical Research Council, [2020](#))

Positive changes..

(Source: National Drug Strategy Household Survey, [2023](#))

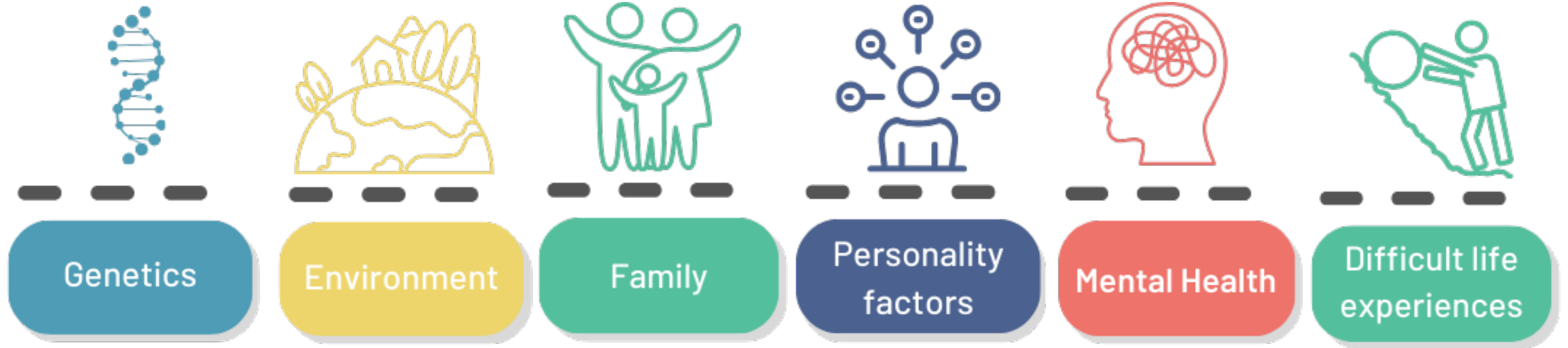
In 2022–2023, the percentage of 14–17-year-olds who engaged in binge drinking in the past month dropped to 5.5%, from 9.5% in 2019.



The percentage of 14–17-year-olds who drank alcohol in the past year declined significantly over time, from 69% in 2001 to 31% in 2022–2023.

However, consumption has been steady since 2016.

Risk factors for alcohol use



How can we prevent harm from alcohol use?

Educate & Communicate

- Calmly communicate expectations and reasons
- Correct common myths – eg “everyone is doing it”
- Non-judgemental, honest communication – leave the door open

Role Modelling

- Model safe & health consumption of alcohol
- Avoid normalising excessive alcohol use

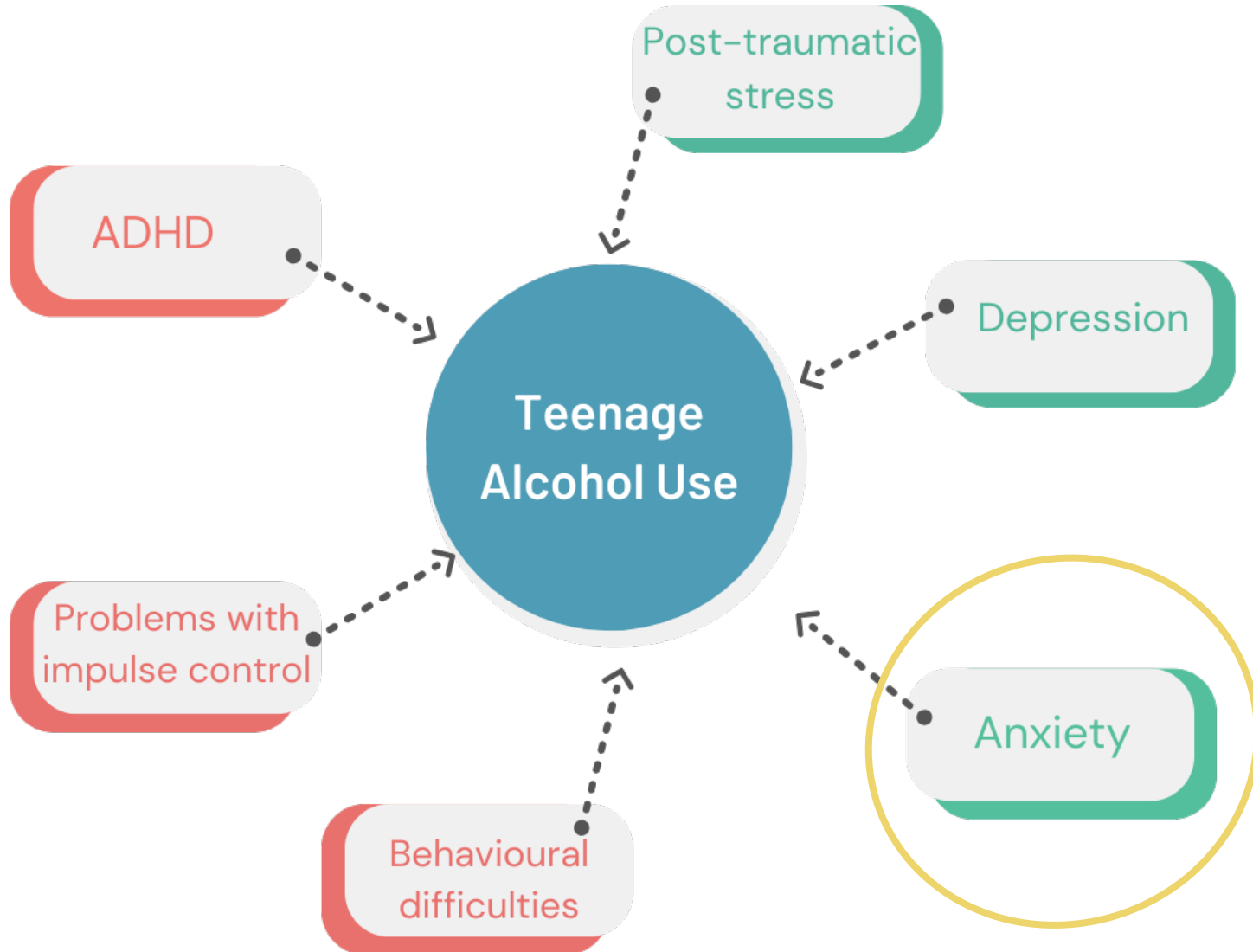
Supply & Monitoring

- Do not supply alcohol
- Stay connected, know teen’s friends and their parents

Understand & address reasons for use

Reduce risk

How can we prevent harm from alcohol use?



- Mental health is an important predictor of teen alcohol use
 - We can help by encouraging teens to seek effective support if they are experiencing anxiety or other mental health concerns



Outline

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Is there a link between anxiety and alcohol use?



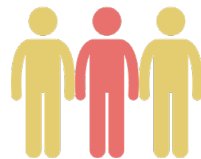
Anxiety in early adolescence can be protective against alcohol use

(Fröjd et al; 2011)

In later adolescent/young adulthood years, anxiety is often associated with more alcohol use (Conway et al, 2016)

Many young people drink alcohol to cope with emotional symptoms, such as anxiety

1 in 3



people with an anxiety disorder drink alcohol due to its **real or perceived anxiety-reducing effects**

(Stapinski et al., 2016; Bolton et al., 2006)

Reliance on alcohol for anxiety management puts young people at

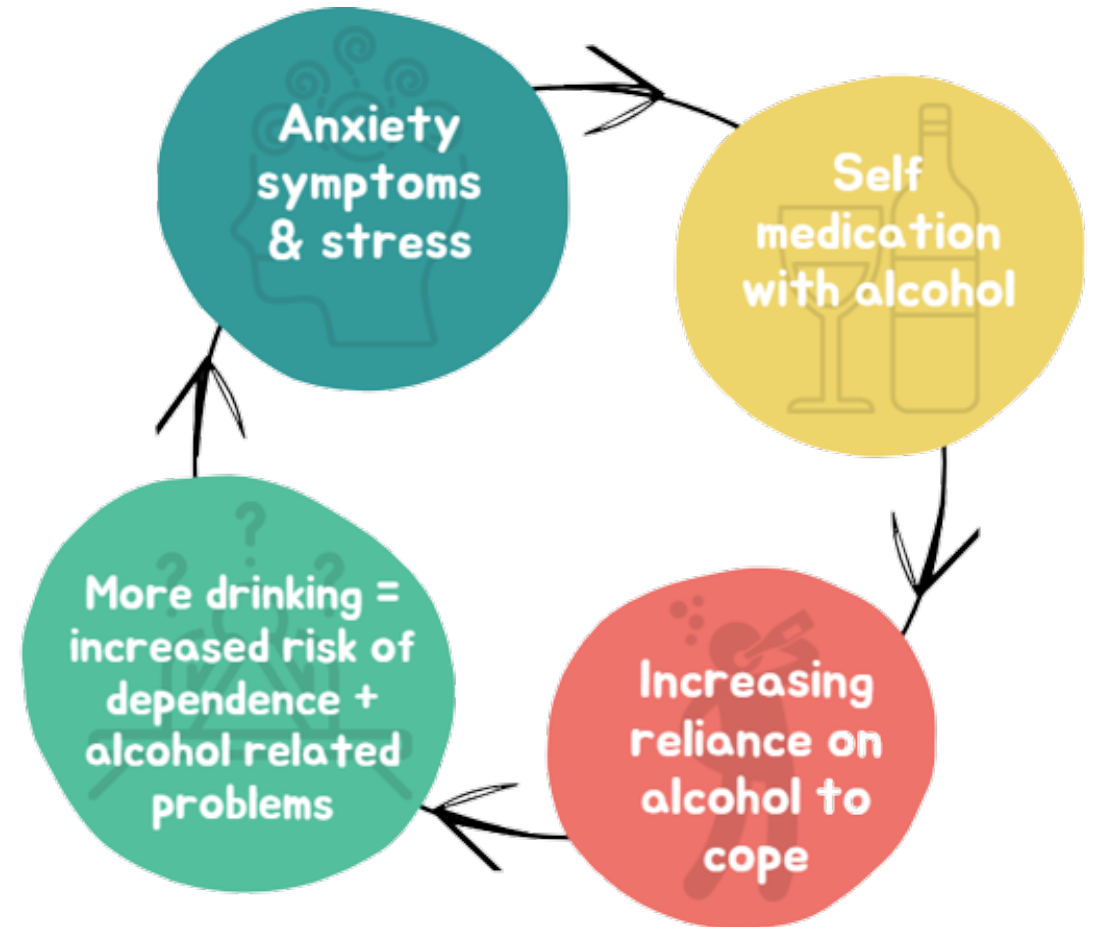
6 times

the risk of developing an alcohol use disorder later in life

(Crum et al., 2013).

Vicious cycle of anxiety and alcohol use

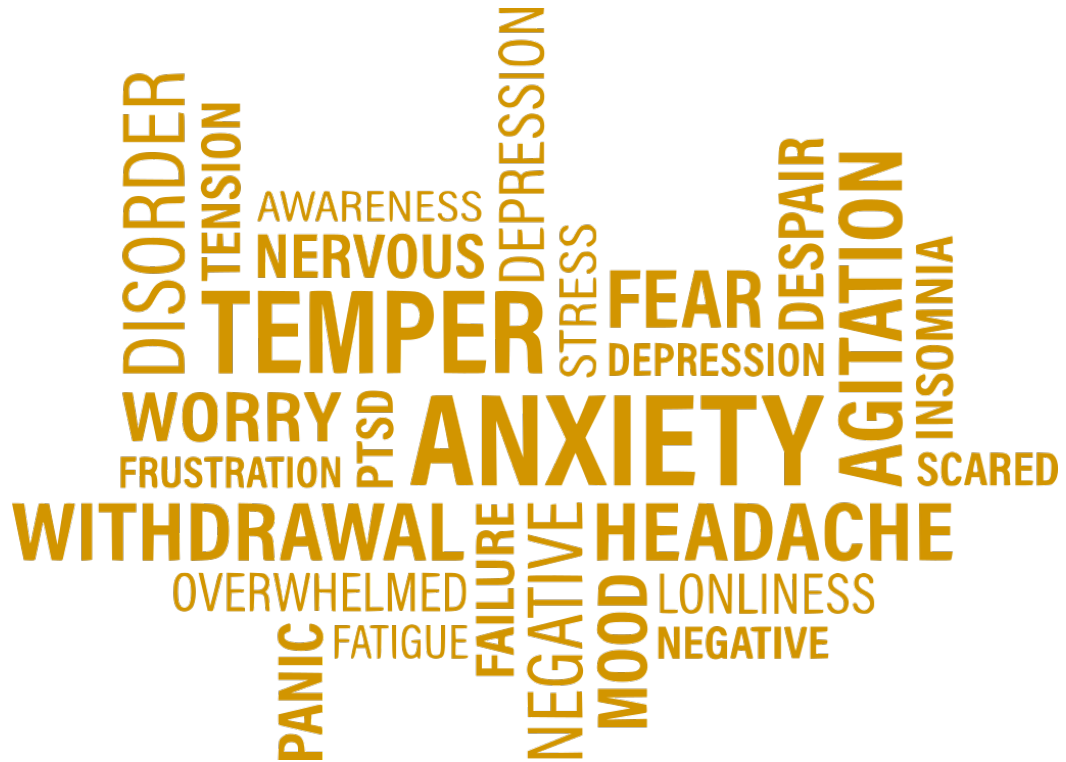
When alcohol is used to cope with anxiety, they maintain and exacerbate one another in a vicious cycle:



Given the link between anxiety and drinking, we can help to prevent alcohol problems by helping teens develop healthy coping strategies



How common is anxiety?



1 in 6 Australians

experience anxiety at a level that causes them to have problems in their day-to-day lives



1 in 3

people aged 16-24 years experienced an anxiety disorder in the last 12 months

(National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, [2021-2022](#))

Common anxieties

**Social/
Being judged**



**Checking/
Making a mistake**



Panicky



Health



**Uncontrollable
worry**

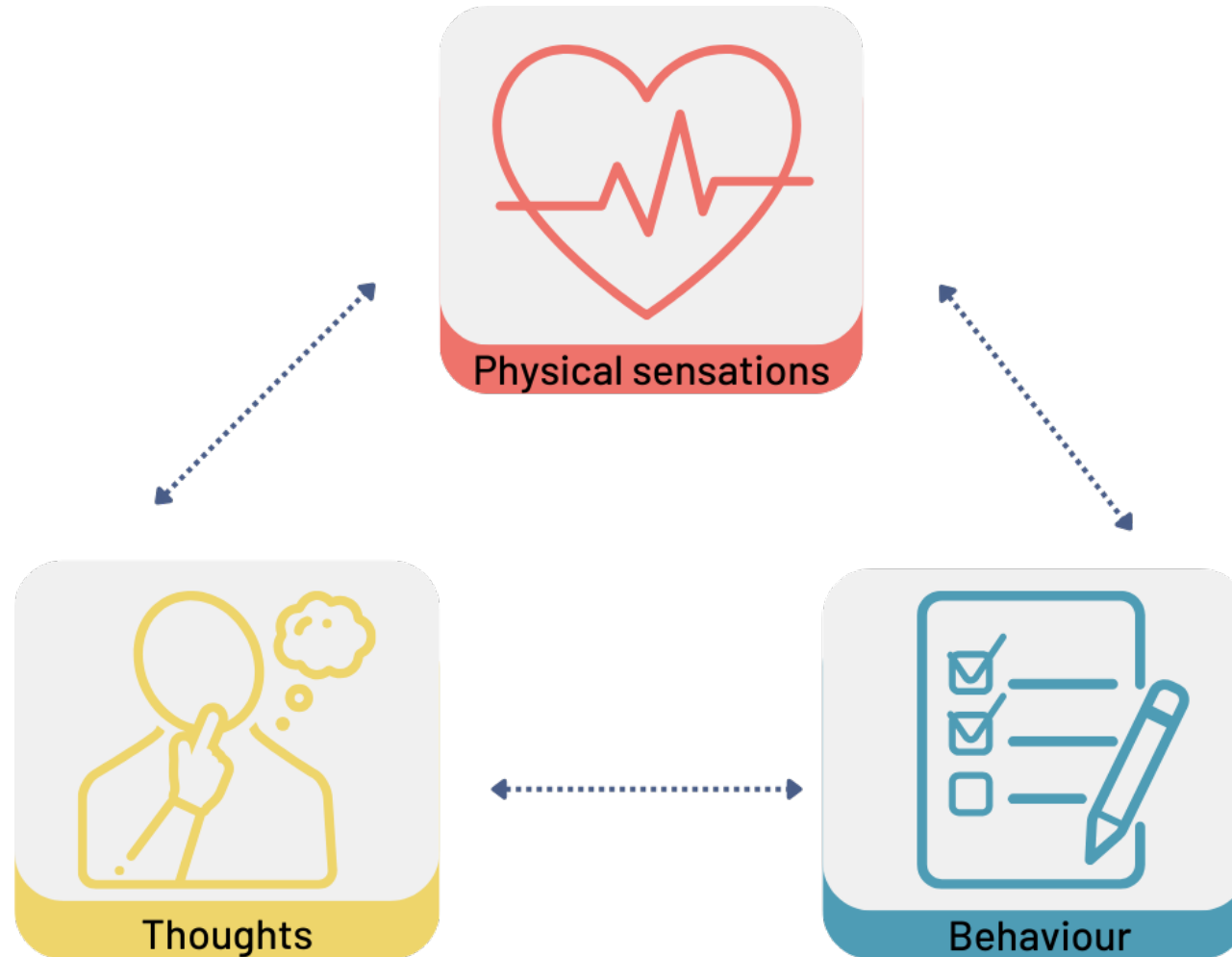


Managing stress and anxiety

- No matter what caused anxiety, there are strategies that we know to be effective for getting anxiety back under control.
- A large body of evidence has found that Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is effective for managing anxiety
 - CBT is a form of psychological treatment that involves strategies to target the physical symptoms, thoughts and behaviours that underlie anxiety



Recognising signs & symptoms of anxiety



Recognising signs & symptoms of anxiety



Physical sensations, eg:

- Pounding heart
- Trembling or shaking
- Muscle tension or headaches
- Restlessness, difficulty concentrating
- Shortness of breath
- Lack of appetite
- Feeling nauseous or “butterflies”
- Irritability
- Problems getting to sleep or early waking

Recognising signs & symptoms of anxiety



Thoughts, eg:

- “They’ll think I have nothing interesting to say”
- “I’m going to get this wrong “
- “The world is headed for destruction, there is nothing we can do”
- “I’m not good enough”
- “Something is wrong with me”

Recognising signs & symptoms of anxiety

Behaviors, eg:

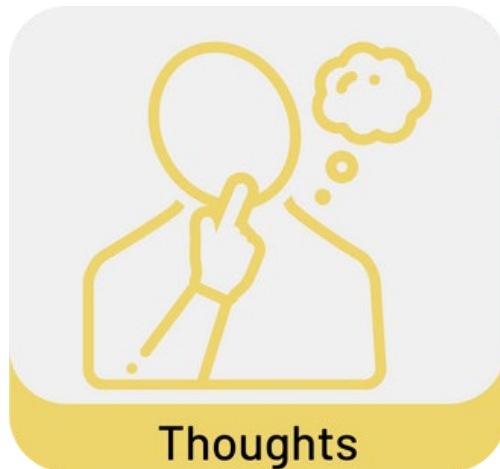
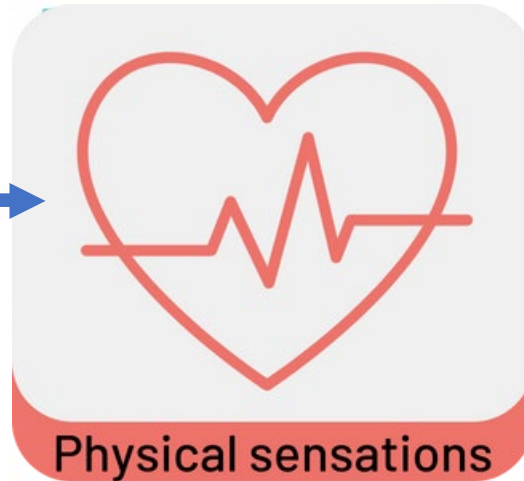
- Avoid particular situations or people
- Avoiding school or separation
- Behavioural outbursts
- Modifying behaviour, e.g to avoid attention
- Compliance/People-pleasing to avoid conflict/being disliked
- Excessive checking to avoid making a mistake



Supporting teens to cope with anxiety

Strategies to help, eg:

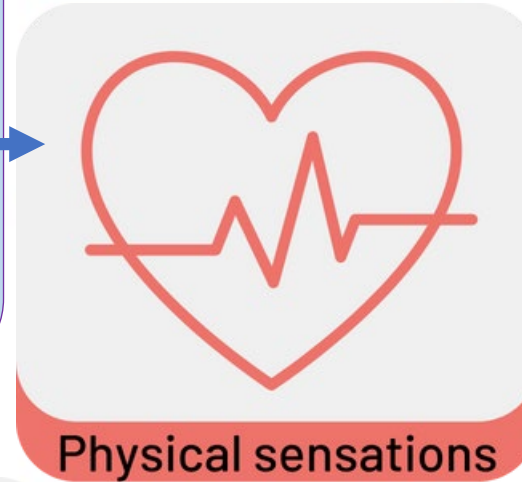
- Guided Relaxation
- Yoga
- Mindfulness
- Nutrition & Exercise



Supporting teens to cope with anxiety

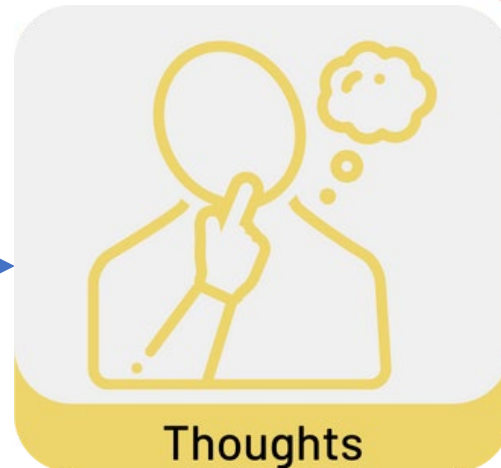
Strategies :

- Guided Relaxation
- Yoga
- Mindfulness
- Nutrition & Exercise



Strategies:

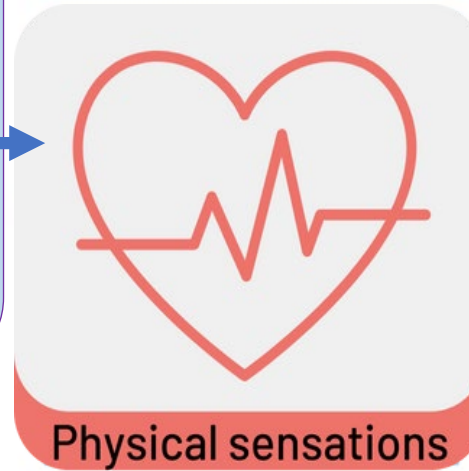
- Accept, but step back – thoughts are not facts
- Considering alternate ways to view the situation
- Talking it over – new perspectives



Supporting teens to cope with anxiety

Strategies :

- Guided Relaxation
- Yoga
- Mindfulness
- Nutrition & Exercise



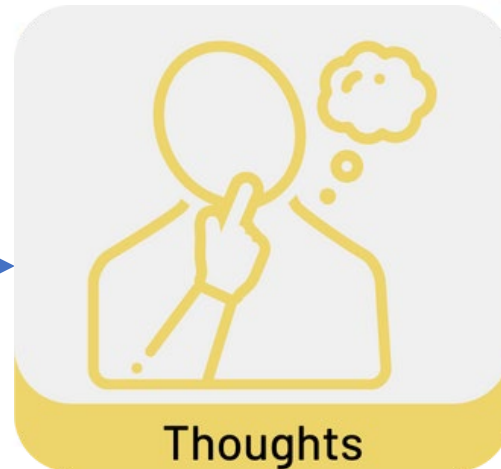
Strategies:

- Identify and deliberately shift patterns that contribute to anxiety
- Reduce avoidance



Strategies:

- Accept, but step back – thoughts are not facts
- Considering alternate ways to view the situation
- Talking it over – new perspectives





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How to help when you're worried about a teenager



Connect and Listen

- Avoiding jumping in with advice, listen first
- Communicate they are not alone

[Factsheet link](#)

How to help when you're worried about a teenager



Connect and Listen

- Avoiding jumping in with advice, listen first
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Understand reasons

- Explore reasons behind alcohol use, e.g. anxiety, to fit in, to sleep
- Explore any negatives

How to help when you're worried about a teenager



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Motivating Conversations

- What motivates them to make a change?
- Ambivalence is common
- Check-in again, multiple conversations

[Video link](#)

How to help when you're worried about a teenager



Connect and Listen

- Avoiding jumping in with advice, listen first
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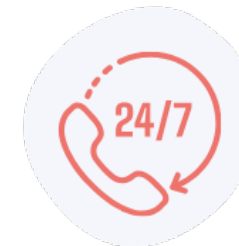
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Facilitate help-seeking

- Talking with a trusted adult/parent
- Link in with evidence-based support
- Be aware of school policies

Seeking professional support for anxiety/alcohol

School counsellor

Headspace (ages 12 – 25)

- [Online counselling/chat](#) or individual [sessions at Centres](#) (free/low cost)

Seeing a psychologist privately in community

- With, or without a [mental health care plan](#) (consult GP) to receive a fee rebate
- How to guide for organising a mental health care plan: <https://headspace.org.au/blog/how-to-get-a-mental-health-care-plan/>
- Don't need a referral or mental health care plan, but won't receive a rebate
- Identifying a psychologist:
 - <https://www.psychology.org.au/Find-a-Psychologist>
 - <http://www.findaclinicalpsychologist.org.au/>
- First Psychologist session: Get to know you, your issues --> treatment plan

Alcohol Counselling

- <https://www.counsellingonline.org.au/>
- 24/7 support, phone, chat, text support

Lifeline (24/7 crisis support), phone (13 11 14) or [chat](#)



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Key risk periods for anxiety and alcohol use problems

- ⦿ The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a key risk period for anxiety & drinking

Changes during the transition to adulthood:



New Job/
Study



New Living
Situations



New Relationships/
Friendships



Increasing
Responsibilities



Increasing Autonomy,
Alcohol Contexts

- ⦿ Multiple life changes can lead to increases in stress and anxiety symptoms
- ⦿ In parallel, young adulthood = Increased availability and accessibility of alcohol
- ⦿ Almost **1 in 3** young adults consume alcohol at very high-risk levels

What are the reasons behind alcohol use?



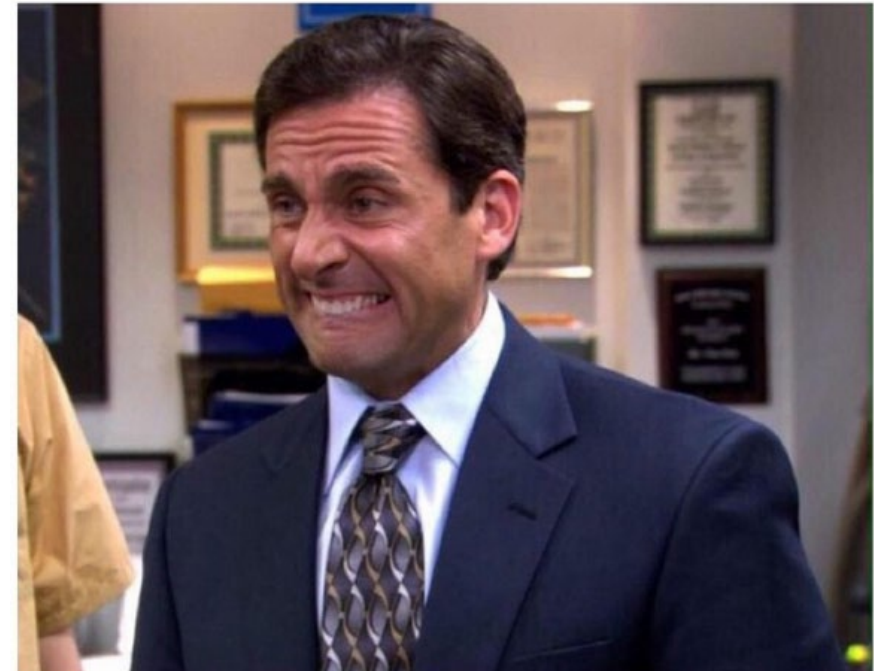
(Abbey et al. [1993](#), Grant et al. [2007](#))

Unrealistically positive expectations?



VS

my face when someone tells me what I did while I was drunk



Preparing teenagers for the transition out of high-school

- **Learn about stress** and signs that a teen may be becoming stressed or anxious
- Help develop their independence to reduce stress-inducing tasks
 - Teaching life skills like budgeting, safety, and housework in advance can help reduce the stress
- Help them develop **other anxiety coping strategies** or alternate activities
 - Help them develop a list of activities they enjoy and help them unwind e.g., Podcasts, meditating, see a new film, playing sport.
- Help them **set achievable and realistic goals**
 - Sometimes goals can seem overwhelming. Helping teens break them down into smaller, more manageable parts can help them take those initial steps.
- Help them figure out a **time-management system** that works well for them.
 - Help them schedule their own timetable, what they want to prioritise etc – studying, working socialising. Writing the ‘big’ things in advance e.g., exams, holidays etc. can help them prepare.

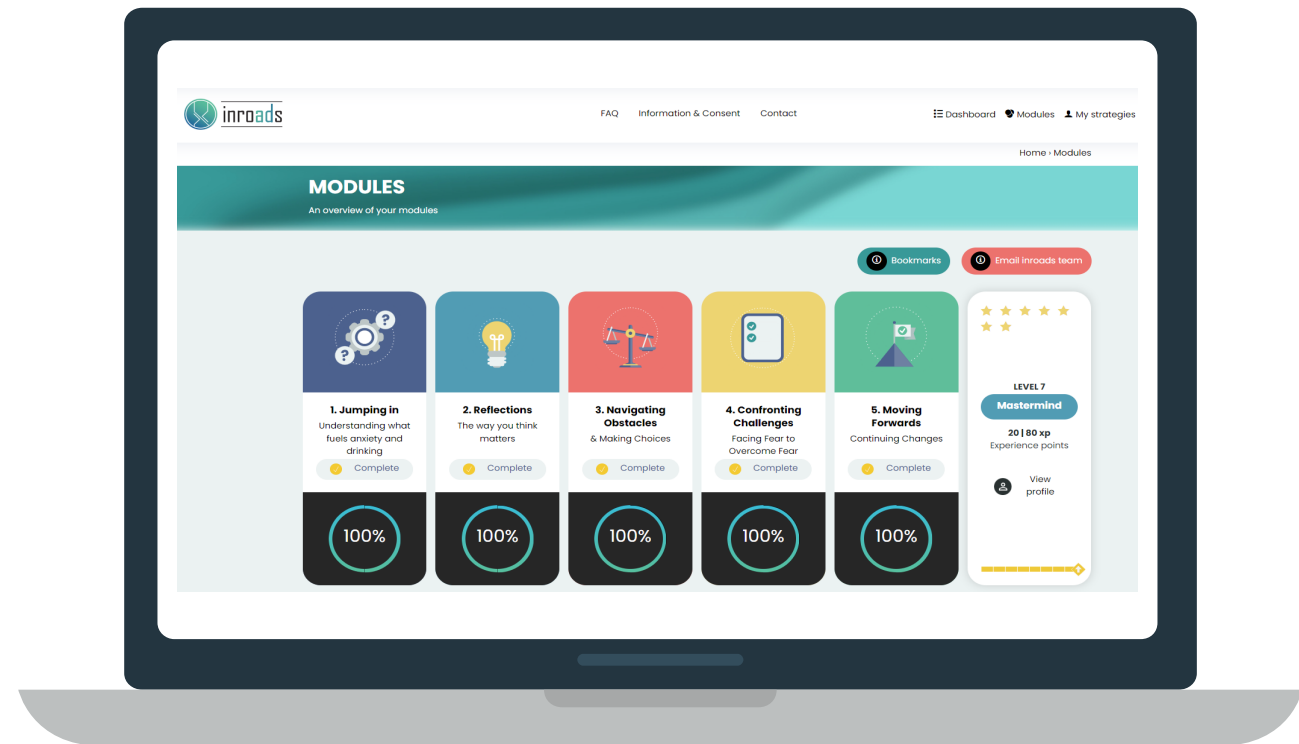
Preparing teenagers for the transition out of high-school

- Help them identify and **set their own drinking limits**
 - Strategies they can employ to limit drinking = decide on daily/weekly limits for drinking, swap to non-alcoholic drinks, only take a certain amount of cash out when drinking (no debit/credit cards), help identify people, places, activities or times that tend to lead to risky drinking for them
- Build their **alcohol refusal skills**
 - Help build their confidence and ability to be assertive in saying no to alcohol
 - Help get their communication right – speaking firmly, not making excuses

Support for youth who use alcohol to cope with anxiety

- ④ **'Inroads'**: A youth focussed **early intervention**
- ④ Uses cognitive behavioural therapy techniques to enhance anxiety coping skills & address coping-motivated drinking
- ④ 5-week online program + weekly support
- ④ Online delivery format to address barriers to help seeking among people

Inroads program
www.inroads.org.au



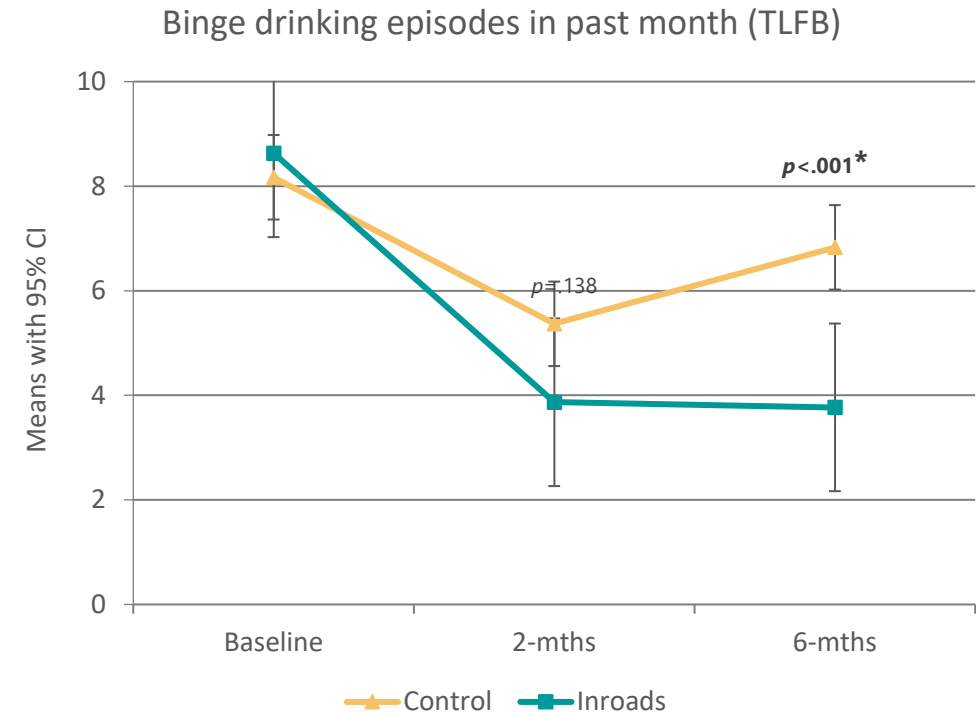
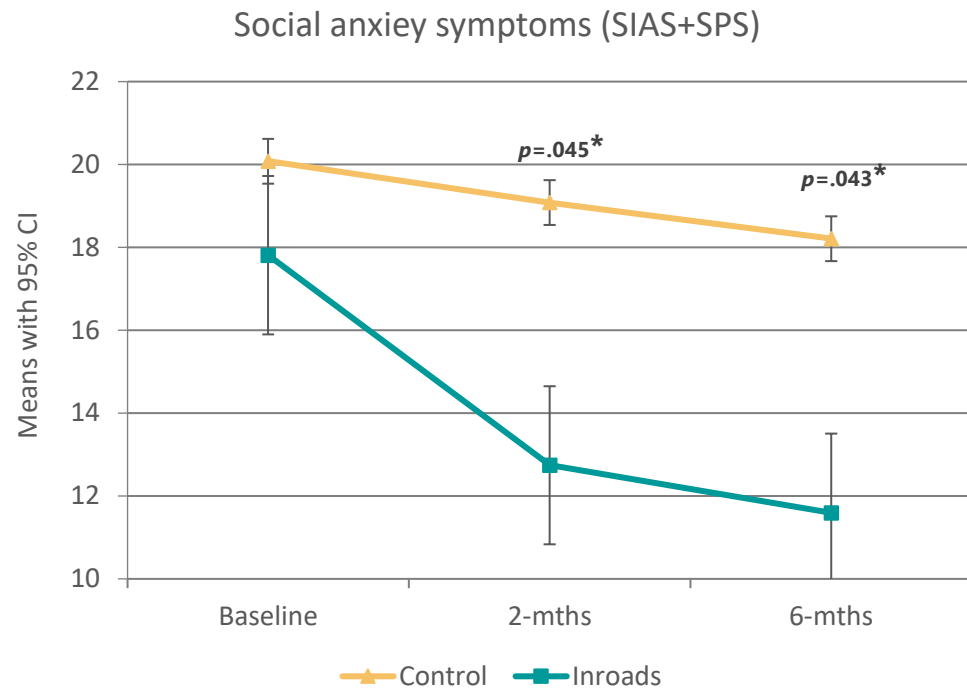
Inroads program for anxiety & drinking in youth



QR code for the
[published paper](#)

- Ran a national trial with 123 people aged 17-24 years
- Compared the efficacy of [Inroads](#) vs providing education about alcohol use

Across 6-months, receiving Inroads improved anxiety symptoms and drinking



Key take aways from the Inroads trial

- The Inroads trial demonstrated that addressing anxiety and alcohol together is important and worthwhile, as these problems are connected
- Intervening early during the high-risk transitional period from adolescence to young adulthood, when symptoms are emerging/peaking, can promote adaptive coping strategies and build young people's capacity to manage anxiety and drinking
- Online programs are an easily accessible and low-cost option for supporting teens/young adults to develop skills to cope with anxiety/life stressors and set limits around drinking



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Online Support Options



- **Inroads**
 - Currently trialling a self-guided version of the anxiety & alcohol Inroads program for people aged 17-30: <https://inroads.org.au>
- **The PreVenture Program**
 - Offers support to teenagers, parents and school-teachers
 - Alcohol and other drug use program implemented by school counsellors/teachers within school context – sign up to learn more: <https://positivechoices.org.au/teachers/preventure>
- **CoolKids Program**
 - *Cool Kids Online* is designed for parents to work through with their child at home to help better manage their child's anxiety (7-17): <https://coolkids.org.au>
- **Brave Program**
 - An online program for the prevention and treatment of childhood and adolescent anxiety
 - Child program (8-12 years) and teen program (12-17 years). There are also programs for parents: <https://brave4you.psy.uq.edu.au>



Summary and key takeaways

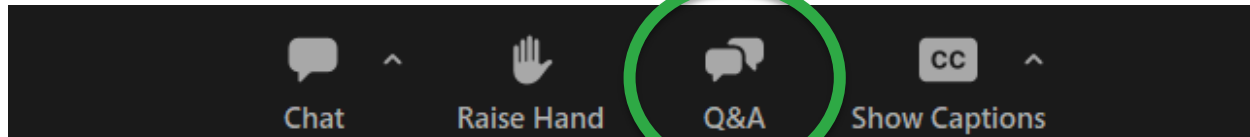
- Anxiety and alcohol use are closely linked.
- Parents can play an important role in recognising and supporting teens with anxiety. This can be done with calm, connecting motivating conversations.
- There are a range of support options available. The Inroads program is one option for young adults with anxiety and alcohol use concerns during the transition out of high-school
- Effective management of anxiety helps to prevent alcohol use and alcohol-related harms

QUESTIONS?



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Questions?





Thank You

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