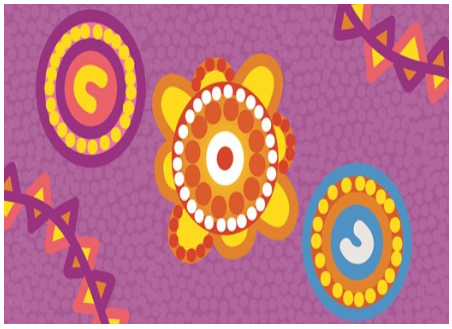
Positive Choices
Drug and Alcohol Information
Get informed, stay smart, stay safe

Factsheet

How do you protect yourself if someone using alcohol/drugs becomes violent or aggressive?



Evidence ratings:

This resource has undergone expert review. See our Help/Q&A section for more details.

Year: Year 7–8, Year 9–10, Year 11–12

Targeted Drugs: Alcohol, Drugs (General)

Tags:

Origin: Australian

Cost:
Free

Attachments

How do you protect yourself if someone using alcohol/drugs becomes violent or aggressive?

Key Messages



How do you protect yourself if someone using alcohol/drugs becomes violent or aggressive?

Sometimes when people are drunk or use drugs they can become violent and aggressive. This can be scary, but here are some ways you can try to calm them down and protect yourself.

Remember: if you don't feel comfortable at any point, it's ok to leave and get help.

If you feel scared or not sure what to do, find an adult who can help (for example, Mum, Dad, Aunty, or Uncle). If you're really worried, call 000 for an ambulance. This is especially important if the person is too drunk or high to know what's going on, or if they start threatening you, or have a weapon.

What can you do?

If you feel like you can talk to them and help them calm down, try doing these things:

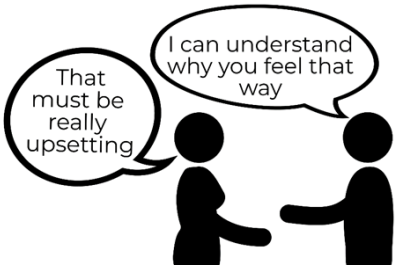
Remain calm and speak to them in a clear and slow voice. It's a good idea to tell them that you care about them and want to help. Try not to use words that sound like you're telling them what to do, this might make them defensive and not listen. An example of what you can say is:



- **Ensure your body language is not threatening.** For example, have your arms open, palms up, or head lowered.
- **Make sure the person has lots of physical space around them.** This will prevent them from feeling confined and threatened, as well as stopping them from hurting themselves. This will also help protect you and give you time to move away if you don't feel safe.



- **Give the person time to think and respond.** For example, when they talk, listen to them and let them know you understand their feelings. For example, you could say:

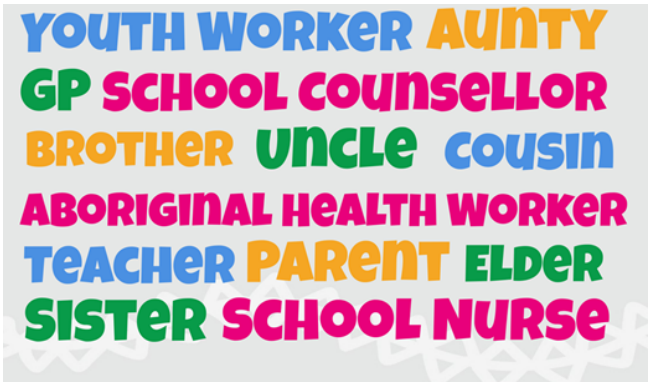


- **If their behaviour gets worse, try and make the person feel like they're still in control** For example, you could say:



What about afterwards?

After you've gone through a violent or aggressive incident, you might be feeling a lot of emotions. You might feel anger, shock, sadness and worry. That's why it's important to take care of yourself after something like this happens. Yarning about what has happened can make you feel better and help you know what to do next. You could talk with your family members, an Aunty or Uncle, an Aboriginal Health Worker, or someone you trust.



Lots of people are here to support you!

You also might not be sure how to talk or act around the person. You can look at the factsheet about How to help a friend or family member with their drug or alcohol use. This factsheet can give you some ideas on how to help them once the alcohol or drugs aren't directly affecting them and are calm. If you need some support with this, ask someone you trust for advice or to come with you to talk to the person.

Making a safety plan

If you're concerned about someone becoming violent or aggressive after using drugs or alcohol (also sometimes called grog), it can be a good idea to have a safety plan. This will help you get to safety faster and know what to do. In your safety plan, it can be helpful to include:

- **A list of important phone numbers.** This can include 000, your local hospital or Aboriginal Medical Service, and numbers for a family member or friend who lives nearby.
- **Find a place where you can make a phone call without being overheard.** This can be useful if you need to call for help and you don't want the person getting upset.
- **Find somewhere safe where you can go if needed.** This might be the house of a family member, Aunty or Uncle, or friend.

Click here for more places where you can find help

You are not alone

You might feel alone in dealing with this, but remember that there are lots of people that can help and support you. If you're feeling overwhelmed, yarn to a trusted Elder or Aboriginal Health Officer and they can help. Remember that the person using drugs is the only one who can change their behaviour, all you can change is how you respond to this situation. Supporting each other has always been a strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities, and we are strongest when we all look after each other.



Evidence Base

This factsheet was developed following expert review by researchers at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of Sydney, the National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, and Gilimbaa Indigenous Creative Design Agency (2018).

Positive Choices artwork by Jenna Lee (Larrakia artist, Gilimbaa).

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