

ON THE EDGE

Video Teacher Guide

A Commonwealth Government Initiative

Australian governments are strongly committed to reducing the harms associated with drug use. The *National Drug Strategy* provides a framework for a coordinated, integrated response to reducing drug-related harm in Australia. It is a cooperative venture between Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and the non-government sector.

The *National Drug Strategic Framework* (NDSF) provides a shared vision and structure for cooperative action. It aims to improve health, social and economic outcomes by preventing the uptake of harmful drug use and reducing the harmful effects of licit and illicit drugs in Australian society. This includes reducing harms caused by the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs. Key initiatives developed under the NDSF include the *National Illicit Drug Strategy*, the *National Alcohol Campaign* and the *National Tobacco Campaign*.

The National Illicit Drug Strategy – ‘Tough on Drugs’ – was launched by the Prime Minister in November 1997 and forms a major phase of the National Drug Strategy. It provides a balanced and integrated approach to reducing the supply of and demand for illicit drugs. In April 1999 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to make a new investment in combating drugs by combining strong national action against drug traffickers with early intervention strategies to prevent a new generation of illicit drug users emerging in Australia.

The *National School Drug Education Strategy* (NSDES) and COAG ‘Tough on Drugs in Schools’ Agreed Measures have been funded under the ‘Tough on Drugs’ initiative. They are complementary initiatives supporting school drug education. The NSDES strengthens the provision of educational programs and supportive environments that contribute to the goal of ‘no illicit drugs in schools’ and the COAG Agreed Measures aim to increase the capacity of schools and their communities to manage drug-related issues and incidents in school.

For further information, go to:

National Drugs Campaign at <http://www.drugs.health.gov.au/index.htm>

National Alcohol Campaign at <http://www.nationalalcoholcampaign.health.gov.au/>

National Illicit Drug Strategy at <http://www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/strateg/drugs/illicit/index.htm>

National Tobacco Campaign at <http://www.quitnow.info.au/index1.html>

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Foreword

The Commonwealth Government is committed to supporting national efforts to reduce the harm caused by drugs in our society and to our youth. I am pleased to be able to provide the REDI – Resilience Education and Drug Information – resources to strengthen the ability of school communities to respond effectively to the harm caused by drugs.

The REDI resources are the first Australian school drug education resources to focus on preventing and reducing harm from drug use by building more resilient young people. Australian and international research is showing that young people who have strong relationships – with their friends, family, school and within their community – are more resilient than other young people. Resilience is the ability to cope with and bounce back from life’s challenging and difficult experiences. It can help our youth deal with life’s stresses and instil in them the confidence to deal with issues and problems that may arise in their everyday life, including those relating to drugs.

The REDI resources include multimedia materials for upper primary, lower secondary and upper secondary students and professional development resources for teachers and school staff. *On the Edge*, the resource for upper secondary school students, explores issues of drug use, in particular around alcohol, ecstasy and cannabis for young people who will be leaving school and entering the world of work or further study. *On the Edge* explores balancing study, work and social life, dealing with stress, increasing independence and looking to the future. In this resource, young people talk about issues that are affecting them now. It is a credible and valuable source of information for upper secondary students.

I commend this important resource to you in the belief that it will help schools to equip generations of students with the confidence and resilience to deal with any drug-related issues they may encounter and to achieve and succeed in their everyday lives.



BRENDAN NELSON

May, 2003

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Newtown Performing Arts High School, Newtown (NSW)
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Overview

On the Edge is ...

On the Edge is a set of classroom resources for students in upper secondary schools that explores issues of drug use, in particular around alcohol, ecstasy and cannabis. It also emphasises the development of resilience and transition skills from school to adulthood. Resilience is ‘the ability to bounce back from adversity’.¹ It has been called ‘the happy knack of being able to bungy jump through the pitfalls of life – to rebound and spring back after the hard times’.²

Skills addressed include:

- decision-making
- critical literacy
- evaluation and judgment
- finding information
- being assertive
- forming and maintaining relationships
- independent thinking
- developing a sense of identity
- communication
- developing coping strategies.

The *On the Edge* resources are made up of:

- The **video**, designed to be viewed by the whole class as a prompt for identifying key issues, and as a trigger for discussion. It focuses on the perceptions and opinions of young people towards drugs, relationships, stress, goals and self-esteem. It can be used with or without the CD-ROM depending on the time and resources available. It runs for approximately 15 minutes.

The video is accompanied by this teacher guide, which provides background information on the *On the Edge* resources, notes on drug information and student welfare issues, suggested extension activities, a full video transcript, website review questions and a website list.

- The **CD-ROM**, designed for small group and individual work. It can be used with the video or as a stand-alone resource. Students are introduced to a range of experts and young people via dozens of short video interviews, or vox pops. Students can follow up the ideas and issues raised in the interviews by exploring interactive activities.

The CD-ROM also contains direct links to many websites that provide online information and support. It is accompanied by a teacher guide.

¹ Wolin, S. and Wolin, S. (1999) *Project Resilience*, <http://projectresilience.com>

² Fuller, A., McGraw, K. and Goodyear, M. (1998) *The Mind of Youth*, Department of Education, Victoria

Curriculum context

On the Edge aligns to the following outcomes:

- Analyses the ways individuals and groups may seek to influence the behaviour of others.
- Analyses how different contexts and situations influence personal values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.
- Explains how social and cultural factors influence what people feel and do about their own personal identity.
- Identifies the knowledge and skills required by communities and individuals to promote a healthier environment.
- Plans strategies to manage identified hazards in the community.
- Researches the influence on relationships of different understandings about human nature and beliefs about people.
- Critically analyses how groups justify particular actions and behaviours by linking them to values they regard as universal.
- Uses critical thinking, interpersonal skills and ethical theories to make judgments on moral issues and dilemmas.

Specific learning outcomes for the video appear later in this teacher guide.

REDI set of resources

On the Edge belongs to a larger collection of multimedia resources, REDI – Resilience Education and Drug Information – which includes these materials for upper secondary along with materials for:

- Upper primary – *The Big Move* focuses on change and peer pressure, and includes negotiating relationships with friends, family and new people and in unfamiliar situations. In this context the issues of alcohol and tobacco are raised.
- Lower secondary – *My TV* explores issues of drug use, in particular alcohol, tobacco and cannabis, through the use of drama. It addresses skills such as decision-making, self-talk and being assertive. Students will be able to engage in problem predicting and solving and in help-seeking behaviour.
- Upper secondary students – *On the Edge* focuses on the perceptions and opinions of young people towards drugs, relationships, stress, goals and self-esteem. It discusses the transition from school to beyond and includes comments and opinions from a wide variety of experts.
- Website (www.redi.gov.au) – containing information on drug education and incident management for all school staff. The website features:
 - a resource list of key school drug education policies and resources available nationally
 - a drug dictionary
 - a Reading Room containing current research, useful statistics, examples of good practice in school drug education and key school drug education documents.

Technical support for the CD-ROM resources is available on the REDI website (at www.redi.gov.au/support/).

Drug information

The three main drugs addressed in the *On the Edge* set of resources are:

- alcohol
- cannabis
- ecstasy.

These, along with tobacco, are the drugs that upper secondary students are most likely to come into contact with.

Because alcohol is a legal drug, its use is commonly sanctioned by adults and it is readily accessible, often in the home environment. It remains a leading cause of disease, death and disability. Alcohol is also associated with violent crime, drink-driving and public disorder.

Cannabis is generally the most accessible and widely used of the illicit drugs. The quality of the drug is unregulated and its use can lead to increased contact with the criminal justice system. While smoking cannabis has been shown to cause similar damage to the lungs as cigarette smoking, the long term effects of cannabis use are under-researched, although an association with mental health problems, such as paranoia and schizophrenia, has been proposed.

Ecstasy became available in Australia in the 1980s. While not as widely used as other drugs, it has become more accessible to young people.

Consequences of substance use

The negative effects of drug use are addressed throughout the *On the Edge* resources, and are included in relation to the following:

- short term physical effects
- long term physical effects
- mental health impact
- effect on relationships with parents
- effect on relationships with friends
- contact with police and the criminal justice system
- financial impact.

The website links on the *On the Edge* CD-ROM (listed in Part 6 of this teacher guide) provide quality information on a range of drugs, both licit and illicit.

The legal status of young people and tobacco, alcohol, cannabis and ecstasy is detailed in the Info sheets which you can find in Part 7 of this teacher guide.

Class climate

Teaching drug education involves discussing sensitive issues, and so it is important to establish an appropriate class climate where students can explore their own values and understandings in a safe and supportive environment.

Disclosure

Students may have personal experience where someone's drug or alcohol use has led to:

- drink-driving
- domestic violence
- family fragmentation
- criminal behaviour and incarceration
- mental health problems
- abuse or neglect of children or young people
- illness
- death.

During drug and resilience education, a young person who has been affected by these or other traumas may become distressed or they may disclose information about their experiences. If this occurs, it is important to take steps to both minimise any negative consequences for them and to connect them with appropriate support as needed.

Setting ground rules

Disclosing in a classroom situation is not appropriate or safe for the student. For this reason teachers of resilience and drug education often request that students and teacher agree not to reveal personal information in class, and instead use the third person. For example, 'I know someone who ...', 'A friend told me ...' and so on.

When a student discloses experience of abuse or other trauma to a teacher it can be confronting, but if handled well, may be of benefit to the student. Early disclosure can lead to a reduction in the long term effects of abuse or trauma. However in some cases, disclosure can also lead to alienation from family or friends.

Protective interrupting

As the teacher, when disclosure occurs in the classroom you will need to interrupt the student tactfully but firmly, acknowledging that you have heard the student and indicating that he/she may want to tell you more later. Then speak to the student individually to arrange a follow-up conversation, ideally straight after the lesson.

Appropriate support

General principles include the need to:

- believe the student
- be calm and supportive
- avoid making promises that can't be kept
- refer the student to professional counselling if requested
- maintain confidentiality.

Note that, in some States and Territories, mandatory reporting requirements may impose additional responsibilities on teachers and other school staff. In such cases, teachers may need to explain their responsibility to the student, and any limitation to confidentiality that can be offered.

Classroom extension activities

In this part you will find the learning outcomes for the *On the Edge* video and suggested extension activities using the video. More activities that can be adapted for use with the video can be found in the teacher guide for the *On the Edge* CD-ROM and at some of the website links on the CD-ROM.

Learning outcomes

Using the *On the Edge* video and extension activities, students will be able to:

- locate, evaluate and select drug-related information on the internet
- identify a range of opinions and attitudes related to drugs
- analyse their own attitudes and opinions related to drugs
- examine a range of opinions and attitudes related to drugs
- examine a range of possible outcomes related to alcohol and drugs
- identify motivating factors in the use of alcohol and other drugs and suggest alternatives to drug use
- identify sources of support and advice for drug-related problems
- examine the goals of other people and explore their own goals
- explore a range of opinions and attitudes related to coping with stress
- develop strategies related to coping with stress.

The following are suggestions for interactive classroom strategies that build on the *On the Edge* video. The activities are not in any particular sequence and can be chosen to suit your school context.



indicates an appropriate activity for discussion of non-use of substances as the safest option.



indicates an activity that involves the investigation of the consequences and risks of early use and early uptake.

Teacher's note: There are significant risks and consequences for young people who use substances from an early age. For current research and information about these, go to the research part of the REDI Reading Room at <http://www.redi.gov.au/ReadingRoom/ViewList.asp?room=Research>

A – Discussion

The goal of this activity is to identify a range of issues raised in the video.

1 Teacher introduction

On the Edge features a range of young people recounting experiences, opinions, attitudes and ideas about stress, study, drugs and transition from school to beyond.

2 Discussion

Ask students to discuss the following questions in small groups, then ask each group to contribute some feedback.

- What are some of the issues you think will feature in the video?
- What opinions and attitudes do you have in relation to those issues?
- What is enjoyable about this time of your life and what makes it difficult?

3 Watch the video

Watch the video through.

B – Identifying the main issues

The goal of this activity is to identify key issues emerging from the vox pops interviews.

1 Mapping issues

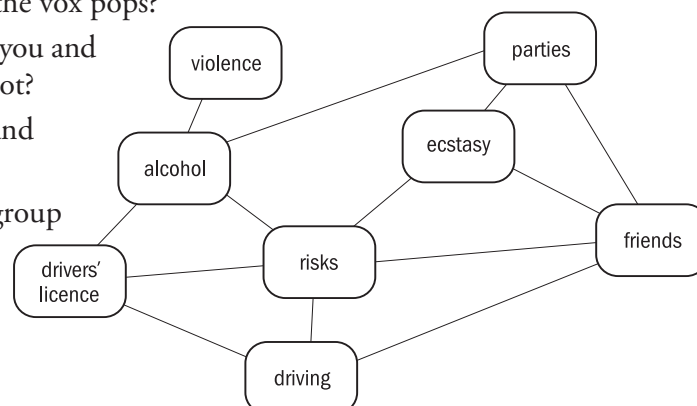
Work with the whole class to create a mind map of the issues raised in the video. This can be done for one topic area (for example Final Years), or a combination of topic areas (for example Alcohol and Stress).

As students provide information, draw and name a circle for each topic area, and add notes under each. Join the topic areas by lines, identifying the issues they may share.

Prompt questions may include:

- What are the topic areas in the video?
- What are the issues raised in each topic area?
- Do any topic areas share the same issues?
- What opinions are expressed in the vox pops?
- Are these issues and concerns for you and most young people? Why/Why not?
- Can you bring your own issues and opinions to the topic areas?

If you prefer to run this as a small group activity, a useful starting point for students is the simple mind map shown at right. This may be developed into a class discussion.



2 Summarising

Ask students to help summarise the main ideas of the video. This can be by:

- Brainstorming as a whole class.

or

- Discussing and writing points in pairs. The pairs then work with other pairs to combine and edit their summaries. Ask a spokesperson from each group to contribute to a class summary, with you acting as scribe. You can use this opportunity to emphasise concept organisation and writing skills by prompting students to edit and rework the text as they jointly construct it.

3 Identifying topics and issues

Watch the video again. Work with the class to produce a list of topics covered and issues raised in the vox pop interviews. While the list should be produced by the students, below are some prompts to elicit and support student suggestions.

<p>Final years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends and study • Choices • Finding a balance • Reacting to pressure • Motivation and burnout • Leaving school friends behind • Relationships and respect • Balancing, juggling and coping 	<p>Stressful times</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life pressures • Coping with stress • Family issues • Stress busting 	<p>Beyond school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovering yourself • Going your own way • Developing new skills • Setting goals • Making your own decisions • Taking care of yourself • Being comfortable with yourself • New friends • Family values • Being overwhelmed
<p>Alcohol</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unplanned sexual activity • Embarrassment and regrets • Knowing your limit • Alcohol and violence • Binge drinking • Drivers' licences • Family attitudes • Getting plastered • Drink-driving • Dependency • Influenced by friends • Pros and cons 	<p>Cannabis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on friendships • 'Potheads' • Damage from smoke • Paranoia and mental health • Pot and study • Dependency • Influenced by friends • Pros and cons 	<p>Ecstasy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is ecstasy? • Downsides and negative aspects • Availability • Dependency • Influenced by friends • Pros and cons

4 Ranking in order of impact or importance to the students

Ask students to rate each issue as important or unimportant to them, eliciting reasons for the ratings. Ask students what areas they would like to understand and know more about.

5 Research plan of action

Students may have raised a number of questions during the discussion and these can also be kept as a list with a plan of action to find answers to the questions. Actions may include:

- using the *On the Edge* CD-ROM web links to find information on the internet
- contacting a relevant organisation for information
- inviting a guest speaker to the classroom
- conducting a survey of school students.

C – Exploring options and consequences



The goal of this activity is to explore the effects of drug use on areas such as studying, leaving school and relationships by looking at the situations described in the video and the possible consequences of those actions.

1 Brainstorming

Work through the first situation regarding cannabis and study with the whole class, to brainstorm some of the issues involved and elicit of a range of possible consequences. Discuss whether the consequences of the situation are all positive, all negative or a combination of positive and negative?

Situation 1	Possible consequences
Coming home after school and having a smoke (of cannabis).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not doing any study • lack of motivation • not being able to study with a clear head.



The use of drugs may be seen to have some positive consequences. With this attitude, when does drug use becomes a problem for people? How do you make a judgment and how do you know that drug use has become a problem? What criteria do you use? What steps can people take to overcome the problem?

Teachers need to be aware that students may respond with a range of attitudes and opinions, such as ‘smoking helps people to relax and have no worries’. It is important to challenge students’ beliefs and attitudes so that they think about their responses and opinions.

2 Identifying consequences

Students work in pairs. For each situation below, ask them to identify some possible consequences of the action.

<p>Situation 2</p> <p>Driving some friends to a party and having some alcohol when you are the designated driver.</p>	<p>Situation 3</p> <p>Taking ecstasy when you are going out to a dance party.</p>	<p>Situation 4</p> <p>Getting so plastered you can't remember a couple of hours from the night before.</p>
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3 Review suggestions

With the class, review some of the suggested consequences.

4 Creating scenarios

With the class, create some additional scenarios and some suggested consequences.

D – What now?

The goal of this activity is to explore the range of attitudes, options and plans people may have after leaving school. Students need to think about their own plans after leaving school, how they feel and the issues and options they have to deal with.

Ask students to think about their own situation:

- What happens after they leave school?
- Have they applied to attend university or to pursue other tertiary study?
- Do they have a job or apprenticeship organised?
- Are they planning to travel?

Show the video again if necessary.

Note: Many students may not really know what they hope to do once they leave school. It may be necessary to identify their personal qualities and skills and help them to project possible career paths and goals, or refer them to a careers advisor.

E – ‘Coping with stress’ poster

The goal of this activity is to identify strategies for coping with stress.



1 Teacher introduction

There is a range of skills people can develop to cope with stress. Some of these include goal setting, problem solving and decision-making. Another way of

coping with stress is through the activities we undertake. People unwind and deal with stress in their own way. Some people play sport, listen to music, go shopping or talk to a friend. How do you like to de-stress?

Teachers need to be aware that students may respond with a range of attitudes and opinions, such as 'smoking helps people to relax'. It is important to challenge students' beliefs and attitudes so they are required to think about their responses and opinions. Some questions that may lead to discussion include:

- How do these activities assist you and other people to manage stress?
- Are all strategies for reducing stress helpful? When might a strategy become a problem?
- Do stress reduction strategies help a person to avoid a situation that may need to be dealt with?
- Is avoiding a situation likely to have a positive outcome?

2 **Small group work – making a poster**

Ask students to work in small groups to make a poster of suggestions for de-stressing. Ensure suggestions and examples are appropriate for classroom use. Extend this activity into electronic multimedia, using software such as PowerPoint, or a graphics editor if available.

3 **Class list of categories and tips**

Use your students' ideas to make a class list of tips, sorting suggestions into categories, for example: 'De-stressing by yourself' or 'De-stressing with family or friends'.

The posters may be displayed in the library or other areas of the school, or published on the school website or in the newsletter or magazine. For additional activities related to coping and stress, you may like to investigate the *MindMatters* education kit (<http://online.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/index.htm>).

F – Research

The goal of this activity is for students to use research skills to collate information and build their knowledge and understanding of alcohol, cannabis and ecstasy.

1 **Teacher introduction**

Brainstorm with students to compile a list of drugs that young people are likely to be exposed to, for example alcohol, cannabis and ecstasy. This activity will focus on research of these three drugs.



2 **Research**

Ask the class to research the effects of alcohol, cannabis and ecstasy. Question what they know already and what they would like to find out. They will need to locate information on the following:

- short and long term physical effects
- short and long term psychological effects
- effect on relationships
- legal consequences.

Students may work in groups or individually and should present their results in point form, organised under appropriate headings.

The class may choose to collate the information in a single poster for display around the school, or include it on the school website or in the newsletter or magazine.

Sources of information may include the websites listed in Part 6 of this teacher guide.

3 Review

Ask students to identify any problems they had undertaking the research. Are the consequences of alcohol, cannabis and ecstasy use clear? What can we infer from the different legal status of cannabis in different States and countries?

Conclude the activity by discussing the following questions with the class:

- What did you learn from doing the research?
- Did it correct any misconceptions you may have had?
- Does knowing about the effects and consequences of drug use change people's behaviour? Why/Why not?
- Will this new information change your own thinking and behaviour? Why/Why not?

G – Movie making

The goal of this activity is for students to investigate attitudes, ideas, opinions and goals in their own school community.

This activity relies on a fundamental level of teacher and student skill and understanding of video technology. You may need to investigate the available options, such as analogue or digital video and the software and hardware used to edit and compile video productions.

Students may enjoy making their own video interview 'vox pops'. Guide them through planning, conducting and editing their interviews with other students on the topic of 'Study, Stress, School and You'. The video may then be shown to other classes in the school.

It is important to work with the students to help them get organised and do some planning before filming. Some guidelines and questions for the planning phase of this activity include:

- Do you have a clear understanding of the purpose of your video?
- Who is the target audience?
- Have you decided on the topics you intend covering?
- Have you drawn up some storyboards?
- Have you written some interview questions?
- What is the message you want to present?
- What are the limitations and benefits of using video?
- What skills do you already have that will help in this activity?

H – Forum

The goal of this activity is to provide a forum for giving opinions and information as well as gaining an understanding of the knowledge and experiences of others. It can be useful to emphasise listening activities and to expect participants to be able to summarise the viewpoints and information presented by other participants.

Five different approaches to this activity are given below.

1A Teacher introduction

Michael talks about reacting to pressure:

Everyone has pressure on them, but people react in different ways. I reacted in a downward way and I couldn't cope, because I'd never had that sort of pressure on me, but yes, it was the worst pressure I'd ever had, I was pretty spoilt. But nowadays I thrive on that sort of pressure, it's part of the job I do, so if I went back I'd probably do a lot better.

1B Discussion

- What pressures do students have on them?
- What pressures do young people (in general) have on them?
- When does pressure have a positive outcome?
- How do pressures become a problem?
- How do you know when it is time to seek help and advice?

2A Teacher introduction

Various students talk about stress busting:

I have to sit down in my room, just relax, turn on some music, Jimi Hendrix ...

Relief when studying ... I often found because I was doing art, just the process of sitting down and relaxing and doing something that I enjoyed, I really enjoy painting and so I found that was an excellent escape ...

I love popping on my favourite album and just dancing on my own, or hula hoop or whatever ...

She's really good with the hula hoop ...

My release was going out for a surf with my mates, going for a swim, then coming back and doing a bit of study ...

When I got to my final exams, I went, "this is my last year of high school, I've got to show 13 years of hard work" and I went "I'm going to stop for a year, give up my social life entirely for a year". I did it for a couple of weeks and then went "there is no way, I'm going to go insane". Like you really do have to find a balance ...

For me in my final year, it would have been better I think, if I'd managed my time more. But I did get my mix of study and also of my fun too ...

It isn't until now that I've finished my second semester at university and I'm going into my second year, that I'm a lot more comfortable with myself in terms of study, and I think that has a lot to do with having a goal. Whereas in Year 12, I just wanted to leave school ...

After finishing my exams I sort of walked through a shopping mall and thought "everyone should be staring at me, because I've just done my final exam" – like "wow, I've finished my life" – that is how it felt. Like, who knows what is going to happen next?

2B Discussion

- What are some ways people like to reduce stress?
- What does finding a balance mean?
- How important is it to find a way to relieve stress?
- What does it feel like to finish 13 years of school?
- How might studying at school be different from studying at university?
- What are some of the potential consequences associated with using drugs to try to relax?

3A Teacher introduction

Chanelle talks about saving money and brain cells:

I think you have to look at the positive things of not doing drugs, like the fact you will have more money, you will have better health and stuff like that. Also like, I think it's hard to go well at school when they are on drugs, because they just don't have the brain capacity to do it.

3B Discussion

- What are Chanelle's views on drugs in regard to money, health and study?
- How do you think study can be affected by drugs?
- What are some other aspects of life that may be adversely affected by drugs?

4A Teacher introduction

Thomas talks about drink-driving:

And everything is like “how am I going to get home, if I’m so trashed, who is going to look after me?” – even driving, drink-driving, like are you going to go out with a bunch of people where the driver drinks and so you are going to be in their care?



4B Discussion

- What is Thomas’ attitude towards drink-driving?
- What are some other attitudes and opinions that people have towards drink-driving?
- What would you do if you were in Thomas’ situation?
- What are some lower risk alternatives to getting into a car with someone who has been drinking?
- How can you plan to avoid situations like these?

5A Teacher introduction

Michael talks about psychological addiction:

There is addiction and there is psychological addiction. There are addictive drugs like heroin and cocaine, but with ecstasy you can get psychologically addicted.



5B Discussion



- What is psychological addiction?
- How is it different from physical addiction?
- What drugs are associated with psychological addiction?
- What drugs are associated with physical addiction?
- How does addiction affect the way people function?
- How does addiction affect people’s ability to cope with life?
- How does addiction affect people’s ability to cope with everyday challenges and problems?



I – Reducing the risks



The goal of this activity is to explore students’ concerns, attitudes and beliefs related to drugs and risk reduction.

I think the biggest issue facing young people is to make an informed choice on drug taking: do I take drugs, do I not take drugs? And statistics show in fact that most people don’t and that’s a really healthy choice.

Robert Bosi, drug and alcohol counsellor, *On the Edge* video.

1 Teacher instruction

Read the quote above.

2 Issues, concerns, attitudes and beliefs

Read Quote A below and discuss the issues and students' concerns, attitudes and beliefs. Use the following questions as a guide.

- What are some risks related to the situation?
- What are some likely outcomes of the situation?
- How might each situation turn out if the risk was reduced?
- How can each of the risky situations be avoided (or the amount of risk reduced)?
- How can friends offer assistance, guidance or other types of support?
- Do people have any responsibilities when their friends are taking drugs?

Continue with the remaining quotes.

3 Quotes

A Well first of all, know your limit, and then if you are planning on getting drunk or drinking a lot, then do it around people you can trust, who will be able to take care of you or whatever.

B Sure when you are younger and you get into drinking, you don't know how much you can drink and you say "OK I'll be a tank, I can drink heaps" and then you get plastered and legless and you are on the floor.

C And everything is like "how am I going to get home, if I'm so trashed, who is going to look after me?" – even driving, drink-driving – like, are you going to go out with a bunch of people where the driver drinks and so you are going to be in their care?

D I know people who just – it's one way to escape from reality – "my homework is pissing me off, I'm going to go and have some cones".

E Some of the risks associated with alcohol are those about violence. It's very common for people to get drunk and then become violent, either to complete strangers or to people that they actually know and care about.

F Everybody knows that drinking, like we talked about this before, drinking you are free of inhibitions and you just go for it, and if you get too drunk, you can put yourself in a really scary situation. Nobody wants to be in that situation.

G I knew some people who had a car crash. They were drunk and they were driving and they all died. That was really sad. It was their own fault in a way. It's all hyped up to be this huge thing and everyone goes up there and gets really drunk and people have accidents.

H Ecstasy is a really big social drug at the moment. Like a lot of Raves, if you go to a Rave everybody is on ecstasy and everyone is happy and friendly, because they are on this happy drug.

I I knew a friend who took an 'e' and things were going fantastic, we had a few drinks, we were having a great time until we were walking down the street about an hour later and without any warning he spewed all over himself and over some other people walking near him. It was so tragic.

J – Agree or disagree?

The goal of this activity is to lead students to acknowledge their own concerns, attitudes and beliefs related to drugs.

1 Introduction

There are many choices to make about alcohol, cannabis or other drugs. There are also different levels of risk and types of risks involved with each. Explain to students that this activity is designed to help them think about the issues and acknowledge their own concerns, attitudes and beliefs. Also stress that there are no right or wrong answers to this activity, and they won't be judged for their responses.

- Read aloud Statement A (below).
- Ask students to move to a pre-arranged corner (or other area) of the room to reflect their attitude – **agree**, **disagree** or **unsure** – to the statement.
- Explain that it is important for them to think about *why* they agree, disagree or are unsure. It is important to discuss the issues raised by students and impress on them that they will not be judged for their opinions. Remind students that they can change their minds at any time throughout the activity.
- Repeat for the remaining statements.

2 Statements

-
- A** Drinking one drink each night for a few weeks is safer than drinking a large amount of alcohol in a single night.
- (Agree – Drinking a large amount of alcohol in a single night increases the risk of vomiting, passing out and alcoholic poisoning.)
-
- B** There is less risk involved in drinking at the beach or in a park than in drinking at home or at a party.
- (Disagree – You are likely to have more options if you need assistance at home or at a party. You are also likely to have more control over the environment, which is safer.)
-
- C** Drinking alcoholic soda is less risky than drinking other alcoholic drinks.
- (Disagree – The risk is similar. Alcoholic soda contains a similar volume of alcohol to other drinks, including full strength beer and mixed spirits.)
-
- D** Girls are more affected by alcohol than boys.
- (Agree – On average, a girl's metabolism and body type and size make her more likely to be affected by alcohol than a boy.)
-
- E** Having drinks with your parents or other adults is safer than drinking with your friends.
- (Agree – While this may not be true in every situation, parents and other adults usually have more experience with alcohol, how it affects people and how to handle a situation in which someone is drunk.)
-

Part 4 Classroom extension activities

F Taking a quarter of an ecstasy pill is safe.

(Disagree – While the dosage may be reduced, you are still taking an illegal drug and can't be sure of the chemicals you are actually swallowing.)

G Taking ecstasy with friends is safe.

(Disagree – There are many factors to consider, including whether your friends are responsible enough to look after you and if they know what to do if something goes wrong. Also, you are taking an illegal drug and can't be sure of the chemicals you are actually swallowing.)

Transcript

Introduction

Chanelle

I've been in school for almost 13 years now, I know adults are always saying "it's the best years of your life", but I want to get out. I'm sick of it.

Grant

When we got to Year 11 they are like "choose your subjects and this will be whatever shapes the rest of your life".

Michael

Being in Year 12 is like being on the edge – you've got so many decisions to make at the end but it's like a new beginning.

Robert

Hi, I'm Robert Bosi. I'm a drug and alcohol worker and I am interested in working with young people who are trying to make sense of the challenges and choices in their life, especially when they are making the transition from school to beyond.

Final Years

Darrell

You can't really look at Year 12 in isolation, because the pressure does build up from Year 10, 11 and 12.

Billie

Year 11 was such a big learning curve, when you're actually getting head-on into the study. You have been going hard core since Year 7, but I've been pretty much taking that big step up, I found it pretty weird.

Michael

Internal pressure from yourself is the worst part I reckon. The parents are bad enough, but when you are pressuring yourself heaps, you just sort of crack.

Darrell

I think for me the problem was maintaining that level of energy and that level of motivation.

Michael

I just had no direction at all, no dreams or anything. Yeah that sort of was my downfall.

Drew

I think friends are a very important thing, I think you really need someone to talk to in really heated times.

Darrell

I found that a lot of my other friends really started to get maybe burnt out.

Intan

About Year 12 people are so stressed and so caught up in exams, you don't realise how many people are slipping away and at the end of the year you're not going to see three-quarters of the people that you have spent seven years of your life with.

Billie

That is so scary.

Stressful Times

Robert

The final year for many students is actually a really hard one. They are trying to think of what they are going to do with the rest of their life and often many young people are faced with a whole lot of stress and sometimes young people end up turning to drugs as a way to try and deal with that and cope with that stress.

Intan

You try and dull out your emotions when they are at some really high point and try and dull out all that by drinking or going out excessively and it just doesn't help. In the end it only makes things worse and it only makes you more stressed when you haven't handed something in.

Lara

It's one way to escape from reality isn't it? Like: "My homework is pissing me off, I'm going to go and have some cones."

Billie

People can make up a million excuses – "Oh but I'm not going out and smoking a stick", or "I'm taking a couple of tokes or whatever and I'm coming home and getting into my work" and "Oh yes actually I didn't do anything last night".

Matt

If somebody is a heavy smoker I doubt that they could get any sort of good marks. Not a good study tool.

Robert

I think the biggest issue facing young people when they are considering taking drugs is to make an informed choice on drug taking, do I take drugs, do I not take drugs and statistics show in fact that most people don't and that's a really healthy choice.

Alcohol

Robert

People often ask about the health problems associated with different drugs and most of the short term problems associated with alcohol use are risk-taking behaviours like drink-driving, mucking around while you are drunk and of course the big one is unplanned sex.

Various

You do not put yourself in those kinds of situations. You surround yourself with friends, you don't go off with some guy somewhere that you don't know – it's asking for trouble. Big fat mistake.

You can't go back in time, you can't rewind and wish you didn't do it.

Or realising you don't know whether you did or not, that would be so bad.

Having someone else tell you about it, it's just "Did I do that?".

Robert

Really common in young people is binge drinking. That becomes a problem, because they are binge drinking every weekend. That causes physical problems, because their body is not used to the alcohol and suddenly it's got a whole lot to deal with; and the other problem associated with that is risk-taking.

Various

Even driving, drink-driving – like, are you going to go out with a bunch of people where the driver drinks and so you are going to be in their care?

Sure when you are younger and you get into drinking, you don't know how much you can drink and you think "OK I'll be a tank, I can drink heaps" and then you get plastered and legless and you are on the floor and it's just not a pretty sight.

And no-one really thinks that's cool, getting really plastered and drunk. Everyone just looks down on you and goes "jeese".

It's a big self-esteem thing too; like people feel the need to drink in order to do things like just say dance or sing or something like that.

Robert

Some of the risks associated with alcohol are those about violence. It's very common for people to get drunk and then become violent, either to complete strangers or to people that they actually know and care about.

Various

People are drunk, like people get really violent, depressed drunks.

If there's like bottles around you know it's just scary.

Bar brawls.

Ecstasy

Robert

Ecstasy is a stimulant, it's a drug that speeds you up. It's got similar properties to things like amphetamines, speed, go-ey, whiz. They're the kind of things people use to stay up all night but not many people use it. It's mostly a party scene drug.

Lara

There's all, like, the high schoolie kind of drugs like pot (marijuana) and speed (otherwise known as go-ey) and ecstasy. They, like, they filter through.

Josephine

There is an extreme downside to e-tabs. Like, I've seen people have the worst experiences, like coming off them and things like that.

Robert

The short term effects of ecstasy, if you get ecstasy because remember you are buying an illegal drug so there is no quality control about it, but those effects are to do with coming down, feeling anxious, and having trouble concentrating. And that can make it really difficult for your final year at school.

Cannabis

Robert

Smoking anything is basically unhealthy, so whether you are smoking a legal or an illegal drug, it's basically an unhealthy thing to do. It's going to damage your breathing system, your lungs, and your throat, and your tongue. It's also going to go into your blood as well. So smoking has problems associated with carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide.

It's really common for people who are smoking dope, marijuana, to end up feeling a bit paranoid and that is at the kind of more subtle end of it. That is sort of feelings like you are being watched or people are listening to you, or people are sort of worried about your every move. Then what you will find is at the more extreme end, you have an association between schizophrenia and smoking marijuana.

Darrell

There is this guy in my year who started taking pot but, um, he was the sort of person that really shouldn't have taken it in the first place because he actually ended up becoming a bit schizophrenic. It sort of it triggered that little thing in his mind.

Grant

Social effects basically, and the like, the effect on your family is pretty bad. They have to have it to feel good. If they are not on it, they are really down and depressed and when they are on it, they are exactly the same, but they feel better.

Dependency

Robert

Sometimes people when they are under stress try to use a drug to deal with that feeling and end up becoming dependant on it and what that means is that they rely on the drug in order to be able to manage that difficult emotion, that difficult feeling, and quite often what happens is it takes more and more of the drug to try and get exactly the same feeling.

Billie

It's hard because you don't want to lecture somebody you know but when you see that even they know it in their own head, but yet they can't seem to control themselves – it becomes a habit.

Grant

You have just got to be their friend and help them through it and be there for what they need, rather than judge them, because it's not what they need.

Billie

And I also think it's important for them to be open with their parents because that's their immediate home environment and that's where you've really got to solve the problem head-on.

Simon

I think the drug addiction is purely symptomatic of something far more severe. I mean you can be having personal family issues, stuff like that.

Robert

Sometimes drug use does get out of hand, and when it does, people need help. Where do you turn to when you need help? If you are at school, try the school counsellor. If you

are at university, go to the student services and there will be a counsellor there; or if you are at work, workplaces too have an obligation to help out people with problems. It's really important to find somebody who knows what they are talking about and it is also important to find somebody you feel comfortable with, so you probably want to look for a specialist drug and alcohol agency.

Stress Busting

Various

Good to go out and have fun because it takes the stress off study because if you don't take the stress off, you're just going to crack.

When I got to my final exams, I went, "This is my last year of high school, I've got to show 13 years of hard work", and I went, "I'm going to stop for a year, give up my social life entirely for a year". I did it for a couple of weeks and I went, "There is no way, I'm going to go insane". Like you really do have to find a balance.

I really enjoy painting so I found that it was an excellent escape.

I like to sit down in my room, just relax, turn on some music, Jimi Hendrix.

I love popping on my favourite album and just dancing on my own, or hula hoop or whatever.

She's really good with the hula hoop.

Going out for a surf with my mates, you know, going for a swim, then coming back and doing a bit of study.

You know, trying to get mentally and physically fit.

Beyond School

Robert

It's a fantastic time, you have just finished your final year at school, maybe you are going to uni, maybe you are going to work, maybe you are just going to take a year off and play. And it is a time to play and that is what a lot of people do and that means that it's also a time of risk. It's worth keeping that in mind. There are all sorts of decisions about drink-driving, about drugging, about what you are going to do where and with whom. And if you want to keep playing, keep having fun, it's important to make sure that you make good choices.

Chanelle

Because in school they have this set timetable for us and everything, but now when we leave school we have to make all these different choices – I can do this or do this.

Skye

It was hard because there were lots of people who were getting their licence around that time and being able to go into pubs and clubs and being able to get alcohol.

Michael

Everyone knows that 'schoolies' week' is just about going up to Queensland or somewhere, just trying to get really drunk every night and get a lay every night. I think everyone knows that, but everyone is just scared to admit it. I know some people who had a car crash up there. They were drunk and they were driving and they all died. That was really sad.

Drew

Getting a job and doing uni as well is hard to balance. I know a lot of people do it in high school as well, but getting more of a full-time job when you are doing uni, you need to know when to study and when not, and how much the work is part of your life.

Grant

Because at uni you don't have a lot of help from your teachers. They just expect you to do it and if you don't hand it in, well they don't care because there are hundreds of other kids who are doing the same thing.

Sandro

It was a big step leaving school and being on your own. I had a part-time job that I'd just started. It was in a cafe. I was learning a lot, how to interact with people, especially older crowds, but when TAFE started it was a different ball game totally.

Darrell

In a work environment, you have different responsibilities than you might have compared to when you were studying. And so you have to deal with other people in the workplace, you have to work in teams, work according to the system, the rules, that govern that sort of workplace.

Grant

If the uni is in a big city and you are not from that big city, it's hard to get adjusted to. You just get overwhelmed by it and just taken up with the crowd.

Lindsay

Because the city is like a big party, you get there and think there are so many things to do, "I'm going to have a great time". You do that and then when you come home and you sit back and you're not there with your Mum and Dad and you have this strange flatmate who never tidies, and there are cockroaches everywhere and you have books to read that have to be read otherwise you are going to fail.

Sandro

A lot of families are all different. You can't just say "Mum and Dad I'm moving out" – "Oh no you're not, you are too young" and that – because they haven't fulfilled their role as a parent yet.

Grant

Just basically learning how to take care of myself. The simple things like cooking dinner, washing clothes, making your bed.

Robert

Some of you have spent the last 13 years with the same people and now you are going to end up maybe in different places. You might even be at a place on your own, you might be in a course or a job where there is nobody that you know. That can be really tough, but it's also a fantastic opportunity to discover yourself, to do a whole bunch of new things, to understand yourself and to be what you want to be.

Lindsay

It isn't until now that I have finished my second semester at university, I am going into my second year, that I feel a lot more comfortable with myself and I think that is to do with having a goal, whereas in Year 12 I just wanted to leave school.

Michael

I'm in a pretty good position at the moment. I'm in a better position than most of my friends – they did a hell of a lot better at the HSC than me.

Grant

You are still young too, like the oldest you are is 18. So you've still got ages, you can go and work for a couple of years or go to TAFE.

Chanelle

At this age we have the highest goals set to be successful, like we just think "Alright I will go to uni, I'll get this job, and I'll get rich", but tend to forget that there are many other things in the world we can do, and that's what I have been thinking about this year. I can do anything.

Websites

www.adin.com.au	<p>Australian Drug Information Network</p> <p>Portal with search facilities. Information and links to over 900 reviewed websites.</p>
www.somazone.com.au	<p>Somazone</p> <p>A site developed by and for young people. Includes information and personal stories on drugs, relationships and body image.</p>
www.curriculum.edu.au	<p>Curriculum Corporation</p> <p>Contains links to various publications including <i>MindMatters</i>, a mental health program for secondary schools.</p>
www.drugs.health.gov.au	<p>Australian Department of Health and Ageing</p> <p>The Australian Department of Health and Ageing is Australia's federal government department responsible for health issues.</p>
www.fcs.wa.gov.au	<p>Family and Children's Services</p> <p>Offers tips for getting on better with your parents and getting connected with other young people.</p>
www.thesource.gov.au	<p>The Source</p> <p>A federal government youth site featuring programs, information on getting a job, career information and youth health issues.</p>
www.reachout.com.au	<p>Reach Out!</p> <p>A service that uses the internet to help young people get through tough times.</p>
www.edsn.asn.au	<p>Eating Disorders Support Network</p> <p>Information and support for people with eating disorders.</p>
www.headroom.net.au	<p>Headroom</p> <p>Information about and ideas to support mental health.</p>
www.kidshelp.com.au	<p>Kids' Help Line</p> <p>Website of professional counselling service accessible to all Australian children.</p>
www.achper.org.au	<p>ACHPER</p> <p>The Australian Council for Health and Physical Education and Recreation.</p>

www.drugsafe.org	<p>Drug Safe</p> <p>Life Education Australia site. Life Education Australia's mission is excellence in drug education, especially for young people.</p>
www.adf.org.au/drughit/	<p>Drughit</p> <p>Australian Drug Foundation featuring accurate and up to date drug information. Also try www.druginfo.adf.org.au</p>
www.dotu.wa.gov.au/drugs/	<p>Drugs and Young People</p> <p>A government funded project intended to educate and provide facts and statistics about drugs.</p>
www.youth.nsw.gov.au/links/drughelp/	<p>Alcohol and Other Drugs</p> <p>Drug-related information written for young people.</p>
www.quitnow.info.au	<p>Quit</p> <p>Features a wide range of information related to quitting smoking.</p>
www.nationalalcoholcampaign.health.gov.au	<p>National Alcohol Campaign</p> <p>Alcohol-related information for parents, the media and students.</p>
www.100incontrol.com	<p>100% in control</p> <p>100% in control offers tips and suggestions for drug-free, alcohol-free and tobacco-free partying.</p>
www.adca.org.au	<p>Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia</p> <p>The Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia is a national body representing the interests of Australian alcohol and other drug non-government organisations.</p>
www.health.org	<p>Prevlene – Prevention Online</p> <p>Website based in the United States which features useful information related to drugs and alcohol.</p>
www.heartfoundation.com.au	<p>Heart Foundation National Schools</p> <p>Information and advice on how to maintain a healthy heart.</p>
www.aihw.gov.au/drugs/index.html	<p>National Drug Strategy Household Survey results</p> <p>Log into the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare website for useful health data and the results of the latest National Drug Strategy Household Survey.</p>

www.fds.org.au	<p>Family Drug Support</p> <p>A website designed to assist families throughout Australia to deal with drug issues in a way that strengthens relationships and achieves positive outcomes. Features a section related to alcohol.</p>
www.drugarm.com.au	<p>Drug Awareness and Relief Movement</p> <p>The Queensland based Drug Awareness and Relief Movement's website offers links to education, prevention, counselling and outreach sites for drug issues.</p>
www.adf.org.au	<p>Australian Drug Foundation</p> <p>The Australian Drug Foundation (ADF) is an independent, non-profit organisation working to prevent and reduce drug problems in the community.</p>
makeanoise.ysp.org.au	<p>Make a Noise</p> <p>A website for young people on a range of health topics.</p>
www.druginfo.nsw.gov.au	<p>NSW Drug Information website</p> <p>Features information on a wide range of drugs including alcohol.</p>
www.oxygen.org.au	<p>OxyGen</p> <p>This site was launched by the Smarter than Smoking Project. It is supported by Quit (South Australian Smoking and Health Project), Western Australia Smarter than Smoking Project and Quit Victoria.</p>
www.aic.gov.au	<p>Australian Institute of Criminology</p> <p>The Institute is the national focus for the study of crime and criminal justice in Australia and for the dissemination of criminal justice information. The Institute draws on information supplied to it by a wide variety of sources and its policy advice is objective and independent.</p>
www.lawstuff.org.au	<p>Lawstuff</p> <p>National Children's and Youth Law Centre website, with information for each State.</p>
www.youth.nsw.gov.au	<p>Youth NSW</p> <p>Looks at a broad range of youth issues such as money, law, environment and housing.</p>
www.abc.net.au/triplej	<p>Triple J</p> <p>Listen to Triple J online. Features information on tours, festivals, sports and the top 50 music chart.</p>

<i>www.jobsearch.gov.au</i>	Australian Job Search Looking for a job? This is the site that will find you a job, traineeship or an apprenticeship.
<i>www.theprogram.net.au</i>	The Program Online creative arts space for young people.
<i>www.myfuture.edu.au</i>	Australia's career information service A joint Commonwealth, State and Territory government initiative.

Because of the nature of the internet, web addresses may change. Well managed sites, however, will direct you to the new address.

Website review questions

Here are some questions to think about when you are evaluating a website.

Is the site up to date?

Is the information accurate?

Is the source of information documented?

Is it clear who owns the site?

Is the owner the government? a not-for-profit organisation? commercial? an individual?

Does this person or organisation have any bias or personal interest that might influence the content of the site?

Who is the site for?

Are the design, content and activities suitable for the target group?

What are the main topics addressed?

Are the topics covered comprehensively?

Does the writer/owner have relevant expertise?

Does the site have good links?

Is it easy to find your way around the site? Does it have a search facility?

Resources

The following pages contain masters of Info sheets that can be photocopied for use by students during activities or for their general information.

They can also be:

- provided to parents
- reproduced in appropriate school newsletters
- used at Local School-Community Drug Summits.

They include facts and information about the various substances and health, social and legal issues around their use and misuse. References are also provided for where to go for further information.

If they are being provided to parents, highlight that they can find very good information aimed at parents at the National Drugs Campaign website (<http://www.drugs.health.gov.au/index.htm>), the National Alcohol Campaign website (<http://www.nationalalcoholcampaign.health.gov.au>) and the National Tobacco Campaign website (<http://www.quitnow.info.au/index1.html>).

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about TOBACCO

Cigarettes and cigars are made from the dried leaves of the tobacco plant. There are more than 4,000 substances found in tobacco smoke and around 200 of them, including nicotine and arsenic, are poisons.

Three of the most damaging substances that affect cigarette smokers are nicotine, tar and carbon monoxide.

- Nicotine is the main drug in tobacco. It stimulates the person's brain and increases the heart rate. Nicotine is addictive, so people who are used to having nicotine find it very difficult to go without it.
- Tar is the main cancer-causing substance in tobacco. It also stains people's teeth and skin.
- A lit cigarette produces the toxic gas carbon monoxide which, when inhaled, is absorbed into the bloodstream instead of oxygen. Carbon monoxide is associated with heart disease and contributes to the number of people who die from heart attacks.

TOBACCO info sheet

Laws about TOBACCO

It is illegal to sell or to supply tobacco products to people under the age of 18 years. Laws determine who can sell tobacco, where it can be sold as well as the age at which it can be bought. Each State and Territory has its own specific policies and laws about tobacco sales and use, including about smoking in restaurants, workplaces and on public transport.

'... in reality the majority of teenagers don't smoke.'

(Tom Carroll, My TVCD-ROM)

Passive SMOKING

Breathing in other people's cigarette smoke is called 'passive smoking'. Passive smoking affects everyone, both smokers and non-smokers.

Passive smoking can:

- bring on asthma attacks in some people
- cause lung cancer
- cause heart disease
- irritate the eyes, throat and airways.

effects Of tOBacco sMOKing

People who smoke tobacco have an increased risk of:

- cancer
- bronchitis and pneumonia
- developing emphysema, which makes it difficult to breathe and eventually causes death
- heart attack.

Smoking tobacco causes the deaths of about 19,000 Australians each year.

Women who smoke when they are pregnant have a higher risk of giving birth to smaller babies.

'Young people who smoke often have problems with their lungs, with asthma. And if they start playing footy or cricket they'll often find that they're getting short of breath or wheezy and basically they can't keep up with the other people of their age.' (Dr Martin Hocknell, My TV CD-ROM)

Other problems some people experience as a result of smoking tobacco include:

- reduced sense of smell and taste
- bad breath
- stained teeth and skin
- clothes that smell of smoke.

'... When people start smoking they don't really realise the damage that they're causing to their body now, but perhaps 10 or 20 years later on, they're going to regret that they ever started smoking.' (Dr Martin Hocknell, My TV CD-ROM)

MOre ON t#e internet

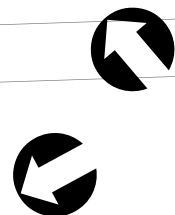
Australian Drug Foundation: <http://www.adf.org.au>

.u: <http://www.dotu.wa.gov.au/drugs>

Cancer Council Victoria: <http://www.quit.org.au>

National Tobacco Campaign: <http://www.quitnow.info.au/index1.html>

REDI website: www.redi.gov.au



about alcohol

Alcohol is one of the most commonly used drugs in Australia. In the past 12 months, more than 80% of people in Australia aged over 14 will have consumed alcohol.

Alcohol affects different people in different ways – it is a depressant which slows the heart rate and slows reaction times.

The taste and the amount of alcohol in an alcoholic drink depend on what it is made from and how it has been made:

- fermented drinks include beer and wine
- spirits, or distilled drinks, include such things as brandy, gin, rum, vodka and whisky – they have a higher alcohol content than beer and wine.

'While we see that the numbers of young people who drink increase as young people get older, it's certainly not the case that everyone drinks and nor do they drink on all occasions.' (Tom Carroll, My TV CD-ROM)

alcohol info sheet

Laws about alcohol

The laws and penalties for young people and alcohol vary slightly from State to State, but generally, if you are under 18 years of age:

- you are not permitted to drink on licensed premises
- it is an offence to use a fake ID to buy alcohol
- anyone who buys alcohol for you could be committing an offence
- anyone who sells you alcohol can be fined.

Laws restrict how much alcohol a person can drink before driving. People who have just learnt to drive cannot drink any alcohol before driving. Other laws about drinking and driving are different in each State and Territory.

For further information about laws and penalties, go to the Lawstuff website at <http://www.lawstuff.org.au/>

Social effects of alcohol use

Some people drink alcohol at social events because it makes them feel more relaxed. Unfortunately if they drink too much they have less self-control and may do things they later regret.

Some people get into fights when they have been drinking.

'Some people drink because they're feeling lonely, they have low self-esteem or they're pretty unhappy with life. But the problem is that alcohol actually makes things worse. It makes them more depressed.' (Dr Martin Hocknell, My TV CD-ROM)



PHYSICAL effects Of Drinking ALCOHOL

Alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream and travels to different parts of the body. It affects the control centres in the brain and thus the way a person behaves. The liver slowly breaks the alcohol down and removes it from the bloodstream.

Alcohol affects people in different ways:

- a small amount of alcohol may make you feel relaxed and you may find it a bit difficult to concentrate
- a lot of alcohol may make you confused, have difficulty walking, and become nauseated and vomit
- too much alcohol can make you become aggressive and violent
- in large amounts, alcohol can cause coma and even death.

Alcohol is an addictive drug. A person who is addicted to alcohol ('alcohol dependent') will experience withdrawal symptoms and find it very difficult to go without alcohol. Excessive alcohol drinking can damage the liver and heart and cause permanent brain damage.

Each year about 4,000 Australians die from alcohol-related causes.

ALCOHOL increases the risk Of accidents

'In 1998 we saw over 1,500 young Australians die as a result of using drugs. Overwhelmingly alcohol is the major problem. Fifty per cent of young Australians who die from drug-related deaths die as a result of alcohol.'
(Paul Dillon, My TVCD-ROM)

Drinking alcohol increases the risk of having an accident because it slows down the drinker's reaction time. It is not safe to drink alcohol and drive a car, ride a bicycle, or go boating, fishing or swimming or operate machinery of any kind.

People who have drunk too much alcohol are also more likely to take risks and injure themselves or put themselves in danger.

If a person has had too much alcohol it is important that someone sober stays with them because they may need help in case they get very sick or injure themselves.



MORE ON THE internet

Australian Drug Foundation: <http://www.adf.org.au>

.u: <http://www.dotu.wa.gov.au/drugs>

National Alcohol Campaign: <http://www.nationalalcoholcampaign.health.gov.au/>

REDI website: www.redi.gov.au



about Cannabis

Cannabis is an illegal drug. The word 'cannabis' is used to describe the various substances made from the plant *Cannabis sativa*. The plant contains the active ingredient, *delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol* - THC - which depresses the central nervous system and has hallucinogenic qualities.

The most common forms of cannabis are:

- marijuana - made from the dried leaves and flowers - this is the least powerful form of cannabis
- hashish - small blocks of dried cannabis resin - THC is more concentrated in the resin than in the leaves
- hashish oil - the extract of hashish in the form of a thick, oily liquid - the most powerful form of cannabis.

Cannabis is also known as dope, mull, gunja, pot, grass, weed, hash, buddha, reefer, herb, joint, stick, buckets, cones.

Cannabis info sheet

Laws about Cannabis

Cannabis is illegal in all Australian States and Territories, but each one has its own policies and laws. Some States and Territories have decriminalised the use of cannabis. Decriminalisation means that a behaviour, such as personal use or cultivation of cannabis, remains illegal but is not treated as a criminal offence.

Driving a car while under the influence of a drug, including cannabis, is illegal. You can be disqualified from driving, fined or imprisoned if you break this law.

SOME facts about Cannabis Use

- 29% of all secondary students aged between 14 and 17 years have reported the use of cannabis at some point in their lives*.
- Although experimentation with cannabis has increased over the past few years, regular users remain a minority**.
- Most users of marijuana do not use other drugs**.
- The majority - about $\frac{2}{3}$ - of people who have ever used cannabis are now ex-users**.

*Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug Survey (ASSAD), 1999.

**2001 National Drug Strategy Household Survey.

effects Of Cannabis

The effects of cannabis use depend on the strength of the dose and the personal characteristics of the user. Cannabis use carries a risk of harm as there is no quality control of the drug – you don't know what you are actually using.

'Smoking anything is basically unhealthy, so whether you are smoking a legal or an illegal drug, it's basically an unhealthy thing to do. It's going to damage your breathing system, your lungs, your throat, your tongue ...'

(Robert Bosi, *On the Edge* CD-ROM)

Some first time cannabis users report that they experience no effects.

People who have taken cannabis will often have red eyes, feel hungry and/or dizzy and have impaired balance and coordination and may experience hallucinations, depending on the amount and strength of the drug they have taken.

It is not safe to operate machinery, drive a car, ride a bicycle, or go boating, fishing or swimming under the influence of cannabis.

Short term effects: feeling relaxed, lowered inhibitions, talking and laughing more than usual, headaches, nausea, red eyes, feeling confused or anxious, memory loss.

Long term effects: damaged memory, impaired concentration, reduced motivation, lung disease.



Cannabis and Mental Illness

Some people experience very unpleasant psychological effects when they use cannabis, such as severe anxiety or panic attacks. At very high doses, confusion, delusions and hallucinations may also occur, but this is uncommon. These effects usually don't last after the effects of the cannabis wear off.

Recent studies have found a link between regular smoking of cannabis by girls and depression in adulthood, and between the use of cannabis by young people and mental illness such as schizophrenia.

The only way to avoid possible harms is not to use cannabis.



Drug use may be a way of controlling feelings and coping with emotional pain but it doesn't solve problems.



More On the internet

Australian Drug Foundation: <http://www.adf.org.au>

.u: <http://www.dotu.wa.gov.au/drugs>

REDI website: www.redi.gov.au

about ecstasy

Ecstasy is an illegal drug that is synthetically manufactured. It is *Methylene-dioxymethamphetamine* - MDMA - and has the properties of amphetamines and hallucinogens. Amphetamines speed up the nervous system while hallucinogens affect the way a person perceives the world - they may see or hear things in a distorted way or that are not there.

'Ecstasy is a stimulant, it's a drug that speeds you up. It's got similar properties to things like amphetamines, speed, go-ey, whizz. They're the kind of things people use to stay up all night, but not many people use it, it's mostly a party scene drug.'
(Robert Bosi, *On the Edge* CD-ROM)

ecstasy info sheet

Laws about ecstasy

Ecstasy is illegal in Australia. Throughout Australia there are penalties for possessing, using, making or selling ecstasy.

Driving a car while under the influence of a drug, including ecstasy, is illegal. You can be disqualified from driving, fined or imprisoned if you break this law.

Effects Of ecstasy

Ecstasy use carries a risk of harm beyond the actual effects of the drug (MDMA) as there is no quality control - you don't know what you are actually taking or the conditions under which it has been manufactured. Tablets sold as ecstasy are just as likely to contain compounds of other drugs and include very little MDMA.

Immediately after taking ecstasy many people experience an increase in heart rate, body temperature and blood pressure.



effects Of ecstasy (Cont)

Other effects of ecstasy:

- jaw clenching, teeth grinding
- nausea
- feelings of confidence
- feelings of wellbeing and closeness to others
- anxiety
- loss of appetite
- sweating
- convulsions
- insomnia
- vomiting
- hallucinations.

As the drug wears off the person may experience depression, anxiety, paranoia and fatigue and have difficulty concentrating.



Health risks and ecstasy

Taking ecstasy can cause death through:

- heart attack or brain haemorrhage
- dilutional hyponatremia (where the person's brain swells from too much fluid intake, resulting in coma)
- overheating, where the effects of the drug combined with dancing raises the body temperature to dangerous levels and the body loses the ability to cool off.

The risks of physical and psychological harm are increased for people who have hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, liver problems, epilepsy and/or a history of mental illness or panic attacks.

Health risks are increased when ecstasy is mixed with other drugs.



More on the internet

Australian Drug Foundation: <http://www.adf.org.au>

.u: <http://www.dotu.wa.gov.au/drugs>

REDI website: www.redi.gov.au