

“Partying Safer” Brainstorm

Recommended Age: 14+

Goals

- To identify harm reduction tools and strategies.
- To link youth to resources where they can go for help.

Have Ready

- Flipchart paper titled, “Staying Safer When Using Drugs or Alcohol.”
- Markers and tape.
- Art supplies (optional Alternative or Extended activity).

Instructions

- Let youth know, **“Often, the best way to be safer with substances is not to use them at all. However, this is not always a choice that people can or want to make, which is why it’s important to know how to reduce the harms when using.”** Even when people aren’t using substances, it’s a good idea to have information on how to stay safer in order to help others.
- Tell youth, **“Let’s brainstorm a list of things that could keep us safer at a party where people might be drinking or using drugs.”**
- Have youth flipchart ways to be safer in 2-3 small groups.

Alternative or Extended Activity:

- Have youth brainstorm ways of partying safer. In small groups or individually, have youth create drawings or posters with the messages. These can be put up in a classroom, school, or community centre, or shared on social media.

Note to Facilitators

For northern and remote communities, include factors for safety considering local realities, such as use of boats, skidoos, winter roads, landscape, weather, wildlife, bodies of water, etc. Include examples such as dress for the weather, especially in winter, have a sober driver on the water or ice in boats, trucks, and skidoos, etc.

Sample Flipcharts

Staying Safer When Using Drugs or Alcohol:

- **Buddy system, have someone you trust around**
- **Safe way home or place to crash** (know the bus route, including last bus home, have cab or bus fare stash, designated driver, or arrange to sleepover at a friend's house. Buddy system is important here, because it's not always safe to travel alone).
- **Drink water and eat food**
- **Know your limits** (if six beers make you fall down drunk, consider bringing only two or three)
- **Start low, go slow** to see how your body responds
- **Take breaks**
- **Don't mix substances**, as it increases the chances of an overdose
- **Watch your drink and do not put things in other people's drinks**
- **Don't share equipment, such as straws, bills, needles, cooking gear, etc.**
- **Carry condoms**
- **Know your dealer**
- Know the laws for your community
- Eat edibles or vaporize cannabis instead of smoking it. If you choose to smoke, the longer you hold it in and the deeper the inhalation, the more potential harm to your lungs.
- Know what strain you're using and its effects (THC vs. CBD levels)
- If possible, delay the use of cannabis until early adulthood, as it will lower the chances of negatively affecting brain development
- Know family mental health history
- Try to use with people or in an environment that is comfortable for you

- If having a bad trip, try to go to a place that is quiet and ideally with a person who can ‘talk you down.’
- Injecting drugs:
 - rotate injection sites
 - use new needles every time
 - get new needles from Street Connections
 - safely dispose of used needles
- Inhalants:
 - try not to spray directly into your mouth
 - try not to light a match or use a lighter, because inhalants are highly flammable
 - try to use it in an open space rather than in a confined space

Additional Considerations for Dry Communities:

- **Drinking real alcohol that has been made to go in a human body,** although it’s more expensive/harder to get, it is safer than homebrew.
- **If drinking homebrew or alcohol not made to go in the body, drink only small amounts and give it time to take effect.** Each batch is different and because it can be so strong, the risk is that it can shut kidneys down quickly and it still ferments in the body, so poisoning can happen faster.
- **It is especially important to take breaks for your body to recover.**
- Tell someone when you’re leaving and tell them which way you are going to get there so they know when to expect or look for you.
- Know who you’re buying from.
- Take a friend when you’re buying.
- Know the risk (punishments) of getting caught by band constables and the RCMP (can be very different).
- Know that if ‘the rez is dry’ (no hoots or booze left), you don’t have to keep looking. It might be a good time to take a break for a little while.

Substance Use & Sexual Decision-Making Debrief

- When people are drunk or high, they can make decisions that they might not normally make, and they are in a vulnerable state. This means that getting someone’s consent when they are under the

influence isn't true (or legal) consent. Under the influence means that there is an outside factor (the substance) impacting a person's decision-making ability.

- Let youth know, **“Consent is enthusiastic and clear permission, which means that only yes means yes.** It's also a voluntary agreement, which means it's something that people freely decide to do together. Sex or making out should be enjoyable for everyone involved, because that's the point!”
- It's never okay to pressure, guilt or manipulate someone into having sex or making out. That is not consent; it is sexual coercion and assault.
- **Getting another person drunk or high in order to have sex with them is sexual assault. Asking someone who is really drunk or high to have sex or make out is not okay. It's never okay to take advantage of someone when they are drunk or high.**
- **What are some ways people can respect or take care of someone when they are drunk or high?** Bring them water, help them get home safely (if they need your help), ask them how they are doing, watch out for them, etc. **It is obvious that there is a very clear difference between showing someone respect and care when they are drunk or high versus taking advantage of them.**
- **If you have ever dealt with or are dealing with sexual assault, it is never your fault, and you have a right to get support.** You can access support for sexual assault or being taken advantage of, even if you were in a relationship with the other person, or if alcohol or drugs were involved. It can help to talk to someone you trust. **The Sexual Assault Crisis Line is a great resource that people can call if they need to talk. It is open 24/7 and free to call from anywhere in Manitoba. Their phone number is 1.888.292.7565 or 204.786.8631.** If someone wanted in-person counselling, they could call 204.784-4049 for Sexual Assault Intake.
- If someone tells you that they have experienced sexual assault, it's important to be supportive. Some things that are important to say are: “It's not your fault,” “I believe you,” “I'm sorry that happened,” “How can I support you,” and “You deserve support.” You can also give them resources mentioned already, such as the Sexual Assault Crisis Line. You can offer to be there with them when they call that line, if that would be helpful for them. You can also call that line to get more information about how to support that person.

- Drugs and alcohol can also affect how safe sex is. Drugs and alcohol can increase the likelihood of sex and decrease how safe the sex is.ⁱ That's why it is important to think ahead about ways to reduce the risk of unplanned pregnancy or STIs/HIV when using. Ask youth, **“If sex might be a possibility in a situation where people are drunk or high, what are ways they could be safer?”** Carry condoms, talk about boundaries when you are sober, have a buddy system, check in with each other, decide to do other activities that are lower-risk, or decide to have sex or make out when sober instead. Note: The relationship between alcohol and sexual violence is complex. The association of sex and alcohol consumption is normalized in our dominant culture. Yet harmful use of alcohol is a risk factor for both experiencing and perpetrating sexual violence. It has been estimated that as many as 50-70% of sexual assaults are linked to alcohol use. Most alcohol-related sexual violence occurs between individuals who are known to each other, most often at parties and in bars, or in dating relationships. Alcohol (the drink itself) is the number one date rape drug.ⁱⁱ

Substance Use & Pregnancy Debrief

- **During a pregnancy, it is best to not drink or reduce use as much as possible. Alcohol use can seriously harm a fetus and can cause Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).** Because of addiction, coping/trauma, or lack of information, people might use during a pregnancy. It's helpful to support someone during a pregnancy and not shame or judge them for using.
- Ask youth, **“How can we support someone who is pregnant?”** **Not drink around them, listen and not judge them,** do fun things with them, offer to go to appointments with them, bring them food, etc.

Additional Activities

Ideally, this activity can be followed by:

- Refusal Skills Brainstorm
- Abstinence Activities Scenario Cards & Brainstorm
- Decisional Balancing Reflection

ⁱFielder, R. L., & Carey, M. P. (2009). Predictors and consequences of sexual “hookups” among college students: A short-term prospective study. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 39(5), 1105–1119.

ⁱⁱThe Government of Nova Scotia. (n.d.). Sexual violence: A public health primer. In *Nova Scotia* (pp. 1–6). Retrieved June 22, 2021, from <https://novascotia.ca/coms/svs/docs/primer.pdf>