 A call to action

Suggested duration: 50 minutes

These activities require students to recognise an emergency, and analyse the effectiveness of a number of strategies that might be used to manage drug and alcohol related emergencies.

Course outcomes

1.1 Assess personal strengths and skills to achieve positive outcomes in a range of challenging and changing situations.

1.2 Critically evaluate services and resources to identify sources of reliable information and support.

1.3 Build positive thinking, self-belief and a sense of empowerment to take action to promote meaningful futures for self and others.

7.2 Demonstrate the capacity to seek help for self and others.

7.3 Apply skills to take personal responsibility for their actions to protect and enhance the independence, health, safety and wellbeing of others.

What do we want students to know, understand or be able to do?

* Recognise an emergency situation and develop strategies around appropriate responses.
* Challenge common myths around how to manage a situation where someone has passed out from drug or alcohol use.
* Develop strategies designed to look out for the safety of others.
* Understand when to call for help and how to do so.
* Apply first aid in drug and alcohol related emergencies.

Suggested content

| Learning context | Content |
| --- | --- |
| Drugs and alcohol  Focus: Making safe and responsible choices | Responsible behaviour   * protective strategies in drug and alcohol related situations * responsible behaviour in venues * responsible behaviour in other environments, e.g. end of school celebrations, festivals and concerts, public places, parties, moving between venues   Accessing information, support and services   * accessing and assessing reliable information, support and services * supporting yourself and others * recognising an emergency situation * calling for help * applying first aid in drug related situations |

Teaching notes

Sometimes medical emergencies occur when drugs and/or alcohol have been consumed. These emergencies can get worse as a result of the impaired judgement of the parties involved. Many young people make poor decisions in emergency situations. These poor decisions may be a result of their fear of getting into trouble with parents or the police, an inability to recognise the seriousness of the situation and common myths that exist in the community.

The skills required to effectively manage an emergency situation are vital. Acting quickly in an emergency can be the difference between life and death. To complete these activities, it is assumed students have some background knowledge of DRSABCD, CPR and basic first aid from the completion of 7-10 PDHPE. Schools may wish to pursue further emergency first aid qualifications with their students if appropriate.

Creating a safe and supportive learning environment

There are a number of strategies that can be used to create a supportive learning environment which enables students to feel safe to learn and ask questions. They include:

* Making students aware at the beginning of Life Ready sessions that disclosing personal information that indicates they may be at risk of harm will be reported to the school principal in all instances. This includes personal disclosures related to instances of abuse, drug use, neglect or sexual activity under the legal age of consent.
* Being aware that some parts of Life Ready can be confronting and sensitive for some students.
* Enabling students to withdraw if they find issues personally confronting to protect them from making harmful disclosures. Equally, it is important to be prepared for issues that arise as a result of a student making a public disclosure in the classroom.

Be sensitive to cultural protocols that may be relevant to certain members of intended audiences when previewing materials. The department’s [Audiovisual materials in schools - procedures for use](https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/controversial-issues-in-schools?refid=285776) provides advice for schools with regard to the use of audio-visual material including films, videos, DVDs and computer games classified by the Classification Board and Classification Review Board.

More information on creating a safe and supportive learning environment can be found on the [Life Ready website.](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/pdhpe/life-ready)

Evaluating resources before use

Preview and evaluate all strategies, resources and teaching and learning approaches in full before use with students to determine suitability for student learning needs, stage of development and local school context. Consider the age, maturity, cultural background, sexuality, gender, sex, health and other characteristics of students in your care. Apply professional judgements to all strategies, teaching and learning approaches and resources including audiovisual materials (e.g. videos, media clips and YouTube), interactive web-based content (e.g. games, quizzes and websites) and texts.

Use the [resource review flowchart](https://schoolsequella.det.nsw.edu.au/file/083acd3a-daca-4307-9afe-bc6c888f694a/1/final-resource-flowchart-html5.zip/index.html) to decide about the suitability of teaching and learning resources.

Materials should be reviewed in full and endorsed by the school principal before use in NSW government schools.

Communication with parents and caregivers

Some aspects of Life Ready may be viewed as sensitive or controversial, such as learning about abuse, child protection, drugs, respectful relationships, sexual health, sexuality and violence. Inform parents and carers, prior to the occasion, of the specific details of the Life Ready program, so that parents and caregivers have time to exercise their rights of withdrawing their child from a particular session. In this regard, a parents or caregiver’s wish must be respected.

Establishing how parents and caregivers will be informed about programs and involved in consultation is a school-based decision. Where parents and caregivers indicate they wish to withdraw their child from a program it is useful to negotiate which parts of the Life Ready program they are concerned about. A sample information letter is available on the [Life Ready website](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/key-learning-areas/pdhpe/life-ready).

Learning experiences

Activity one – Recognising drug and alcohol related emergencies (5 minutes)

1. As a class, brainstorm things that could go wrong when drugs and/or alcohol have been consumed. Ask students to specifically consider the medical emergencies that might be faced in these situations. Possible ideas include:

* overdose
* vomiting
* violence and assault
* difficulty breathing
* heart attack
* injury
* hallucinations
* paranoia or psychosis
* loss of consciousness
* drowning
* unexpected reaction
* car accident
* sexual assault
* drink spiking
* seizures.

Activity two – Scenarios (30 minutes)

1. Students work in small groups with one of the four drug and alcohol related emergency scenarios. Students read the scenario.
2. Students are provided with an Emergency Action Sheet for review. The Emergency Action Sheet lists possible strategies that could be used in an emergency.

* Ask students to identify and record any other possible actions that might be missing.
* In small groups, students discuss the effectiveness of each strategy listed on the Emergency Action Sheet for their scenario. Students should record their group’s reasoning to share with the whole group.

1. After completing the task, invite each group to share their scenario and discussions with the whole group. Facilitate discussion as a whole group using guidance from the teacher notes as required.

Activity three – Emergency first aid (15 minutes)

1. As a group, step through the DRSABCD action plan for revision. Websites where students can access more information include:

* [St John Ambulance](http://stjohn.org.au/first-aid-facts)
* [Australian Red Cross](http://www.redcross.org.au/useful-resources.aspx)

1. In pairs, students use the scenario from Activity 2.

* Identify the potential injuries or health problems that the person in this scenario may face.
* Explain how you would apply the DRSABCD action plan to this scenario.

Extension activity

If schools have access to resuscitation manikins, students could practise the skills that may be required in applying first aid in an emergency, including putting someone in the recovery position and applying CPR.

Emergency scenarios

Scenario 1:

Hannah is 17. At the end of Year 12, she is invited to a party with most of the people in her year group. She doesn’t normally drink much alcohol, but she has decided that at this party she will have a few drinks. After finishing the drinks that she took to the party, she joins in some drinking games and is given some more drinks by some of her friends. She starts sharing a bottle of vodka, and is offered some shots by some boys in her class. A little while later, her friends find her passed out in the garden.

Scenario 2:

Naomi and Zahra go to a music festival. Someone in their group offers them an ecstasy tablet. It is a hot day and they have been dancing in the mosh pit for a few hours. Naomi tells Zahra that she is feeling really thirsty so they go to get a drink of water. While they are standing in line to buy water, Naomi collapses.

Scenario 3:

Tinu and Chris are hanging out one afternoon after school at Tinu’s place. There is no one else at home. Chris suggests that they try a tablet that one of the boys at school has given him. Both take a tablet to see the effects. Chris starts acting strangely. He takes off his clothes, and starts running around the back yard. He keeps shouting “Get away from me. Stop chasing me.” He then goes into the kitchen to get a knife.

Scenario 4:

Vlatko and some of his close friends have recently turned 18 and finished exams, so they decide to go out to celebrate. After having a few drinks at one pub, they decide to move on to another venue. Outside the pub, another man makes some comments to Vlatko, so he starts making some aggressive comments back. The other man comes over and punches him in the face. Vlatko falls over and hits his head on the concrete.

Emergency action sheet

| Possible strategy | Would you use this strategy? (Yes/No) | Explain the reasons for choosing to use or not use each strategy in your emergency scenario. |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Call the ambulance | none | None |
| Call their parents | None | None |
| Get them to eat something | None | None |
| Put them in a cold shower | None | None |
| Put them in the recovery position | None | None |
| Get them to drink some water | None | None |
| Find somewhere quiet for them to sleep it off | None | None |
| Follow the DRSABCD procedure | None | none |
| Take them home and put them to bed | None | None |
| Other strategy: | None | None |
| Other strategy: | none | None |

Emergency action sheet – Teacher notes

Call the ambulance

If the person is unconscious, having difficulty breathing, suffering any life threatening symptoms or other serious injuries, it is essential that an ambulance is called as soon as possible. Give the paramedics as much information as possible, including what drugs or alcohol the person has taken.

Sometimes people do not call the ambulance when illegal drugs are involved because they are worried that they might get into trouble with the police. Paramedics are concerned with saving lives, not getting people into trouble. Police will not attend an ambulance call-out unless they are needed to deal with other issues, such as violence. Failure to call the ambulance might cost someone his or her life.

Call parents

Calling a responsible adult, like the person’s parents, is often a good idea as they can help you deal with the situation, especially if they are nearby. If you are also under the influence of drugs or alcohol, it is likely that your decisions and actions will be impaired, meaning that you could use the extra help from someone who is thinking clearly. Even though parents might be angry, making sure that you and your friends are safe is much more important than any trouble or embarrassment that might be faced later.

Get them to eat something

If someone is unconscious, you must not put any food or drink in their mouth as they may choke on it. Forcing someone to eat food is never a good idea, and it will not make any difference to how quickly they sober up anyway. The only way for someone to sober up is to allow enough time for the body to process the drug.

Put them in a cold shower

Putting someone in a cold shower will not sober someone up, and it can be very dangerous if the person is unconscious because they may slip and hit their head, or they may drown if they lie face down in the water.

Put them in the recovery position

If someone is unconscious or if they want to lie down, it is important that they are put in the recovery position so that their airway is kept clear of any blockages, such as the tongue, food or vomit. When they are in the recovery position, they should be monitored until help arrives.

Get them to drink some water

Dehydration and heat stroke can be side effects of some drugs, particularly ecstasy. They are also a common problem at festivals and concerts, even when drugs have not been used. If someone is dehydrated or suffering heat stroke, give them small sips of water if they are conscious and are able to swallow. They should not gulp large amounts, because drinking large amounts of water after taking ecstasy can lead to death. To treat heatstroke, you should also move them to a cold and quiet place, loosen tight clothing, apply a wet cloth to back of neck, and seek medical help. If someone is unconscious, whether it is caused by drugs, alcohol or any other cause, you must not put anything in their mouth, including water, as they may choke on it.

Find somewhere quiet to sleep it off

Leaving someone to sleep it off by themselves when they have passed out from drugs or alcohol, or when they have hit their head, can be extremely dangerous. If you cannot get a response from the person, do not assume that they are asleep. If someone can’t be woken after consuming alcohol or other drugs, or after hitting their head, it’s very important that they receive medical help as soon as possible. Keep monitoring them until medical help arrives.

Follow the DRSABCD procedure

If you are dealing with a person who is unconscious, you should follow the DRSABCD procedure, including sending for help if you are unable to get a response. If you are also under the influence of drugs or alcohol, find a responsible adult, such as parents, venue staff, security staff, etc. to manage the emergency and apply the DRSABCD procedure.

Take them home and put them to bed

The same applies here as finding somewhere for them to sleep it off. If someone looks like they are sleeping and can’t be woken after consuming alcohol or using other drugs, or after hitting their head, it’s very important that they receive medical help as soon as possible. If you are able to get a response from them, do not leave them by themselves until you are sure that they are okay. This may mean waking their parents when you drop them home.

Sources:

NSW Department of Education, [Turning 18: Drugs, alcohol and celebrating safely](http://www.turning18.com.au/)

[Australian Red Cross, Save a Mate](http://www.saveamate.org.au)

[St John Ambulance Australia, First Aid Facts](http://stjohn.org.au/first-aid-facts)

Australian Drug Foundation, [Drug Info – facts and resources about drugs and alcohol](http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au)

Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia, [Fact Sheet 2 – How to look after a drunk friend](http://darta.net.au/wordpress-content/uploads/2010/10/Factsheet-2.pdf),

National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre 2014, Illegal drugs – what you need to know, University of NSW, Sydney.