Models and frameworks that assist in assessing alcohol and other drug use

Provided by Drug & Alcohol Services South Australia (2012)

Harm Minimisation: examples

- Seatbelts
- Bike helmets
- Traffic lights
- Condoms
- Standard drinks/ responsible service of alcohol
- Random breath testing
- Clean Needle Program
Harm minimisation: Alcohol and Other Drugs

- Supported by the National Drug Strategy (1985 onwards)
- An approach that aims to reduce the adverse health, social and economic consequences of alcohol and other drug use
- Distinguished from other approaches by emphasis on decreasing problems rather than decreasing consumption itself
- Comprises three interrelated strategies:
  - Supply reduction
  - Demand reduction
  - Harm reduction

- Harm Reduction
  - Is value neutral: neither encourages nor condones drug use
  - The goal is the reduction of drug related harm rather than drug use per se
  - Strategies acknowledge continuum of drug use as well as abstinence

Continuum of drug use

No drug use | Experimental use | Regular use | Dependent

Prevention | Community education and health promotion | Counselling / treatment
Thorley’s model (1982)

• Problems arise from the way the substance is used. A common misconception is that if someone has a drug issue they must be dependent. The person may have only been experimenting with the drug for a short time but may have experienced an issue related to their use such as a health consequence, legal issue or been exposed to Hepatitis C.

• Thorley’s model explains that problems may arise from intoxication, excessive regular use and dependency. The person may be using a range of different substances and have different patterns of use for each e.g. dependent on tobacco, regularly drinking alcohol and occasionally using cannabis.

• The model helps to identify the pattern of use and apply an appropriate intervention to be matched to the issues occurring for the person.

Intoxication and regular use

Intoxication

• Can be a one off event, experimentation or more frequent
• Occurs when people use more of the substance than the body can tolerate.
• Can affect behaviour, thinking and judgement.
• Effects of intoxication are unpredictable and can vary depending on the level of experience the person has with the substance.
• Intoxicated people may be agitated, excitable, relaxed through to unconscious. Reaction time, judgement and coordination can be affected.

Excessive regular use

• Using several times a week and perhaps in larger amounts as tolerance increases
• As drug use becomes more frequent, the risks and associated problems increase leading to health, relationship, legal, financial and social issues
Dependence

Dependence

- Occurs when substances are used in large amounts over an extended period of time.
- As tolerance increases the person needs more of the substance to get the same effect.
- The degree of dependence relates to the priority that is given to obtaining and using the substance and how this behaviour is impacting on the person’s life.

Thorley’s model (1982)

- Intoxication
  - Use is starting to impact on health, relationships, affecting ability to meet obligations, financial, legal and social issues.
  - Examples are: significant health issues, loss of relationships, not meeting obligations, financial, legal and social issues.

- Regular use

- Dependence
  - Issues can include risk taking, absenteeism, unwanted and unprotected sex, violence, accidents and injury.
Zinberg (1984)

• Zinberg’s model provides a comprehensive approach to viewing all the factors that need to be considered when addressing drug-use issues.

• Zinberg emphasised the importance of viewing drug use in a context of three variables:
  – the substance: the drug and its pharmaceutical properties
  – the set: the individual characteristics of the user
  – the setting: the influence of the physical and social environment in which drug use takes place

Zinberg (1984)

• This has become known as the Interaction model and recognises that no person’s drug use is totally ‘good’ or ‘bad’.
• A major consideration is the balance of costs and benefits.
• The model suggests that drug use in one setting may be relatively problem free, while in another setting it may be problematic.
• For example, a few drinks with friends at a barbecue at home may be low risk and create few problems; however, should someone in this group decide to drive home or go to work, the level of risk and potential harm to self and others will increase significantly.
Zinberg (1984)

![Diagram showing Substance (drug) connected to Set (individual) and Setting (environment). Set examples: physical and mental health, skills, confidence etc. Setting examples: accommodation, influences from the media, socio-economic situation, relationships, support, where substance is used (home, park, pub) etc. Examples for Substance: prescribed, legal, illegal, over the counter.]

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)

1300 13 13 40
24-hour confidential advice, referral and information telephone service

Needle Clean Up Hotline
For the nearest CNP phone ADIS