

User's News

UN

FESTIVALS

ISSUE #93
SUMMER 19-20

YOUR RIGHTS WITH THE COPS

HANG HARM REDUCTION

ESSENTIAL DOOF TIPS

TRIP SITTING 101

PILL TESTING



Serotonin Syndrome / MDMA Overdose

Taking MDMA increases the level of serotonin and other neurotransmitters (chemicals used to transmit electrical signals) available in your brain, which is what gives the drug its 'feel-good' effects. However, having too much serotonin available in your brain can be very harmful, and sometimes leads to what is known as Serotonin Syndrome. Serotonin Syndrome can be fatal, and was a factor in some of the MDMA-related deaths at NSW music festivals last summer. MDMA use alone can lead to serotonin syndrome, although the risk is dramatically increased when combining MDMA with certain other drugs or supplements.

What are the risks?

Serotonin syndrome can happen to anyone. You are at increased risk if:

- You use cocaine, amphetamines, or LSD together with MDMA (these drugs also increase serotonin levels)
- You recently started taking or increased the dose of a medication known to increase serotonin levels (e.g. many antidepressants, DXM, Tramadol)
- You take herbal supplements known to increase serotonin levels (e.g. St John's Wort, Ginseng, Nutmeg)
- You take more than one substance known to increase serotonin levels.

What are the warning signs?

Some people have compared serotonin syndrome to "the most uncomfortable MDMA come-up imaginable". Serotonin syndrome symptoms will usually occur within a few hours of taking MDMA, or when you add other drugs into the mix.

Common signs and symptoms include: hyperactivity, confusion, agitation/restlessness, fever, racing heartbeat (tachycardia), high blood pressure, shivering/goose bumps, headache, vomiting, diarrhea, involuntary muscle movements (twitching/shaking, jaw clenching/teeth grinding), heavy sweating, and eye-wobbles.

Life threatening symptoms include: high fever (with or without sweating), seizures, irregular heartbeat, and unconsciousness.

What should you do?

- Mild reactions are often considered to simply be a part of the MDMA experience – however, serotonin syndrome comes on quickly and often gets worse before it gets better.
- If you or those around you start to experience these symptoms, you should seek medical help as soon as possible – go see DanceWize NSW or First Aid if you're at a festival, or call 000 if elsewhere.
- If you're unsure if someone needs help, just ask, and ask early! The earlier you or your friends seek treatment, the more likely you are to recover smoothly.
- Mild cases are best treated by rest in a cool environment. Moderate or severe cases are likely to require cooling, fluid replacement, and potentially sedation and hospitalisation.

How to reduce the risk?

- Smaller doses when you're partying – start low and go slow!
- Drink water, physical rest, avoid overheating
- Avoid using more than one drug at once (poly-drug use)
- Avoid combining MDMA with other substances that affect serotonin - (including, but not limited to; cocaine, amphetamines, some prescribed MAOI or SSRI antidepressants, St Johns Wort, Ginseng, and other herbal remedies. Do your own research if combining any drugs!)

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EDITORIAL

USER'S NEWS #93

My name's Thomas, I'm 22 years old, and I work at NUAA in the Publications team who are responsible for the very magazine you are reading right now. I thought an introduction was appropriate because I am your guest editor for this edition of User's News (no need to fret, our beloved editor Leah will be back for the next one).

Quickly - I've been volunteering in NUAA's program DanceWize NSW for three years and working at NUAA for one year. Since age 16 I've used lots of drugs in a lot of different contexts, but I must admit that working at a harm reduction organisation run by people who use drugs has been eye-opening in more ways than one. I guess where I'm going with this is that there's a big problem in our community of drug users - lateral violence towards one another.

LATERAL VIOLENCE IS WHEN WE, AS DRUG USERS, DISCRIMINATE AGAINST OTHER PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS.

Lateral violence is when we act harmfully towards our peers, rather than our shared enemies. Lateral violence is when people who take MDMA every second weekend think they're just having fun, while also believing that meth and anyone who touches it is putrid, despite the fact that they've almost certainly had some in a cap before. Lateral violence is daily weed smokers thinking that people on the methadone program are junkies and shouldn't be allowed to drive, despite there being no evidence saying it's any riskier to drive when your treatment is stable. Lateral violence is when we, as drug users, discriminate against other people who use drugs.

This edition of User's News is focused on festivals, and we're hoping to reach a few new people with this edition. Hopefully, our usual reader's will still take something useful away from this edition - even if you haven't been to a festival, rave, or doof in years. Let's leave the stigma and discrimination to less high-brow publications (looking at you, News Corp) and remember that everyone who uses drugs is subject to prohibition and all of its harms.

We need to work together. We need to bridge these gaps. I think that NUAA is doing an excellent job in this respect, and has been for many years. Although a lot of our focus is on reducing the harms associated with using meth and opioids, for many years now this organisation has also been delivering frontline harm reduction and education to ravers, festival goers, and everyone in between.

Mainstream media, politicians, and the criminal justice system have, in my opinion, played a huge role in demonising, demoralising, paternalising, and of course criminalising people who use drugs. Straighty-180s and users alike fall victim to these mind games, and the resulting stigma and discrimination towards people who use drugs has serious and often tragic real-world consequences.

That's where we step in. As a community-based organisation, NUAA doesn't have to put out content that will keep advertisers happy or appeal to everyone. All we want to do is make sure our people aren't putting themselves in unnecessary harm. We don't have to pull our punches or bite our tongues when fighting for justice. All we have to do is remember what the drug-user movement has achieved and keep fighting against the oppression and mind-numbing boredom of everyday life.

Stay safe fam
Thomas xx

NUAA would like to show respect and acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation as the rightful owners of the land on which User's News is published. We respectfully acknowledge all Aboriginal nations where this magazine is distributed. This country has always been, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

DEAR UN

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the editor;

Why do people feel the need to attend meetings where they receive affirmation and congratulations from other people who supposedly manage life unmedicated? These meetings mean affirmation for some people, but discrimination for others. It all just contributes to more stigma.

There are millions of people being medicated each day with something to help them function in this challenging world. So what if some people don't need this help to cope? It does not make them superior to anyone else.

We are all the same inside – like all animals, we suffer from fear and anxiety. It's part of our DNA, our survival instinct - if we didn't have it none of us would be alive. Some people cope better than others, sure, but that has more to do with having a balanced upbringing, facing less adversity, and making 'better' choices if you will.

This business of seeking other's validation that we are on the 'right path' is corrupt. How dare people treat others with downcast smirking eyes, mocking others because they're not up to standard – their standard.

It'll be a fine day when people start accepting each other as is – no qualifications, no perfect looks, no need for a scintillating personality at all time. Do I worry about taking meds? Yes. And then I think, oh dear, I'm not perfect!

- Anon (response to 'Blair's Story' published in UN93)

Thank you for writing, my friend

We know that 12-step programs, like Narcotics Anonymous, work for some people but not others. Unfortunately, Blair's story was a painful example of when they don't work.

A lot of people have made serious changes to their lives through programs like NA and AA. The main issue is the stigma that comes out of these spaces – the type of language that is used and how that is used to stigmatise people still using drugs.

Clearly there is a disconnect between how different people or institutions view drugs. When talking about treatment, drug use is discussed as a health issue (as it should be). However, this is at odds with so many other aspects of society – it is discussed as criminal issue when dealing with the police and the courts, and a moral or spiritual issue when discussed in weekly meetings around endless cups of coffee.

It's not that the meetings are bad in and of themselves. In fact, the community of support that these programs encourage can often be exactly what people are needing in their lives when struggling with their using. Perhaps, in a society that wasn't so hyper-individualised and where stigma was not cemented in our minds and institutions, more people would have strong support networks already in place. No need for anonymous strangers to affirm you and help you out when you have friends and family to do so!

You summed it up well – we are animals, and we eat and fight like other animals. We love like other animals and need strong social connections to thrive. The main difference between humans and other animals seems to be that we have a much greater capacity to enjoy the world. Maybe some of us allow that to guide our choices more than others, and that's absolutely okay!

All the best

Thomas

DOSE OF REALITY

YOUR DRUG-RELATED NEWS ROUNDUP

NSW Police: Strip search quotas confirmed

NSW Greens member David Shoebridge has recently revealed that the NSW police program known as the Command Performance Accountability System (COMPASS) involves Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), meaning local area commands are required to meet search targets.

“It’s telling police that they must search people, in order to meet the local area command’s quota, rather than address the circumstances on the street”. Shoebridge said. The quota system could be one explanation as to why the NSW police have dramatically increased its use of strip searches in the field. In addition, Shoebridge expressed concern that this policing by numbers approach made it easier for police powers to be abused.

This revelation comes on the back of rising concerns within the community about the overuse and misuse of strip searches. The recently released ‘Rethinking Strip Searches by NSW Police’ report, commissioned by the Redfern Legal Centre (RLC), found an almost twentyfold increase in strip searches in just under 12 years – 277 strip searches used in the 2006 calendar year, compared to 5483 in the 2018/19 financial year. The report also found unlawful strip searches were widespread and that only 30% of strip searches in the field in the 2017/18 financial year resulted in a criminal charge.

In response to the COMPASS revelations, the Redfern Legal Centre has called on the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC) to investigate the impact policing quotas have had on the sharp rise in the number of strip searches in NSW. Samantha Lee, Head of the Police Accountability at RLC, suggests that “the use of targets may explain why the people of NSW have been exposed to a drastic rise in invasive, harmful and unlawful strip searches...strip searches should only be conducted where the legal circumstances exist – not driven by targets as part of a numbers game”.

Source: Sydney Criminal Lawyers & RLC

Cannabis is legal in the ACT: now what?

The ACT has become the first Australian jurisdiction to legalise the possession, use and cultivation of small amounts of cannabis.

The new legislation, which won’t come into effect until January 31, 2020, allows adults to cultivate cannabis plants at home, with limits of two plants per person and four per household, or to possess 50g of dried cannabis. There is a 150g limit for fresh (or “wet”) cannabis to account for cannabis that has been harvested but not yet dried. For anyone under the age of 18 years caught possessing a small amount of cannabis a “simple cannabis offence notice” will be issued, which is essentially a fine. However, the sale or supply of cannabis is still a criminal offence.

When compared to international models of cannabis regulation (like the “cannabis social clubs” found in some European jurisdiction), this change seems modest. However, by ending the criminalisation of cannabis use, the new legislation will decrease stigma for people who use cannabis, and hopefully reduce barriers to health and social services for people who use cannabis.

Source: The Conversation

'Ice' Inquiry: Counsel Assisting overwhelmingly supports harm reduction

The Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice' will report back in late February after nearly a year of evidence-gathering and consultation. Established in late November 2018, the Inquiry looked at the nature, prevalence and impact of crystal meth and other amphetamine-type stimulants, including MDMA. The Inquiry also was tasked to inquire into, and report on, potential options to strengthen NSW's response to illicit stimulant use in NSW.

The Inquiry undertook extensive work within affected communities, holding regional consultations and centring in their work the evidence of people with lived experience of drug use, their families and those in their networks. NUAA had a significant level of input into the Inquiry with two submissions, two appearances by CEO Mary Ellen Harrod and by working closely with the Inquiry to ensure that the views of community members were represented.

The Closing Submissions of Counsel Assisting was released late October 2019. The Closing Submissions of Counsel Assisting is a large document which details submissions to the Inquiry – including from NUAA – and makes recommendations about the best course of evidence-based action moving forward.

A key recommendation was that NSW abandons the unofficial “just say no” policy that drives legal decisions around illicit drug use, and instead implements a comprehensive, government-wide alcohol and other drug policy (AoD) - one that recognises drug use is a health and social issue and the harms of punitive responses. The recommendation also included that this policy must be designed in a way that includes the perspectives, concerns and expertise of people with lived experiences of drug use.

Importantly, the Counsel Assisting's report broadly recognised that a punitive approach - punishing people for using drugs rather than supporting them - resulted in significant harms. From this, the report made another shock recommendation: that personal drug use is decriminalised as a whole.

In our submissions, NUAA gave evidence supporting the decriminalisation of the possession of ice pipes, and suggested that models for their distribution should be trialled at community health services such as NSPs - another recommendation made by the Counsel Assisting in the final report. Further recommendations include that an NSP service is trialled at one or more NSW prisons, that the NSW Police remove drug detection dogs at NSW festivals due to the harm they can cause, and that the Government trial a medically supervised substance testing service – that is to say, a pill testing trial!

Crucially, the NSW Police Force supported the development of a NSW AoD policy recommendation of a harm minimisation approach and recommended that government and non-government agencies collaborate to support the implementation. The final police submission was generally supportive of greater community engagement and treatment. However, it did not support recommendations around the removal of drug detection dogs at music festivals. This recommendation was also one made by NSW Coroner in the findings of the Inquest into the death of six patrons of NSW music festivals, Hoang Nathan Tran, Diana Nguyen, Joseph Pham, Callum Brosnan, Joshua Tam and Alexandra Ross-King.

Whether or not we see the NSW Government implement these massive changes remains to be seen. However, what can be said is that the evidence tabled in the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice' has added to the strong foundational principles that guide harm reduction, on paper and in practice.

You can access all of these documents, including NUAA submissions, online at www.iceinquiry.nsw.gov.au or www.coroners.justice.nsw.gov.au. Happy reading!

Source: NSW Users and AIDS Association

Mobile Drug Testing: High rates of false indications

If you're pulled over for a mobile drug test (MDT) in NSW, you'll be tested with one of two devices — the Securetec DrugWipe, or the Draeger DrugTest 5000. But new research by the University of Sydney has raised serious questions about the devices' accuracy, showing that up to 10 percent of people who test positive to THC may not be under the influence of cannabis at all.

Ten thousand people in NSW were prosecuted in 2016 for cannabis use while driving, after being tested by two different mobile drug testing devices that continue to be used today. The number of mobile drug tests being conducted each year continues to rise, with the NSW Police planning to conduct 200,000 in 2020, at a cost of \$40 each, or \$8 million in total (imagine if this went into treatment instead!)

The study has called into question the reliability of the most common roadside drug testing devices used by police in Australia. It found the devices frequently failed to detect high concentrations of THC with false negative rates of 9% and 16% respectively. They also recorded positive results when saliva THC concentrations were very low or insignificant, with false positive rates of 5% and 10%.

You can't tell how much cannabis someone has consumed, or how intoxicated they are, by testing THC levels in saliva. "Detecting impairment due to cannabis use is an important goal in promoting road safety," said Professor Iain McGregor, academic director of the Lambert Initiative for Cannabinoid Therapeutics and senior author of the research. "But using saliva tests to do this appears [to be filled] with issues."

"We should instead be focusing on developing novel methods for detecting drivers who are actually impaired by cannabis. The two devices used by police in MDT were never designed to measure impairment. Authorities in other jurisdictions, such as Canada, remain far more cautious in their use of such devices," Professor McGregor said.

Ultimately, the study reveals – what many of us already knew – that simply testing for the presence of THC is not the most effective way of removing drug-affected drivers from the roads.

Source: Junkee

WANNA FIND OUT MORE ABOUT MDT?

CHECK OUT OUR FEATURE ARTICLE ON PAGE 62

DOSE OF REALITY

Facebook censors harm reduction advocates

In the past few months, harm reduction advocates and organisations have noticed their accounts have been disabled, groups have disappeared, posts containing substance related content have been removed and they are being banned from advertising on Facebook.

When reached for comment, a Facebook spokesperson said the company is investigating these incidents. In response to the allegations, Facebook has stated that their Community Standards do not allow people to “promote the use of non-medical drugs including providing instructions on how to use them”. However, their policies do allow “people to raise awareness of harmful drugs and share their stories of recovery.” Their main goal, they say, is to reduce drug selling and promotion—not political speech or harm reduction organising.

But regardless of the particulars, these incidents make clear the enormous unchecked power held by tech corporations like Facebook. The internet has traditionally allowed harm reduction organisations to offer information on alternative views on drug policy and previously inaccessible academic research, which rarely receives attention in the mainstream media. As a result of Facebook’s policing of harm reduction organisations our community is silenced and we need to be aware of, and create innovative strategies, to avoid this censorship.

Source: Vice News

NSW Government told to introduce pill testing, scrap sniffer dogs at festivals and decriminalise personal drug use

The NSW coroner has recently recommended that the state government roll out pill testing, drop the use of sniffer dogs, and decriminalise all personal drug use at music festivals. In light of the recent inquest into deaths at music festivals, it was found that heavy police operations – including drug dogs and strip searches – significantly increases the risk of harm to festival attendees.

"The evidence arising from this inquest clearly indicates there is much that can be done to prevent MDMA deaths," deputy state coroner Harriet Grahame said. "There are practical solutions to some of the issues identified."

Gladys Berejiklian has been urged to use an evidence-based drug policy, with the recommendation that pill testing be used "as soon as possible" to help prevent future deaths.

As we enter festival season, this evidence could not be more important. The time is now – we demand change!

Source: ABC News



COMMUNITY TIES

WHY PEER-BASED PROGRAMS WORK

None of us are in denial – festivals and underground music events can be dangerous places. Following the widely-publicised deaths at music festivals over 2018-19 festival season, it has become clear that these spaces need to be safer for everyone involved. No one knows this better than DanceWize NSW co-ordinator Gina Bell, who has seen first-hand the difference that harm reduction services make on the ground at festivals, raves and bush doofs.

UN: I'm sitting here with Gina, long-time doofer and one of the three coordinators of NUAAs DanceWize NSW program. To begin with, for those who don't about the service, what is DanceWize NSW and how does it work?

G: DanceWize NSW is a peer-led harm reduction service. It operates in NSW and is funded by NSW Health to provide a range of harm reduction services.

DanceWize NSW has three key services, all run by our amazing team of volunteers; education, roving, and care. What this means is that we distribute evidence-based information and peer information about drug use broadly, as well as for specific substances. We also have a roving team, who keep an eye out for people who might be experiencing harm or distress while at the party, and assist them as needed. We also provide

care for people who are stressed, experiencing mental health problems, or have been harassed or assaulted.

UN: So you said that DWNSW is a peer-led service. What does that mean?

G: 'Peer-led' basically means that the whole program is operated and run by people who are in the festival community themselves. There's a strong emphasis on elevating the expertise which comes with lived experience, whether it's people's personal experiences of drug use, or their community or their friends.

Because we're peer-led, everyone on our team has insider knowledge about the community, how to run things and what's going to be best for the everyone. Our team currently has 250 volunteers and staff, and everyone's got that lived experience.

UN: Why is important that DanceWize NSW is at these sorts of events?

G: Care services, specifically peer-based ones, have been identified as being really important at these events, especially for people who choose to use drugs. Unfortunately, no one receives any sort of formal education on how to use substances safely, or around how to look out for our mates. But when things do go wrong, the options for support can feel pretty intimidating and scary for people – no one wants to ask the medical team or police for care.

Because the DanceWize NSW volunteers are part of the scene, people are much more comfortable in asking for and accessing help when they need it. It also gives people the opportunity to have in-depth conversations about their drug use, which is something that a lot of young people have never had the opportunity to do before.

I think that most of us have gone through the ‘Just Say No’ education at schools and from society more broadly, and so DanceWize NSW is filling this massive gap, by providing education and non-judgemental support which is something that everyone should be able to access easily.

UN: We’re starting to see DanceWize NSW at a lot more festivals and underground events lately, as well as similar services that aren’t ‘peer-based’. Why is it that there’s so much more focus on harm reduction in these spaces today than there was 5 years ago?

G: That’s a good question. I think that harm reduction is something that’s had a growing evidence base for quite some time, and a growing level of support in all aspects of drug use. Specifically, at music festivals, globally there’s been a big focus on harm reduction in music scenes, and the government of Australia is quite behind on it. Thankfully, we’re finally catching up and receiving quite a lot of support from the NSW Health, which is awesome.

Following the festival season last summer, where we saw a lot of widely-publicised harms and deaths occurring, I think that harm reduction is really being given more of an opportunity to demonstrate that it works and that it can help. From my perspective, it’s both what the community is wanting and asking for, and there’s a growing amount of evidence that says it works.

UN: Having volunteered for the program in its early days, I can definitely agree with all of that. How do people get involved and learn more?

G: The best way to get involved is to follow us Instagram and Facebook to keep up to date with our recruiting, as well as fun little competitions, giveaways, and other opportunities. We go through rounds of recruiting, so keep an eye out as to when we open up applications.

If you want to learn more about drug use or harm reduction in general, you can check out our website at www.dancewizensw.org.au. Resources are available from the website to download for free, and you can order them as hard copies too.

UN: Cool stuff, was there anything else you wanted to say to the masses? It’s now or never!

G: The main thing to get across is that if DanceWize NSW is at an event, look out for our volunteers wearing the purple shirts that say ‘CROWD CARE’. We’re there to support you, not judge you.

In saying that, we aren’t going to be at every event all the time, which is why it’s important to get informed and learn about how you can party while looking after yourself. You don’t have to be volunteering with DanceWize NSW to be a harm reduction advocate - you can learn yourself and teach your friends about harm reduction. Being an ambassador for harm reduction means safety and peace of mind for yourself and your friends!

This festival season, catch DanceWize NSW at:

- Lost Paradise
- Summer Gathering
- NYE in the Park
- The Drop Manly
- Lunar Electric
- The Drop Newcastle
- EPIK
- Ultra
- FOMO
- Bad Friday
- Grow Your Own
- Wine Machine (Hunter Valley)
- Rolling Loud

Plus a few unregulated events that we can’t tell you about! Those in the loop might find us at a ~Secret Inner West Location~ or deep in the bush sometime soon.



BUSTED WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU GET CAUGHT WITH DRUGS AT A FESTIVAL IN NSW?

Uh oh – you’ve been caught with drugs in your possession at a festival in NSW. What happens next depends on a few things: what drugs and quantities you are found with, your criminal history, and the police officer’s discretion (what they decide to do). This article provides some general guidance about what will happen if you are caught with drugs. However, it is only relevant to NSW and should not be taken as legal advice.

ON-THE-SPOT FINES

As of 2019, NSW police now have the power to issue \$400 on-the-spot fines for the possession of a ‘small quantity’ of drugs. A record of this will be kept, but you will not get a criminal record for possessing drugs if you pay this fine.

Informal discussions with researchers and police have revealed that on-the-spot fines for drug possession are only being issued at festivals. If you are caught with drugs at a train station, at the pub, walking around Kings Cross - ANYWHERE other than a festival – it is highly unlikely that you’ll be given an on-the-spot fine. Instead, you will receive a ‘court attendance notice’ and will have to go to court.

On-the-spot fines are only issued to people caught with a ‘small quantity’ of drugs. The exact amount/weight of what is considered to be a ‘small quantity’ of drugs is outlined in Schedule 1 of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 and depends on the drug. For example, a ‘small quantity’ of heroin, speed or meth is 1 gram, while a ‘small quantity’ of MDMA caps is 0.25g. If you are caught with even 0.01g over what the law states is a ‘small quantity’ you cannot receive an on-the-spot fine. For example, if you have 0.26g of MDMA caps you will be formally charged with possession.

Look at the table on the opposite page to see what the law defines as a ‘small quantity’ of some common drugs.

WHAT IS CONSIDERED A "SMALL QUANTITY" OF VARIOUS DRUGS?

Aplrazolam/Xanax	5g
Amphetamines	1g
Buprenorphine	4g
Cocaine	1g
2CB	4DDU or 0.08g
Dexamphetamine	1g
DMT	1g
Fentanyl	0.0025g
GBL & 1,4B	10g
GHB	1g

Heroin	1g
Ketamine	2.5g
LSD	4DDU or 0.0008g
Methamphetamine	1g
Morphine	3g
MDMA Capsule Any other form	0.25g 0.75g
NBOMe family	4DDU or 0.0008g
Oxycodone	2.5g
Psilocin/Psilocybin	4DDU or 0.04g

**DDU stands for direct dosage unit e.g. a pill, capsule, or tab*

Note: Police are not able to give on-the-spot fines for cannabis possession, as this is covered by the cannabis caution system.

CANNABIS CAUTION

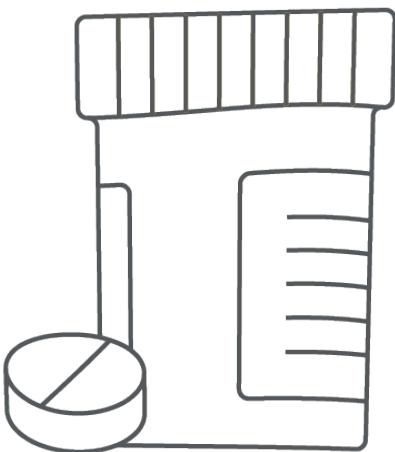


In NSW, people caught with a small amount of cannabis (less than 15g) can be issued a cannabis caution instead of being charged with an offence. Receiving a cannabis caution will not give you a criminal record, and you won't have to pay a fine. A record will be kept that you received a caution, but you usually don't have to declare it when applying for jobs or travelling overseas.

It is up to police discretion (decision/choice) to decide whether to give you a caution. They can only give a cannabis caution if you admit to the offence and do not have prior convictions for sexual, violent, or drug-related offences.

You can only receive two cannabis cautions – three strikes and you're out! The first time you receive a caution you will be encouraged to contact Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) for information, education and counselling. The second time you are cautioned, you will have to contact ADIS for a mandatory education session.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICINE



You might have noticed that Valium (diazepam) is not included on the tables on the previous page. That's because some (not all) prescription medications are dealt with under the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966.

The maximum penalty you could receive for possessing Valium without prescription is up to 6 months imprisonment and/or \$2,200 fine.



COURT ATTENDANCE NOTICE

Cannabis cautions and on-the-spot fines are given at the discretion of the police officer – police may decide to charge you with possession, regardless of whether you are eligible for a cannabis caution or on-the spot fine.

If this happens you will receive a ‘court attendance notice’, which is a piece of paper saying you must go to a courthouse to have your case heard. If you go to court, you can either fight the charge or accept the punishment handed down to you by the magistrate. The maximum penalty you could receive for possession of a ‘small quantity’ of drugs is up to 2 years imprisonment and/or a fine of up to \$2,200.

Magistrates will often be lenient, and it’s rare to be given the maximum penalty. The Court may decide to completely dismiss the charges, or give you a conditional release order without conviction. This means you will not receive a criminal record.

Whether you receive a conditional release order without a criminal conviction is supposed to depend on your ‘personal character’, which takes into account your age, health, mental condition. It also depends on how serious the offence was and the circumstances that led to the offending. Conditional release orders aren’t a no-strings-attached deal – the ‘conditions’ of your release may require you to attend drug and alcohol treatment or ban you from associating with certain people or visiting certain places.

LEGAL HELP

If you get into legal trouble and have to go to court, your best bet is to get a lawyer to help you with your case. Having a lawyer is helpful because you’ll be working with someone who knows what they’re doing. Representing yourself in court isn’t advised, and usually leads to a worse outcome in the court case.

If you can afford it, your best option would be to go with a private criminal lawyer – doing so is more likely to lead to a result that you’re happy with. If you can’t afford to get a private lawyer, you may be eligible for free legal representation by a lawyer from LegalAid.

If you need legal help, call LawAccess NSW on 1300 888 529 Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm (excluding public holidays). They will be able to advise you as to what to do next, and can refer you to LegalAid if you are eligible.

The information written here should not be taken as legal advice. Call NUAA on 02 8354 7300 or TOLL FREE 1800 644 413 for further information.

Charlee's Story: Busted @ DEFQON.1

It was the night before DEFQON.1, and I was lying in bed, wide awake. My mind was racing, thinking about the plan for tomorrow. Justin, who I was seeing at the time, said he'd give me some caps for free if I brought his ones in for him too. I was taking a lot of ecstasy at the time and figured it was a cheaper and safer way to do drugs at a festival – safer than buying off some random at least. It sounded like an okay deal and an easy way to get drugs inside, but I did feel like it was expected of me, my 'duty' as the girl in our group.

I didn't get any sleep, so I was tired on my way to the festival, not to mention stressing about the 13 pills and 12 caps all wrapped up and inside me. My fears were confirmed when we got inside the festival gates and saw the police operation – so many dogs! The cops zig-zagged through the lines, weaving around people. There was no way you could avoid having a dog walk by you at one point.

I was wearing rave clothes – booty shorts, a tiny sports bra, and Air Max. I guess I looked like the kind of person who would be carrying drugs, if they had to stereotype it, and I probably looked pretty stressed. Maybe it was stereotyping, maybe I just got unlucky – who knows? Either way, I did have a lot of drugs inside me. The dog sat down next to me – fucking snitch! – and the cops start asking questions: "Do you have drugs on you?" I told them I didn't.

"The dog has stopped, its sensing something. Why is it sensing something?" I told them I didn't have anything on me and I didn't know why the dog stopped, but I was stumbling over my words. They patted me down but didn't search my belongings really – it seemed like they were just going through the motions. Then they said they were going to take me to the back and search me "properly".

Out the back they had the strip search tents set up, and a female cop waiting for me in one. She told me I had to take all my clothes off, and then said she needed me to squat and cough. I did, and the ruse was up. Busted.

I was anxious and stressed, and started crying, but the entire situation didn't feel real. I started getting a bit manic, crying and laughing and blurring the lines between the two. It was bizarre, and I think it spun the cops out a bit. I asked them if they enjoy doing this to young people who are just trying to have a good time, but none of them would give me a reply.

After that, they tried to interview me on camera. Four cops took me outside of the festival grounds, and said they were going to film me while I answered a few questions. Three of the cops just stood there with their arms crossed the whole time, but the other one took a video camera and start taping me. I didn't have anyone else with me and felt super intimidated.

"We're going to ask you some questions now," he said.

MAYBE IT WAS STEREOTYPING, MAYBE I JUST GOT UNLUCKY – WHO KNOWS?

"Too bad, I'm not answering anything."

It went on like this for 5 minutes – he kept asking

questions, and I kept repeating the same lines, that I didn't consent to the interview and wasn't going to answer anything. I knew I'd be better off by not saying anything and instead leaving it to the court date.

They gave up and eventually took me back to the police tent. When in the tent, the police weighed up my drugs, gave me a court summons, and sent me on my way. They wouldn't let me into the festival, but all I had on me was my phone, because my friends were carrying my bag and wallet when we went in. Eventually, my friend got a security guard to pass my bag on to me, and I left to go home.

I started getting more anxious after I got done – I was actually struggling with a lot of mental health issues for some time after. I would instantly panic when I saw a cop; I'd be drifting off to sleep in bed, hear sirens in the distance and freak out thinking they were for me. I mean, it sounds silly, but it was fucking horrible, and something I'm still working out how to deal with.

My biggest fear about it all was having my mother find out; I was acutely aware of the shame it would bring to her and our family. My court date was fast approaching, but I couldn't access Legal Aid or tell my family, and I had no money for a lawyer. I had no idea what to do, but a friend suggested I try sex work, which I'd never done before. I was young and felt like I didn't have any other options – and ended up with a career change.

I was in court for a year because my case kept getting adjourned – I got bounced back and forth between district and local court a few times over some administrative errors. Finally, over 12 months after the festival, I finally got sentenced. I ended up with a Section 10, which means there was no conviction recorded, but I didn't feel like it was a win. The entire experience was horrible.

I've always thought that the police hold a questionable role in society but being subject to their policies of violation has made me even more critical. The entire structure – the legal system, the police, prisons – is designed to make you feel powerless, less than human. Police can disempower and humiliate you, especially if you're a drug user, and even more especially if you're a drug user who isn't white! It feels like they're walking around a music festival with guns just to remind you who's boss, not to make the community safer.

As long as the prevailing attitude of the powers that be is that the police should be instilling fear, we will continue to see abuses of police power – kids getting shot at Central Station, climate protesters getting beaten and pepper-sprayed, and teenage girls being forced to strip by armed strangers. One day, we will live in a world without police or prisons, but until then we have to stick together and fight back!

Have you been stopped and searched by the cops?

Not sure what to do next?

Redfern Legal Centre have just launched their 'Safe and Sound' campaign, which aims to change strip searching laws in NSW. As well as lots of interesting and helpful information about your rights when dealing with the police, their website has a 'Rights Advisor' app. If you've been searched recently, the app can help you with working out whether the search was legal, as well as deciding what to do next. Check it out at the link below!

safeandsound.org.au/rightsadvisor

Your Rights with Cops

Dogs, searches, complaints... and K9 units

Regardless of whether we've done something wrong, none of us like dealing the police. When stopped by the police, it can be difficult to know what you should do, which is why it's important to know what your rights are when dealing with the police.

In saying that, **NONE OF THIS IS LEGAL ADVICE AND SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN AS SUCH!** It is also not your how-to-guide on not getting pinched. It's simply information about what is required from you, and what to expect, when dealing with the cops.

Police Questioning

The golden rule when dealing with police is this: **LOOSE LIPS SINK SHIPS.**

While you legally must provide police with certain information in specific contexts, you generally have the right to silence.

You do have to give your name and address if police are trying to serve you with a fine or warrant, or if they think you may be a witness to a serious offence. If you are driving a car, you may be required to show the police your licence. Passengers may also be required to provide details about the driver if the police suspect the driver has committed an offence. In these situations, police must warn you that failure to provide correct details may be an offence.

The police can ask you questions at anytime, anywhere - at home, on the street, at the police station - but you do not have to answer them (except by giving your name or address in the situations already mentioned). In any situation it is probably a good idea to give them your name and address, but you do not have to answer any further questions.

While you have a right to silence, it's always a good idea to be polite in your interactions with the police. Police officers have a lot of power over us in these situations, so maintaining a sickly-sweet air of politeness with them often will lead to a more positive outcome for you.

Cannabis Cautions

One situation where talking to the police about drugs may actually work out in your favour if you are caught in possession of a small amount of cannabis. This is because of the Cannabis Cautioning Scheme. If you're caught with a small amount of cannabis (less than 15g), you can receive an official warning, or caution, instead of being charged with possession.

However, police can only issue a cannabis caution if you admit to the offence – you have to say that the drugs are yours. So, if you're eligible for a cannabis caution, and know that they can't nab you for anything else, you may decide that it is better to admit possession of the drugs. However, this is not a decision to be taken lightly, and not everyone is given a caution.

For more information about the Cannabis Cautioning Scheme, see page 14.

Police Assistance Dogs AKA Sniffer Dogs

A lot of people are worried that if they carry drugs on them, they will be caught by dogs or searched by police. This is one reason people pre-load on drugs before going into a festival and was identified by the NSW Coroner as a significant factor in at least one of the drug-related deaths that happened in the 2018-19 festival season.

However, just because you are carrying drugs doesn't mean you will be picked up and just because you aren't doesn't mean you won't be. Multiple reviews of the NSW Police Assistance Dog program have found that sniffer dogs have high instances of false positive and false negative indications.

In fact, a research article, 'Handler beliefs affect scent detection dog outcomes' (Lit 2011) in an academic journal called *Animal Cognition* concluded that sniffer dogs are excessively influenced by their handlers. In the study, the dog's handlers were given false information that scents were present in specific places. They found that handlers prompted their dogs to 'indicate' that they smelt the non-existent targets, and the dogs obeyed.

The message out of this is: your behaviour and police stereotyping are probably bigger predictors for whether you'll be stopped by dogs than whether you are carrying drugs. Watch a few of those shows about airport customs procedures and you'll see how many people get pinched for looking nervous, trying to avoid dogs/police, not having stories straight, and not being white.

Source: Lit, L., Schweitzer, J. B., & Oberbauer, A. M. (2011). 'Handler beliefs affect scent detection dog outcomes.' *Animal cognition*, 14(3), 387-394. doi:10.1007/s10071-010-0373-2

Police Searches

Legally, the police can stop, search and detain anyone if they “reasonably suspect” that person is carrying drugs or anything dangerous or unlawful (e.g. a weapon). They don’t need a search warrant – the only basis required for a search is a reasonable suspicion held by the police officer. There must be a factual basis for the suspicion. Police guidelines direct police to consider things like the time and location, your behavior and whether you are known to police. **Simply being at a music festival is not enough a reasonable ground to suspect you are carrying drugs.**

At some large festivals and multi-day events, the police can obtain a warrant that covers the festival grounds and surrounding areas. This could give them the right to search persons, cars, tents, bags and other property at the festival without having to form a “reasonable suspicion”.

The police don’t require reasonable suspicion to search you if they ask and you say yes (or otherwise consent). If you do not consent to a search, make sure to clearly state this and ask that it be officially recorded by the officer involved. If you have been stopped by the police at a festival, it is likely that they will search you regardless of your consent. It’s best to remain calm and comply with any searches but tell the officer you do not consent to being searched and ask this is noted (it may help if you make a complaint or end up in court).

If you do not consent to a search, make sure to clearly state this and ask that it be officially recorded by the officer involved.

Collecting Evidence

When a police officer stops you for any reason, you can ask for their name, rank, and place of duty. They must tell you when asked. If possible, ask while they are on film, or record their details in case you need to refer to them later in making a complaint or for a court case.

It is always legal to film in public places – including, and especially, filming the police. During police stops or searches, we suggest that you or someone else tries to film as much of the interaction as possible. You are entitled to have a personal representative/support person present during a strip search. It is legal for them to film your interactions with the police, as long as they stand some distance away and are not interfering with police proceedings. **Police can not tell you to delete images or recordings from your phone.**

After a search, record in detail what happened as soon as possible. That way, you can make a complaint if you believe your rights have been breached, and will you have a reliable account of events if you decide to go to court.

What to expect during a search

When searching you, a police officer may:

- Ask you to empty your pockets;
- Ask you to remove outer garments, such as coats, shoes, socks and hats;
- Search your bag or other belongings
- Quickly run their fingers through your hair;
- Run their hands over the person's outer clothing; and
- Ask you to open your mouth and shake your hair.

Anything more than this will no longer count as a regular search and may instead be considered a strip search.

If the police require you to remove your clothes, other than just outer clothing, you are being strip-searched.

For a strip search to be legal, the police must believe on reasonable grounds that it is necessary and that the seriousness and urgency of the circumstances require one.

Strip searches must be carried out in a private enclosed area, (e.g. a tent), and the search must be conducted by an officer of the same sex. No one should be present other than those needed for the purposes of the search, and nor should any item of clothing be unnecessarily removed.

Police can't search any body cavities – it is not legal for them to tell you to squat and cough, as this counts as a cavity search.

If Police wish to conduct a strip search, they must:

- Tell you whether you will be required to remove clothing during the search;
- Tell you why it is necessary to conduct the search;
- Provide a private area for the search to be conducted; and
- Ensure an officer of the same sex conducts the search.

If these things have not been done and you feel your dignity and privacy are being violated, you have the right to request that these provisions are met before the search commences.

Move-on Directions

Police have the right to give you a move-on direction if you are in a public place and they have reasonable grounds to believe that:

- you are obstructing another person or traffic; or
- you are harassing or intimidating another person; or
- you are likely to frighten a reasonable person; or
- you are there to obtain or supply drugs.

Police have no right to move you on just because you can't give a reason for being there. The law doesn't say what kind of direction the police may give. The law only says that the police direction must be reasonable in the circumstances to reduce or stop the problem behaviour (e.g. the obstruction of traffic or the drug dealing).

What do I do if the police tell me to move on?

If the police do approach you and tell you to move on, the police officer must first:

- tell you his or her name and the name of their police station;
- tell you the reason why you must move on; and
- warn you that if you don't obey the direction you are committing an offence.

Even if you think the police have no right to tell you to move on, it is usually better to do what the police tell you, rather than losing your temper or swearing at the police. This will give them grounds to arrest you and take you to the police station. It's usually a better option to follow their direction, and you can challenge the direction or make a complaint later.

What happens if I don't move on?

If you fail to obey the direction, the police officer may give the direction again, with another warning that it's an offence to disobey. If you disobey the second direction, you may be issued with an on-the-spot fine for \$220. Alternatively, the police may arrest you and charge you or give you a court attendance notice. If you are fined or charged, we recommend that you get legal advice. You may have a very good chance of beating the charge in court.

Seizure of Property

Police have a right to confiscate property from you such as: weapons and dangerous implements; prohibited drugs; anything they believe is stolen or unlawfully in your possession, and anything they suspect has been, or is being, used in connection with a serious offence.

Often if police confiscate your property, they will fine you or charge you with an offence. If you are found not guilty, the court will usually order the police to give your property back.

If police confiscate your property without fining or charging you, you can apply to the police get the property back. If the police won't give it back, a lawyer may be able to help you. In some cases, your property can be confiscated if police believe it's associated with criminal activity, even if you haven't been convicted of an offence. If this happens you should seek legal advice.

Making a Complaint

If you believe that you are being unfairly harassed by police, you have the right to make a complaint about it. The Law Enforcement Conduct Committee (LECC) is a body that independently investigates serious misconduct by police officers of the NSW Police Force.

Some of the issues that LECC will investigate include: police taking bribes; perverting the course of justice (e.g. planting fake evidence or interfering with evidence); serious assault; interfering in police investigations; manufacturing, cultivating or supplying prohibited drugs; and any crimes attracting a minimum of five years imprisonment. If your complaint is not considered 'serious misconduct', the LECC will refer it back to the NSW Police Force to be dealt with internally.

If the LECC finds that your complaint is valid, the police may have to apologise to you, or even pay you compensation.

Unfortunately, these sorts of complaints often get nowhere — but this doesn't mean you shouldn't complain! Your complaint has more chance of success if it is backed up by statements from witnesses or from other people who have been treated by the police in a similar way.

You should write down as much about the incident as possible soon after the incident. If you need help writing the complaint, a legal service like Referrn Legal Centre or another Community Legal Centre can help you. You can also get help from a youth worker or other support person.

HOW CAN WE MAKE FESTIVALS SAFER FOR WOMEN?

Irene Squires

Summer is just around the corner, and we all know what that means - festival season! As excited as we are to get out into nature, enjoy the warmer weather and celebrate with friends, we have to remember that these events are for ALL of us to enjoy.

Unfortunately, festivals are not always safe spaces for women or members of other vulnerable groups. Increasingly, we are hearing of incidents at festivals that need to be avoided. It is our personal responsibility to consider ways in which our behaviour may impact on the enjoyment of others and moderate ourselves to limit the risk of harm to others.

Music festivals have been getting a bad reputation lately, with media attention focusing on a small number of unfortunate incidents including drug overdoses, sexual assaults, domestic violence and deaths. However, this simply highlights the importance of harm reduction, and provides an opportunity for us to redefine how our community is perceived.

The most effective way we can push back against the negative stereotypes some people hold about the doof and festival scenes is by setting a positive example! Music festivals can be safe, transformative, and enjoyable for all – but only if we make them so. Across the next three pages are the top three ways in which we can reduce instances of sexual based harm, facilitate safe spaces for women at music festivals, and develop a community we are all proud of.

1. UNDERSTAND CONSENT

Despite the excitement and the lack of inhibition that often accompanies drug use at festivals, it is important to make sure that we seek consent before getting intimate with anyone – this includes touching, hugging, kissing, groping, and of course any sexual activity.

One way in which we can ensure our own behaviour is respectful of others is by following the five pillars of consent. Consent must be: revocable, conscious, enthusiastic, verbal and ongoing. In so doing we ensure all parties are agreeable and we aren't overstepping personal boundaries.

While this is bare minimum of respect you should show someone, it also helps set standards in the community about what is and isn't acceptable. If you're hooking up with someone, they need to be as enthusiastic as you are before proceeding and throughout the experience. Remember – someone can revoke (take back) consent at any time, and that's totally fine! By holding ourselves up to these standards, we can make sure that everyone is on the same page and no one feels like they've been taken advantage of.

THE FIVE PILLARS OF CONSENT

Obtaining consent is essential to any sort of sexual encounter. Consent must be:

Revocable – consent can be withdrawn at any stage, and any party can change their mind. Individuals have the right to withdraw consent, even if they have previously consented. An individual may consent to one act, but not another, and has the right to revoke their consent under these conditions

Conscious – Individuals must be in a state in which they can provide verbal consent, which means someone who is under the effects of drugs or alcohol, is asleep or is non-responsive are unable to provide consent to sexual acts. Individuals that are under the effect of drugs and/or alcohol cannot legally provide consent and are able to press charges of sexual assault

Enthusiastic – Consent must not be coerced or forced; an individual must freely provide consent without pressure from others.

Verbal – consent needs to be vocalised, and not merely obtained through gestures and/or signals. The absence of someone saying 'No' is not reasonable grounds for consent, but rather we should seek positive affirmation of participation. In this way we avoid confusion and misinterpretation, enabling a clear consensus on whether an individual is consenting or not

Ongoing – Consent must be continuous. Best practice encourages us to regularly check in with one another and affirm that each individual is consenting

2. BE AN ADVOCATE FOR WOMEN

If you see something that doesn't seem right, you have a responsibility to do something. If you see someone in distress, ask them if they need help. Help can be sought from organisers or security, but ideally the community should support one another and provide a culture of security.

It is our collective responsibility to establish a community ethos and define acceptable behaviour in our community, including condemning any violent or antisocial behaviour. Silence only feeds the belief that inappropriate behaviour is acceptable and reinforces victim's vulnerability. So, if you see something that doesn't feel right, speak up and seek help where appropriate.



3. ENCOURAGE BEST PRACTICE

One of the greatest powers we have as festival attendees is through unity. Through solidarity on these issues we can send a message to fellow partygoers and organisers alike, and stand up for safe spaces for women and other vulnerable groups. It's important to stand up for others, because doing so spreads and legitimises the message that inappropriate sexual behaviour will not be tolerated in our community.

If we lead by example, we can promote a culture of security, which supports and empowers everyone to speak up against unacceptable behaviour. Focusing on these issues, however unpleasant, highlights our values to party organisers. Getting organisers onboard is crucial, as they are the ones in a position to implement structural harm reduction measures. Structural harm reduction includes care spaces, safe spaces, educational workshops, and improved lighting and infrastructure.

These tips are just a starting point, but if we all respect the five pillars of consent, music festivals will be a much safer and happier place. In order to keep the events we love on the calendar, we need to work together to recast public perception of music festivals. As we know, 'the greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members' (Coretta Scott King) and we have the power to spread love and compassion throughout the scene.

Irene Squires is a party animal, a sociologist and a writer. Her most recent research focuses on gender performativity at "underground dance parties", and she can regularly be found running workshops on safety, respect and consent at doofs. Irene loves fast psytrance and hates the patriarchy.

Need some extra support?

NSW Rape Crisis Centre (24/7) | Phone: 1800 424 017

Trauma-specialist counselling, information and referral for anyone in NSW who has experienced or been impacted by sexual assault.

Support, information and referral is also available for non-offending supporters



UNDERGROUND, ABOVE & BEYOND

HARM REDUCTION IN THE UNREGULATED DOOF SCENE

Over the recent years, it's becoming more and more common for music festivals and raves to have a harm reduction service on site, such as DanceWize NSW. Many unregulated events (i.e. bush doofs, warehouse parties, underground raves) also provide some sort of care space and/or roving service to help their punters stay safe.

Origins of Entropy, an 'alternative music/arts/lifestyle event' (i.e. a sick doof), is one such event. They ran their own peer-based harm reduction service in 2017 and 2018, and in 2019 invited DanceWize NSW along to provide this service with them. Users News sat down with Phill, one of the individuals behind Origins of Entropy, to discuss the role that festival organisers have in reducing harm at their events.

UN: Hey Phill, thanks for having me. Firstly, tell me about yourself! What was your introduction to doofing and festivals, and how did that end up with you throwing Origins of Entropy over the last three years?

P: I went to my first doof about 15 years ago and was a big fan of the vibe and the people who attended these events. They are carefree spaces that encourage everyone to be themselves without judgement, which is a unique experience amongst our heavily structured society, and I was inspired to try and contribute what I could. My first contribution was me writing music to perform at them, and eventually I started contributing by helping friends run parties, before finally putting on my own events.

Regarding my own events, I travelled to Europe in my mid-twenties and went to some of the bigger alternative outdoor festivals – Noise Poison, Freqs of Nature, Lost Theory Festival, and many more. These events hosted mainly experimental electronic music, as well as having adult playgrounds in and around the dancefloors, and were vastly different to anything that was happening in Australia at the time. When I arrived home I was inspired, so I banded together with some good friends and we started hosting our own gatherings that were focused on doing what the rest of the Australian outdoor scene was not. From the start, there was the understanding that if we actually wanted to get anywhere and have longevity, we would have to start small and grow organically. The first few years was an annually operated event called Void, which eventually evolved into Origins Of Entropy.

UN: I remember what really struck me when I attended Origins of Entropy two years ago was that Origins had its own harm reduction and crowd care team, even though it was an unregulated event. What was your rationale behind providing a care service, and how did it work?

P: As I gained more experience over the years from managing events, I understood that promoters have a responsibility to ensure the safety of their patrons. By implementing a crowd care service, we were able to facilitate that additional level of care. The teams operated around the clock to look out for people in need of help. We also provided a space for the rovers to take anyone that needed some downtime or extra support. We made sure our crowd-carers had first aid training, and experience in similar roles – we actually even had some people from DanceWize NSW volunteering with our team.

It's not like we were just picking any random person to help – it was a carefully curated team of the most caring, capable and experienced individuals in our community.

Another harm reduction method we implemented this year was to have breaks in the music at key points during the event. This wasn't a requirement for us to be able to operate the event, it was just another harm reduction practice. Quite often, if you give a lot of people the option to party for four days, they will party for those four days, non-stop. And I know this because I have done it myself in the past. If you take away the music and utilise the time to remind everyone that we are all here together and we should all be looking out for each other, then a fair percentage of the crowd will positively receive this message and take some time to recharge and reflect.

The more events I managed, the deeper my understanding became about the responsibility of promoters. I've seen small situations avalanche out of control, and it is the organiser's duty of care to have in place pre-emptive measures to make sure things don't go wrong, and to have the appropriate protocols in place in case they do. In saying that, it's always a fine line between babysitting patrons versus giving them a level of responsibility – but that line isn't always so clear. At the end of the day, creating an event that cares for the people and helps educate them to care for themselves and others is just as important as having super sweet entertainment.

UN: So how did you find working with DanceWize NSW at your last event? Were there significant differences between NUAA's service compared to doing it in-house?

P: We've never had any major incidents at any of our events, so it's hard to tell whether DanceWize NSW was more effective than the crowd care team we put together. The only major difference I found was that DanceWize NSW gave us a log of every single interaction or incident there was through the event. They gave a pretty good report at the end of it all, and that gave a lot more insight about what to look out for next time.

UN: So before, you were talking about the organisers having a responsibility to patrons, to keep the community safe. I wanted to ask about sexual violence and sexual harassment at events – from your experience, is there a problem with this sort of behaviour in the doof scene?

P: Honestly? I don't think so, at least not around Sydney events. But that does not mean that there are zero incidents. There's always going to be that one person who behaves inappropriately, not only in the doof scene but in every aspect of life, from workplace environments to social outings.

I think it's common for people to get intoxicated and become less mindful of how they are acting, and that includes how they interact with other individuals. People that attend doofs aren't anymore evolved than anyone else out there.

But I would say in 99% of the cases when unwanted advances are made on someone, making the individual aware of their actions is enough. Generally, said person apologises and everyone goes back to doing what they were doing before the situation arose.

However, it is way too common for low levels of harassment to be accepted as general behaviour, and that is just one of the reasons why these things keep perpetually happening. Because of this, it's important that we educate the attendees of the events of what is and is not acceptable. It is hard to cancel out all the negative behaviour though, especially once events start getting larger. It's a numbers game really – the more people you have, the more chances of having an arsehole among them.

One way myself and other organisers are dedicated to keeping people safe is by keeping an event blacklist. This list is shared only between promoters and is used to stop violent and predatory individuals from coming to our events – there are some people who aren't welcome. To be honest though, I haven't thought too much about how to deal with sexual harassment at events, besides from pre-event awareness campaigns and having security on site to deal with offenders. Stating it's not on, offering safe spaces, making patrons aware that offenders will be removed and barred seems to have been enough for our events so far.

Is giving someone information about consent going to stop sexual violence though? I think that kind of education and information more works on people who are unconsciously harassing – people who are getting intoxicated and being intrusive. There's always going to be a small minority of people in the world who are going to be acting consciously with bad intentions, and I don't currently have a solution for how to deal with that situation when it does arise. But you have given me something to think about. It never hurts to try and be more innovative in crowd care.

UN: This year's Origins of Entropy came to an early end on the Sunday, as does occasionally happen with underground parties. When it was clear that the party couldn't go on, were you worried about people driving intoxicated?

P: That was something that we were worried about, and it was something we told police – “Look, there are 1800 people who came here expecting a party, and this is the peak of the event. If you take that away from them now, they aren't going to chill out and go to bed, they're either going to keep partying, or drive home before they are properly rested”.

If an event is being run in a way that minimises all possible harms, shutting it down is an irresponsible option compared to letting the energy naturally fade out. I know, as a fact, that a lot of people went back to their camps and kept partying. You take the music away, and people will entertain themselves by getting intoxicated.

I feel like the police have a conflict of interest when it comes to their affiliation with outdoor events. On one hand, they are there to keep everyone safe and their advice on how to increase the safety of an event is at times useful. On the other, they are there to do the job of the government and enforce government legislation, and it is not uncommon for legislation to be irrelevant, outdated or unnecessarily over-restrictive. If the police were more open to working with the community, rather than acting as if everything is black and white, then these relationships could be much more productive, but at the moment that isn't the case.

People worked themselves up for an experience, and they got that experience one way or another. Thankfully, there weren't any accidents from people driving home – maybe that says something positive about the personal responsibility of the people in our scene.

UN: I also wanted to talk about getting to and from events in more general terms. There is this shared concern between the authorities and our community in not wanting people to crash and die, right? How do we navigate this?

P: That seems obvious, who really wants anyone to crash and die? I definitely think event organisers have a good chunk of responsibility on this one.

For multi-day events, promoters need to not only educate punters about not driving while fatigued and intoxicated, but also provide opportunities for punters to not drive home in that state. For example, you always allow people to stay an extra



night, and make sure that the event's entertainment is stopped before midnight on that last night at the very latest. If the entertainment keeps going, then people keep going, which defeats the purpose of allowing people to stay that extra night to recover. Also, having markets open throughout the festival, till the morning after the last day, so that people can get some food, have a coffee and a meal before they drive so they're properly recuperated.

It is also good to provide a secondary option for patrons to get to the event with services such as shuttle buses, and also give individuals access to services such as Blow Me First. And if you catch people driving intoxicated, then those individuals should probably be going on a blacklist as well.

It is definitely the younger crowd that drives home when they're not as well rested as they should be, but it's hard to avoid. You can identify an intoxicated person, but a fatigued individual is a lot harder to spot – the younger generations will go through that learning curve though and hopefully we can speed up the process with education coming from the more experienced peers in the community.

Again, promoters are responsible to try and provide solutions to these issues, but that doesn't

mean individuals shouldn't be responsible for themselves.

UN: Do you have any last thoughts to add?

P: Unfortunately, we can't solely rely on people to be responsible for themselves, and even when people are being responsible, things sometimes go wrong. I would heavily encourage organisers and promoters to think about their responsibility towards the patrons of an event.

The more events you do, the more you mature in this field and understand where your responsibilities should or shouldn't lie. If it means reducing the cost of your entertainment to ensure you can take care of the patrons, then that's something you have to do. But there still needs to be a line drawn where patrons are responsible for themselves. We can't just cover everyone in metaphorical bubble wrap because we are scared someone will be a complete munt head and hurt themselves.

MDMA Supplements Guide

Liam F

Do you constantly find yourself waking up after a festival or night out feeling empty, lethargic and struggling to recover? Do you find that your hangovers or come downs are becoming increasingly more difficult to handle, or that your indulgence in substances has left you depressed and struggling to function in your day to day life?

If these experiences sound familiar, it might have something to do with neurotoxicity. The term neurotoxicity refers to the damage or destruction of cells (neurons) in the brain. Recreational drugs work by acting on these neurons and manipulating the behaviour of these chemicals in the brain, which is how they produce their desired effects.

What goes up must come down, it's true - but this doesn't mean you have to come down so far below your baseline. It is possible to enjoy yourself without having to pay such a huge price. This article mainly focuses on the ways that MDMA can cause damage to your brain cells, and ways to help combat or prevent damage.

DISCLAIMER:

It's important to note the science behind this supplement guide and their protective effect is based on animal studies, which don't necessarily translate to humans. It does however make perfect sense in theory and there are plenty of anecdotal reports of supplementing having a noticeable effect on the negative after-effects of MDMA use.

I am not a doctor or a scientist and don't claim to be. Always do your own research and come to your own conclusions. There may not be a way to completely prevent the neurotoxicity associated with certain substances, however any protection at all is better than none. Although this supplement guide is mainly focused on MDMA, it will be helpful in protecting the brain in regard to other substances. All of the supplements listed here are great for brain and body health as well.

How can MDMA cause damage?

The main cause of drug-induced neurotoxicity is something called Oxidative Stress - which is caused by the excess formation of toxic chemicals known as 'free radicals' (aka Reactive Oxygen Species) in the brain. When the levels of these free radicals become too high in the brain, the body no longer has enough antioxidants to remove them all. Our brains are then left unprotected from the free radicals, and they can go on and damage or destroy our neurons.

Neurons can also be damaged through another process called excitotoxicity. This happens when the excitatory neurotransmitter glutamate, which is toxic to cells in high concentrations, rises above safe levels in the brain. This can result in over stimulation and the damage or self-destruction of neurons. Using MDMA or other stimulants at high doses, and withdrawing from alcohol or benzos, can lead to excitotoxicity.

There is a lot of debate about MDMA's potential neurotoxicity and whether it's a concern for human users. However, if you're taking any drugs recreationally - even just alcohol - it's much better to be safe rather than sorry. Fortunately, there are ways to protect your brain from oxidative stress, reduce your chances of doing damage to the cells in your brain, and hopefully not feel like dying the Tuesday following a big weekend.

MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH SUPPLEMENTATION

Personally, and purely anecdotally, this supplement guide has completely changed my drug taking experience. I can now enjoy the occasional MDMA experience without the fear of destroying my brain or my mental health. Without the fear of having to suffer through the depression or feeling of emptiness for weeks or months after my dose, and then not being able to tell whether I'm still coming down or just depressed.

The 'come down' I experience now results in an afterglow that lasts a couple of days before I return to baseline. The psychological benefits of the experience can last for up to two weeks after. I no longer 'come down' further below my baseline or experience a lot of the negative aftereffects I used to. In fact, I now actually find myself in a better mood than before I took the substance. This tells me the supplements I'm taking are at least doing something to protect my brain.

SUGGESTED SUPPLEMENTS THAT MAY PREVENT OR REDUCE MDMA-RELATED NEUROTOXICITY

N-Acetyl-Cysteine (NAC)

NAC is involved in the synthesis of Glutathione by our bodies. Glutathione is the main antioxidant produced by the human body. Supplementing NAC will mean more Gultathione produced, which can protect us against oxidative stress and damage to the brain. NAC may also be helpful for healing the neurotoxic damage associated with cocaine and amphetamine use, as well as improving several mental disorders. Can be purchased online or in health/vitamin shops.

People who use MDMA regularly or in larger doses often find that the euphoric effects of the drug become less pronounced with more frequent use. Anecdotal reports suggest that supplementing with NAC can “bring back the magic” of rolling on MDMA.

Grape Seed Extract (Vitamin E & Flavonoids)

Grape seed extract contains vitamin E and flavonoids. Rats deficient in vitamin E were found to experience an increased severity of MDMA induced neurotoxicity. Vitamin E and flavonoids are also potent antioxidants that will fight off excess free radicals and prevent oxidative stress. Not to be confused with grapefruit seed extract. Can be purchased online, in pharmacies, or in health food/vitamin shops.

Na-R-Alpha Lipoic Acid (Na-R-ALA)

Na-R-ALA is a potent antioxidant that can fight off excess free radicals, helping prevent oxidative stress and neurotoxicity. A 2001 study showed it prevented MDMA neurotoxicity in rats, even when body temperatures rose. Can be purchased online or in health food/body building shops.

Acetyl L-Carnitine (ALCAR)

Another potent antioxidant that synergises with Na-R-ALA, has shown to prevent MDMA neurotoxicity in rats. Can be purchased online or in health food/body building shops.

Green Tea Extract (EGCG)

Green tea extract contains EGCG, an antioxidant which fights free radicals. Can also reduce the difficulty of urinating which some people experience while on MDMA. Purchased online, in pharmacies or health food/vitamin shops.

5-HTP

Your body creates serotonin through a two-step process. First, the amino acid Tryptophan, which we get in our diets, is converted into 5-HTP. 5-HTP is then used by your body to make serotonin.

MDMA use can block the enzyme in the body that converts Tryptophan into 5-HTP. So, for a couple of weeks after use, a lot of the tryptophan you're consuming through your diet isn't turning into serotonin. Taking 5-HTP skips this first step and will help replenish your serotonin levels much more quickly.

Taking 5-HTP with Green tea extract (EGCG) will help to make sure it's your brain that's getting the serotonin, not your gut. You can purchase 5-HTP online, or in body building/health food stores.

Important: Do not consume 5-HTP within the 24 hours before and after taking MDMA. Doing so may increase the risk of **serotonin syndrome**. For more information about serotonin syndrome, see the inside front cover.

Vitamin C

A common antioxidant found in fresh fruit and juice, especially citric fruits. has shown to prevent MDMA neurotoxicity and liver toxicity in rats. Vitamin C from fresh fruit and juice is preferred as it's better absorbed by the body. The chewable 500mg tablets are also a good option and are easily available from pharmacies and supermarkets.

Vitamin C and other antioxidants are known as 'free radical scavengers'. This is because antioxidants can prevent oxidative stress in your body by hunting down and removing the excess free radicals before they can damage or destroy neurons.

Melatonin

Melatonin is produced naturally by your body in low light and helps regulate your sleep pattern. Taking melatonin can help you get to sleep after taking stimulants. It is also a potent antioxidant that will help prevent any lingering free radicals from inducing oxidative stress and doing more damage. Purchased online, or in pharmacies.

Highly bioavailable Magnesium

Magnesium is the substance the body uses to naturally protect itself from glutamate-induced brain damage (excitotoxicity). Supplementing magnesium gives your body the substance it needs to naturally protect its neurons from killing themselves due to excitotoxicity. Magnesium can also reduce or prevent teeth grinding, jaw clenching, and muscle tension. Some forms known to be really well absorbed by the body include, Magnesium L-Threonate, Magnesium Citrate and Magnesium Glycinate. Can be purchased online, in pharmacies, or vitamin/supplement shops.

MDMA SUPPLEMENTS: TIMING AND DOSAGE

6-12 HOURS BEFORE dropping

Magnesium Glycinate or similar - 2000mg
Grape seed extract - 100mg

1 HOUR BEFORE dropping

Magnesium Glycinate or similar - 2000mg
Grape seed extract - 100mg
Vitamin C - 500-1000mg
Grapefruit juice - small glass (optional)

ALONG WITH MDMA INGESTION

Na-R-ALA -100mg
Acetyl-L-Carnitine - 500mg
Water - 250ml
Electrolytes - 250ml

WHILST ROLLING

Na-R-ALA - 200mg (ever 2 hours of the roll)
Grape seed extract - 100mg
Acetyl-L-Carnitine - 500mg
Magnesium Glycinate or similar - 2000mg
Green tea extract - 400mg
Vitamin C - 500-1000mg
Water - 250ml an hour / 500ml an hour when dancing
Electrolytes - 250ml (every 1-2 hours)

POST-ROLL

Magnesium Glycinate - 2000mg
Na-R-ALA - 100mg
Vitamin C - 500 - 100mg
Acetyl L-Carnitine - 500mg
Melatonin - 5-10mg before bed
(using larger doses for its antioxidant effect.)
Water - 250ml - 500ml + Electrolytes - 250ml

3-7 DAYS FOLLOWING MDMA USE

5-HTP - 100mg before bed
Green Tea Extract - 400mg with 5-HTP before bed
N-AcetylCysteine (NAC) - 600-1000mg (optional)

Just the Essentials

Obviously, it might not always be feasible to take a smorgasbord of different supplements into a festival or nightclub. For a simplified regime, I recommend:

Magnesium Glycinate 2000mg - (before leaving the house), if you can manage to fit a couple in a pocket somewhere, even better, take another during and another after.

R-Alpha Lipoic Acid 100mg and L-Carnitine 500mg - I will usually just chuck 5 or 6 capsules of each in different pockets and/or in my tobacco pouch. Take 1 of each before, along with MDMA ingestion, every hour or so of the roll and then every couple of hours afterwards. The more antioxidants you get in you, the better!

Vitamin C 500-1000mg - an easy one to get! Especially if you don't want to be carrying any more tablets around. Vitamin C from fresh fruit or juice is even better, why not order yourself a pineapple/orange juice from the bar?



GRAPEFRUIT JUICE

Drinking a small amount of grapefruit juice can partly slow or prevent the metabolism of MDMA and MDA to their neurotoxic metabolites, therefore may help in protecting your brain from neurotoxicity.

However, grapefruits and grapefruit juice also affect how your body metabolises lots of other drugs, including benzodiazepines, amphetamines, some SSRI antidepressants, some HIV medication (ritonavir), opioids, and many more. These interactions can be harmful to you and even fatal (e.g. can lead to opioid overdose). **For this reason, we suggest that for the sake of harm reduction, you don't mix grapefruit juice with most illicit or prescribed drugs - please do your research!**

Do I really need to take all this shit?

A lot of these supplements are more for extra protection. It's okay if you don't follow the guide exactly - any protection is better than none!

Just remember: Antioxidants, Magnesium, an efficient diet, drinking enough water and electrolytes, getting enough sleep and keeping your body temperature down are the most important things to remember when it comes to keeping your body and brain safe.

HARM REDUCTION AND SUPPLEMENTATION

Because most drug induced damage is the result of the excess formation of free radicals inducing oxidative stress, and antioxidants (such as vitamin C, E, glutathione) are what our body uses to fight off these excess free radicals; If you can keep your antioxidant intake up you'll be doing your body a huge favour.

Magnesium is also extremely important for protecting our neurons from damage, especially when it comes to MDMA, chronic high doses of amphetamine-type stimulants and the withdrawal from drugs that affect GABA such as alcohol. Another reason Magnesium is so important is because most of us are deficient in it and it takes at least 3 months of daily supplementation to even make a dent in the deficiency.

The more often you take a substance and the higher your dose is, the more tolerant you will be to its effects. This is because receptors 'deactivate' themselves to protect themselves from over stimulation, as a response to the sudden rise in neurotransmitter chemicals like **dopamine** and **serotonin**. Try to keep your dose as low as you can and spread out your use as much as possible.

The recommended wait time between MDMA use to avoid tolerance is 3 months. If you're having to eat 300-400mg of MDMA to feel any effects, then you probably need a good period of abstinence, to not just allow your receptors to 'reactivate' (up-regulate), but to also allow time for your brain to heal. Tolerance to the effects of a drug does not mean tolerance to the potential damage it can cause.

As well as drug use, diet, exercise and sleep are the 3 other big areas to make sure you've got covered, to ensure you enjoy the full extent of your experience and are able to keep the party going without having to suffer in your every day life.

Mixing other substances (including LSD and other psychedelics) with MDMA and (meth)amphetamines can exacerbate oxidative stress and increase its neurotoxic effects. So be mindful of this when mixing the two and deciding on your dose.

It's also important to remember that Females are more at risk of Hyponatremia (low blood sodium levels) when using MDMA. So if you are female and using MDMA, don't forget to get some electrolytes in you!

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

KEEP YOUR BODY TEMP DOWN AND YOUR WATER AND ELECTROLYTE INTAKE UP.

KNOW YOUR SUBSTANCE, YOUR MIND AND YOUR BODY

ALWAYS DO YOUR OWN RESEARCH AND COME TO YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS.

ANTIOXIDANTS ARE ESSENTIAL IN PROTECTION FROM NEUROTOXICITY CAUSED BY OXIDATIVE STRESS.

REDUCE OR AVOID MIXING MDMA WITH OTHER DRUGS - ESPECIALLY WITH OTHER STIMULANTS.

EAT YOUR FRUIT AND VEGGIES, GET A DECENT AMOUNT OF SLEEP AND LOOK AFTER YOUR BRAIN!

MAGNESIUM IS ESSENTIAL FOR YOUR BRAIN TO NATURALLY PROTECT ITSELF FROM GLUTAMATE-INDUCED DAMAGE.

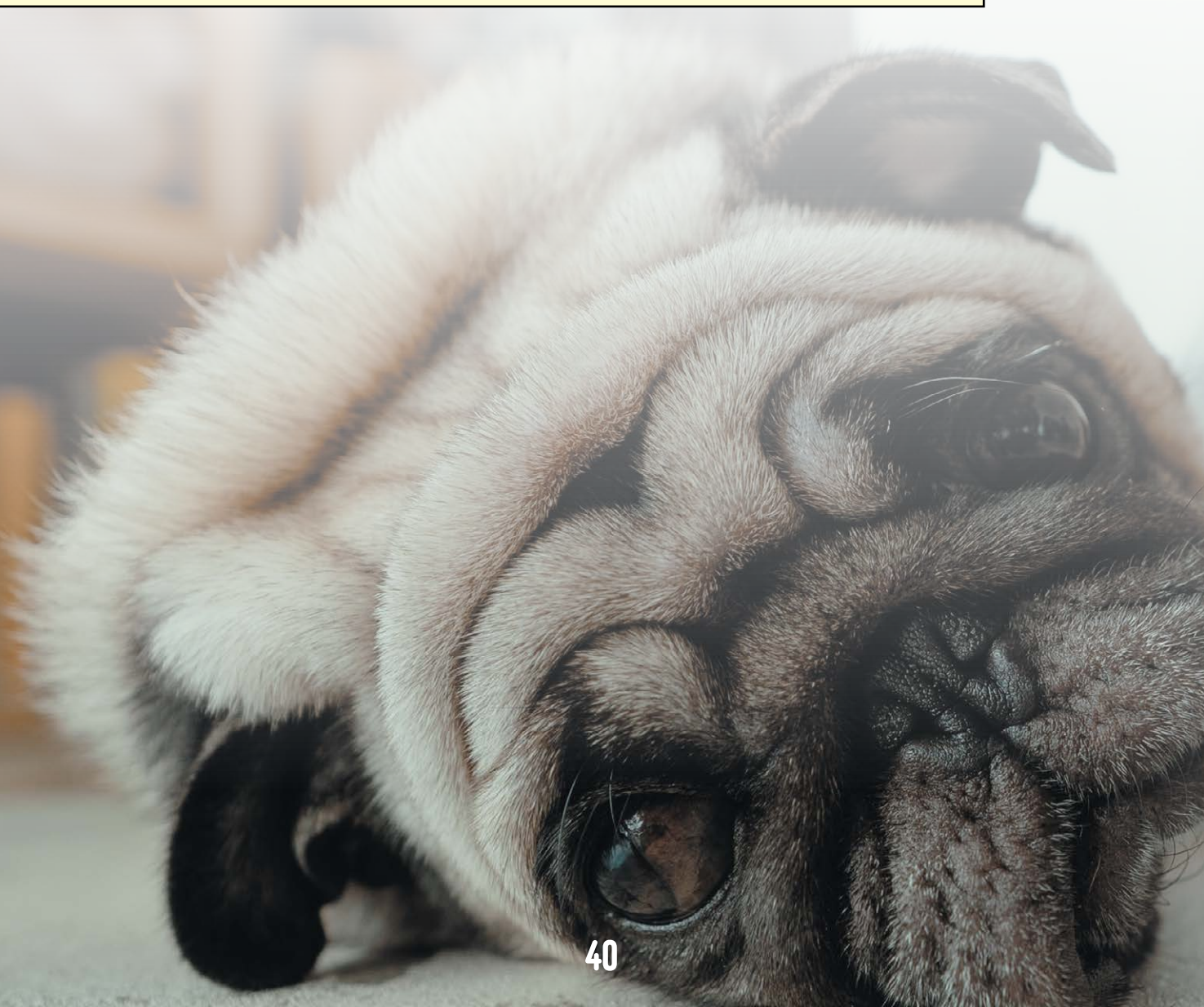
DON'T FRY YOURSELF!

HAVE FUN

Burnt out, crying over spilt milk, swearing you'll never take drugs again – sounds like you're coming down! A lot of people experience rollercoaster emotions after partying all weekend and, in particular, MDMA has a reputation for causing savage comedowns. Below, we'll look at some of the different methods for bouncing back after a big weekend, and some steps you can take to help avoid comedowns altogether.

COMEDOWNS

AVOIDING & COPING WITH THE POST-PARTY BLUES



WHAT CAUSES A COMEDOWN?

Comedowns will differ from person to person. For some, it may be no worse than feeling like you are suffering from a sluggish hangover. Others may experience total emotional ruination that can last up to a week.

When it comes to MDMA comedowns, people like to throw around the age-old one-liner: "what goes up must come down". Luckily for us, this may not be as true as once thought. Recent research from the Imperial College London has suggested that MDMA can potentially be taken in a way that avoids comedowns. The same study also provided some evidence that MDMA can produce an "afterglow" effect - which is what some people who use it have been saying on internet forums for years.

Why then do so many of us feel like human trash the next day? Well, recent studies supported by anecdotal reports indicate that MDMA comedowns are strongly related to:

- Contaminated or impure MDMA
- Excessive dosing or certain drug combinations
- Sleep loss
- Not taking care of your health before and after partying

With this in mind, the following information could help make 'the Monday blues,' 'Suicide Tuesdays' and 'Wasted Wednesdays' a thing of the past for you.

SLEEP

Sleep is super important, and how much of it you get plays a massive part in how you feel both physically and mentally. Anecdotal evidence has long suggested that many of the most common comedown symptoms may be the result of not enough sleep, rather than the MDMA itself.

This belief has been backed-up with evidence in recent clinical trials of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for treating alcohol dependence. Preliminary results, shared by Dr. Ben Sessa, found "No post-dosing mood drop in the 7-days after medical MDMA." He instead suggested that post-party comedowns are "an artefact of sleep loss, excessive exercise and concomitant drug use."

So what's the lesson here? To reduce the chance of comedown, avoid mixing drugs, take regular breaks when dancing, and try to get at least 9 hours of sleep the night before, and the night after, taking MDMA.

SUPPLEMENTS

Supplements can help to reduce comedown symptoms, reduce side effects and even help with neuroprotection. Things like vitamin c, antioxidants and magnesium can all help to fight off the comedown, as they can protect you against drug-induced damage to the brain and body before it occurs.

While there is plenty of information out there about supplements to use with MDMA, it is essential to remember that, primarily due to prohibition, much of this information is anecdotal. Refer to page 32 for our complete MDMA supplements guide.

SAFER USING

Although still rare, the most common causes of serious illness surrounding MDMA seem to be severe overheating and (ironically) people drinking far too much water out of fear of that overheating.

Generally, it is recommended that you drink: around 500ml of water per hour if active and around 250ml an hour when inactive. It can be a good idea to supplement some of your water intake with drinks that contain electrolytes (sports drinks and coconut water are good options).

Avoiding dehydration will help to fight off some of those physical comedown symptoms. To know if you are hydrated keep an eye on the colour of your pee – dark yellow means dehydrated, very light yellow or clear means too hydrated. You want it to be straw-coloured, similar to the shade of yellow on this page!

HYDRATION

Different people experience different drugs in different ways – so it is vital that you know yourself and your limits. It is important to be smart about your use and practice harm reduction where possible. Some of the most important things to think about:

- Get your MDMA tested. Seeing we don't yet have access to lab-quality testing, get a reagent testing kit to use at home (Head to page 72 for more information about reagent test kits).
- Take safer dosages, perhaps less than 180mg total during a session for a male or 120mg for a female/smaller person.
- Don't mix MDMA with other drugs that have comedowns.
- Start low, go slow and don't re-dose for at least 2-3 hours.
- Take breaks between consecutive MDMA sessions: at least not more than every 3 weeks, but preferably keeping it to max once every 3 months.

NUTRITION

Having a healthy, well-balanced diet is just plain good for you. And it will make you better able to cope with whatever morning-after effects you're dealing with.

You may not have much of an appetite the next day, so being well-nourished before you start will ease the suffering later. Consider having a hearty and healthy meal about 4 hours before you take MDMA. This way, the food will be digested before you take MDMA, but you will also have food in your system. Eating is particularly important if you're planning on dancing or being active.

You probably won't feel like eating directly after rolling, but try getting something down. We suggest drinking your nutrition before crashing – green smoothies are perfect for this. Trust us, you'll feel better for it.

TIPS FOR COPING WITH COMEDOWNS

Even if you do your best to follow all the advice in this article, unfortunately you could still end up an emotional wreck and feeling like your brain is made of mashed potato.

While it might be tempting to fight your comedown with more drugs and keep the party going, doing so isn't a good idea and won't help in the long run. This is the time to practice some self-care. What's your favourite way to chill out? What do you need to recover? Everyone will have something different that works for them, but some of our favourite comedown tips include:

- Binge watching some mindless show on Netflix.
- Having a bath - maybe use that bath bomb you have had lying around the house for the last 3 years.
- Skincare! A hydrating face mask can bring you back to life after big weekend.
- Lip balm is great to counteract the last 48 hours of drug-induced lip-licking and sunburn.
- Joints shared with friends (if that's your thing)
- Cuddling up in bed with someone else who's coming down
- Emotional support.
- Smoothies! Lived experience suggests bananas, berries, peanut butter and soy milk are a good combo.
- **NOT MAKING LIFE CHANGING-DECISIONS.** Trust us, it can wait till later.

Basically, just chill out on the drugs for a bit, be kind to yourself, and try not to be too much of a prick to the people you love around you. Comedowns doesn't last forever, but the memories of a good night will!



BEEN THERE, DONE THAT!

MOLLY'S MULTIDAY FESTIVAL GUIDE

Months of saving, weeks of planning, days of excitement leading up to it, hours in a cramped car with your mates, who are just as keen... and then what?

After all that anticipation, it can be tempting to cut loose, hit the tinnies and dig into your stash as soon as you arrive at a multiday doof or festival, but that is rarely a good idea.

Thousands of ravers have gone before you, making these same mistakes – so heed my warnings and hopefully you don't have to!



Resist the temptation and don't get cooked before you get your bearings and set up your tent and campsite. It's a lot harder to care about it and a lot trickier to do once you are cooked. It's important to set up your campsite as a proper temporary home. You are more likely to go rest, get a feed and have some chill time, and give yourself the opportunity to catch up with how your feeling. You may even find that you need a proper sleep, which is crucial on a multiday. You don't want to find yourself burnt out just as your favourite act is about to hit the stage!

use morning times to get my shit together. I always make sure to get some food in my belly, because food is the fuel your body burns to boogie.

When you drop by your camp to get some warmer clothes when the sun sets, or to get into your stash again, have a little snack. Planning meals is great, but eating can be difficult at times and it's important to be able to get something practical into your system. My personal favourites are suckable yoghurts, bananas and cucumbers. I can pull them out of the esky and head off in a hurry, and they are easy to get down even without much of an appetite.

DON'T THINK "OH, I'LL REMEMBER WHERE I PUT IT" - NOT IF OLD MATE KETAMINE IS INVOLVED YOU WON'T!

When setting up camp, create a decent amount of shade cover, enough for the friends you came with, and the new friends you will make along the way. Put your tent under a tarp if you can - it'll provide extra shade, meaning you can sleep longer in the mornings.

If you're camping with your car, stash your valuables, but not your essentials. You don't want to keep going back and forth to get things out, especially if you drove multiple people. Keys get lost or get locked in cars, batteries die, and you don't want that stress ruining your vibes.

When I camp, I know cookery will be afoot, so I set up my tent in to accommodate. Keep your important things in the same place. For example, I have a dedicated torch pocket. I couldn't tell you the amount of times I've rolled into my dark tent, gripped with fear that I wouldn't be able to find something essential, only to remember about the trusty torch pocket. Don't think "oh, I'll remember where I put it" - not if old mate ketamine is involved you won't! I will also usually put my warm clothes in a pile at the entrance to my tent. Makes it a lot easier to find when you're freezing cold and tripping.

If you wake up and you have misplaced things, put them back where they belong, reset your tent and campsite before partying again. Generally, I

Even more important than food is water. Invest in a clip-on water bottle and clip it on to your bag or doof belt. It's going to annoy you (a little bit), which is good! The point is to remind yourself to drink, so if it's right there you're more likely to notice when it's empty and fill it up. Chuck some electrolytes in there once in a while for quicker recovery and cramp-free shape-cutting.

Reckon some of these just won't work for you? That's okay, they work for me, but they're only general tips. The important part is learning to hack yourself. Have a look at your festival history, and think about what has supported you to make good decisions. What has led to you make not so good ones? Is there a specific substance that once you're on it, you forget basic self-care? Or certain people that you've ended up camping with that have made you avoid camp and stay on the dancefloor, hungry and tired?

We talk about set and setting when making better choices about using drugs, but it can be so much more than that. Knowing yourself and understanding your surroundings can lead to better decisions overall and ensure you have the best possible time. That's what it's all about, right?

- Molly

TAKE FIVE

5 TIPS FOR SAFER FESTIVALS

It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of going to a music festival, but rushing into things doesn't give us a chance to think critically about our plans for the weekend. That's why before getting on it, before getting to the festival, before even packing your bags, we suggest you step back and think about what you want out of your party.

We've pulled together what we think are 5 of the most important things to consider, to make sure your festival is as safe and enjoyable as possible. By taking a few simple steps you can do as little damage to yourself as possible while maxing on enjoyment. It's about respecting your body, listening to your limitations, being a good friend and being empowered by evidence about safer ways to use drugs.

#1: SET + SETTING

How do you feel, where are you going, what are you taking?

Set and setting refers to the two most important things to think about when taking drugs (especially psychedelics) - your mindset, and the setting that you're taking drugs in.

Consider your **mindset**: Do you feeling like partying? Maybe you've been upset or unwell recently? If so, don't push yourself. If you are unwell, you may be setting yourself up for a bad drug experience. Drugs and alcohol often enhance the mood you are in, and if you are feeling down or unwell, you may just be magnifying those feelings.

What's the **setting**? Are you taking drugs at a house party, a large commercial event with police and security, or a multi-day festival you're camping at? Different settings require different considerations. Do some research. What kind of facilities are at the event? Can you get healthy food, or do you need to take some? Is there a medical/first aid provider?

As well as first aid, most music festivals in NSW will have a crowd care service, such as DanceWize NSW or similar. The people who run these services are there to help, not bust you! Make sure you know where they are located, in case you or someone around you needs help at any point.

Shout-out to Timothy Leary for this great tip, amongst other things!

#2: MATCH YOUR DRUGS TO THE EVENT

Make sure you have all the info on your substance(s) of choice and the music event you're attending.

Have you tested the substances you are going to take, to make sure you know what they are? It's important to know about any substances you may choose to take prior to taking them. Some helpful things to think about include:

Research your drugs and the event, to make sure they are a match! Do your drugs suit the music? Maybe you should reconsider taking uppers if you're attending a low-key family folk festival. The reverse is also true - you definitely want to avoid K-holing in a moshpit.

What drugs are your friends taking? It's always more fun to be at the same level as your friends and be able to support each other.

Have you had the drug before? It's better to use substances you know or have tried before. Seek guidance from your peers if you haven't tried it, but they have. You can also research the effects of drugs online. Dancewize NSW's website (dancewizensw.org.au), erowid.org, reddit.com and bluelight.org are great places to start.

It's always best to buy from a trusted and reliable source. Taking your chances at a festival and buying from someone you don't know doesn't always work out. You won't know the strength, and you might get ripped off or end up with something other than what you wanted. If the gear is unknown, try a little bit first. You can have more later.

If you're using more than one substance, make sure you do the research on potential effects of combinations. Think about any prescription medication you may be on and whether they can be mixed with other substances or alcohol. The more different drugs you take, the bigger burden on your body and the more likely you may feel unwell or have an overdose. Adding alcohol adds a lot of extra pressure on your body.

Think about the party start and finish times and how long your ride is going to last. You don't want to find yourself experiencing a 24-hour high at an 8-hour party! Nor do you want to be peaking while you are still in line or trashed before your favourite DJ even hits the stage.

Seriously consider investing in your own drug testing kit. Reagents test kits can produce results for a range of substances, and can identify dangerous adulterants.



#3: SORT THE MECHANICS

Wear comfortable clothes and comfortable shoes! Your drug of choice may make uneven surfaces (and gravity) your enemy. Take a jacket, even if it's hot. It can double as a cushion if you feel a bit cooked and need to sit down and chill. If you're heading to a multi-day event, prepare for all seasons and always have a dry pair of socks!

Check the weather forecast. At single day events if it's warm, but there's a chance of rain then take a plastic poncho. They are cheap, don't weigh much, and can make a big difference to your comfort. Have water on you always; wear your drink bottle like an accessory. Remember to have a salty snack on you because the combo of dancing and stimulants means you will lose body salts. You only need a teaspoonful of salt so a packet of salted peanuts in your pocket will work. Don't guzzle water or get obsessed with rehydrating. But don't let yourself get too thirsty either. Just drink normally.

If you're attending a one day/night event, consider how you'll get home and whether you'll have to travel while high. Can you sleepover at a mates, or do you have a lift sorted? Is there someone you can call if you get in a spot who'll pay a cab at the other end or pick you up? Despite your best plans, things do go wrong, so have a plan B.

If you're attending a multiday festival, set up your campsite before you take anything! Tent poles and tarps can put up a fight under even in the most comfortable of settings and you want to have your campsite set up before you start to party so you have your own chill out space ready. This can be a place to go rest once you've had enough adventure for one night, but it's also a safer and more private place if you're choosing to take drugs too.

#4: PRE AND POST-PARTY CARE

Pre-loading on drugs or alcohol can seem like a good idea in terms of saving money and not being sniffed out by a dog. However, doing so could potentially wreck your experience (and yourself!). You can end up peaking way too early or feeling ill from having too much at once.

If you want to 'pre-load' then do it on sleep, vitamins and food! Healthy nutrition, hydration, and regular sleep is the magic triad for enjoying music and using drugs in a safer way. Anyone who uses stimulants may need supplements of magnesium, potassium, vitamin B, and vitamin C or other minerals or vitamins. Have a look at our supplement guide on page 32, but do your own research about the best ways to bounce back after your drug of choice.

When it's time to party, make sure you have a balanced meal before you put drugs in your body – you probably won't be feeling hungry for a couple of hours at least after your drop, even if you need to eat.

After the partying is done, the best thing to do is get plenty of rest! Know that you may feel a bit flat or depressed after partying and have some recovery plans in place. Whether you choose to relax with friends or alone, make sure your bed is comfy, your room is clean, you've got some fruit stocked in and you have made the time to relax and enjoy. In general, be nice to yourself and let yourself get heaps of sleep. Try take a flexi or a rostered day off if you work, so you can collapse without having to call in sick on the Monday.

#5: THE BUDDY SYSTEM

The buddy system is the best way to stay as safe as possible while using drugs.

Make a deal with a friend or a group of friends to watch out for each other and stick together. Babysitting your mate when they get too loose is one of the most important things you can do, both for your friend and for others at the festival.

A big part of harm reduction is about community; people who use drugs looking out for and taking care of one another. Prohibition means that drugs are overwhelmingly discussed as a criminal issue, rather than a health issue. This criminalisation results in stigma and discrimination towards people who use drugs, which can be a barrier for people getting trustworthy information about drugs or accessing health services.

The peer education model is a positive counter-force. Practice harm reduction and be a positive role model to your peers. Share your knowledge with your friends. It's worth sharing your concerns if a friend is being unsafe and needs to pull up. Watch out for each other. Your response in these situations may save a life, or solidify friendships that will last a lifetime!



WORD ON 'THE STREET'

User's News is a magazine written and produced by people who use drugs, for people who use drugs! To highlight that anyone can be an advocate for harm reduction, and in the vein of "by us, for us", we reached out to our supporters on social media about what were their personal best tips for looking after themselves at music festivals and other parties. Here are some of the things your peers suggested to avoid burning out and to make sure that you get the most out of your festival season.

"Eating before I consume any alcohol or drugs. Oh, and loads of chuppa chuppas" - Kevin

"Water, water, and more water. And also sunscreen" - Daisy

"If you NEED drugs to have fun, you're at the wrong event - they should enhance your experience, not be the main focus of your weekend." - Chom

"Take care of your physical and psychological needs. Sleep, eat, and drink water." - Chris

"Plan your day/ weekend but don't put too much pressure on yourself to do everything you planned" - Acacia

“Eat well, get some sleep, don't booze. Take some time to go for a walk away from the d-floor. Sometimes that few moments of peace from the noise can really recharge you” - Litia

“Earplugs are great for when you're sleeping to let your body switch off a bit” - Steven

“Always have a space that's your own. I create a tent haven, so that when everything gets too much, I have my own space with things that make me happy in it” - Reece

“Stay hydrated!!” - Irene

“putting a berocca in with your beer” - Jonno

“Don't skip meals, take a magnesium supplement, and charge the electrolytes!” - Rob

Got your own tips on how to stay safe while partying? Have a story you want to share? Get in touch with User's News! We're always looking for stories, tips, and feedback – as long as it's relevant and speaking from your experiences, we want to hear it! Send us an email at usersnews@nuaa.org.au



ROAD//TRIP



DRIVING, SELF-CARE AND FESTIVALS

The freedom that comes with having a car and a licence is great – you can do what you want, when you want. One of the downsides though is that there's a good chance that you end up driving to and from pretty much every single festival that you attend. Unlike your happy-go-lucky mates, you've got to think about getting there and back, how many seats you have and who gets them, and the chance of being drug tested on your way to and from the festival.

If you're going to be the driver, you have the responsibility to make sure that you're as safe as possible when driving – the lives of you, your mates, and other drivers depends on it. Here's a few of the most important things to consider before jumping behind the wheel.

SOBRIETY

It should go without saying that you should never drive while intoxicated. Besides putting yourself and others in extreme danger, there are also massive fines and a pretty good chance you'll lose your licence if you're caught driving while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. For some more in-depth info about Mobile Drug Testing (MDT), head to page 58.

A lot of music festivals in NSW have the BlowMeFirst service on site. BlowMeFirst offer on-site drug and alcohol testing, the same types used in RBTs and MDTs. While the service costs a small fee, it is definitely worth using them to make sure that you aren't affected by drugs and alcohol before jumping behind the wheel.

REST UP

When leaving the festival, it's important to be properly rested, recuperated, and ready for a long, dusty drive. We know that being sober is important, but did you know driving while tired can be just as risky?

If you're driving while tired, you're going to have slower reaction times, less concentration, poor judgement, and you may even nod off for a few seconds or have a microsleep. Studies have shown that being awake for 24 hours straight makes you drive like you have a blood alcohol level of 0.10%, which is double the legal limit for driving.

If you're going to be driving home, you need to get a full night's sleep (7+ hours) at some point over the festival, or at least a few hours if it's a one-night event. If you're scattered or are coming down, you're probably going to need more sleep – you know when you're tired, so listen to your body. If you know what fatigue looks and feels like, you can make an informed decision about whether or not you should be driving.

The signs of driver fatigue include: yawning, heavy/tired eyes, slowed reaction time, stiffness and cramps, daydreaming or not concentrating while driving, and impaired driving skills (e.g. poor gear changes, speed creeps up or down without noticing).

If you're feeling tired while driving home, pull over for a rest or even a nap. It can help a lot to have someone to share the driving with, so ideally you should swap drivers at some point. Hopefully, at least one of the other freeloaders in your car has their license!

Tips to combat driver fatigue

The only way to actually address being tired is by sleeping. It's never a good idea to keep pushing yourself, be it with chemical assistance or sheer willpower. However, if you do have to drive after a big weekend and a less-than-ideal amount of sleep, here are our best tips for ensuring you get home happy and in one piece:

- Try and get a full night's sleep before leaving the festival
- Take regular breaks – at least every two hours
- Share the driving wherever possible
- Don't drink alcohol or take any non-prescribed drugs before your trip – both uppers and downers can make the effects of fatigue much worse.
- Avoid traveling at times when you'd usually be sleeping
- Take a 20-minute power nap in your car if you feel yourself becoming drowsy!



SAFETY FIRST

Camping festivals and doofs are usually held at locations out of the way, and getting there often means driving on remote, unfamiliar roads. We ain't the cops and we ain't your parents, but it needs to be said: don't speed! In many cases, these roads will be loose gravel or even dirt, which means you're going to want to take them a lot slower than you would normally.

There's also a good chance that there'll be wildlife about, especially if you're driving at night. Hitting a kangaroo, koala, or wombat isn't going to be fun for you or them and can do some serious damage to your car. The only way to avoid this happening is to slow right down, especially around dawn or dusk when these animals are more active.

Remember: don't ever swerve to avoid hitting an animal. Ideally, you'll be going at a slow enough speed that you can stop in time for them, but if not, just hit them. It won't be pleasant, but it's better than swerving, spinning out, and hitting a tree.

If you do hit an animal, pull up wherever is safe, and go back to check on them. They may be carrying their young, so have a look at their pouch if possible, and call WIRES' Wildlife Rescue Line on 1300 094 737 if necessary.

If you hit and severely injured an animal, but they are still alive, you may decide that the most humane option is to put them out their misery – while this can be a difficult or even traumatic experience, it's much better than leaving them there to die slowly.

FOR PASSENGERS

You think none of this applies to you? Think again! If you're the passenger, you have as much of a stake in getting to and from the festival in one piece as the driver does, and you should support them however necessary during the drive.

You can support the driver in a few ways, but the most important thing is simply to stay awake and attentive while in the car. Make sure the driver is feeling good and safe before you leave and continue to check in with them during the drive. Everyone is tired at the end of the party, but you should avoid falling asleep if you're the only passenger who's awake.

There are more simple ways to support someone while they're driving. Being the designated ciggie roller, snack distributor, and playlist curator can solidify friendships, and your company will be invaluable in helping the driver stay awake.



ADVENTURES IN MICROSLEEP

COOPER'S STORY

Mysterious Experiments was a small but impressive party, with some big names in psytrance and world-class production. I can't quite remember how many doofs and dance parties I'd been to before this one, but I probably could have counted them on one hand. To be honest, I instantly fell in love with the doof scene. I didn't touch anything harder than alcohol and weed for at least my first year of partying, but I loved the music and the crowd.

As an invincible 17-year old, I felt experienced in partying and was certain that I knew all the risks and how to navigate them. This belief was far from the truth – I didn't know shit, which I imagine would be the case for most self-assured teenagers. As it happened, my own naivety led to me putting the lives of my close friends and myself in danger. My case was different,

however, because intoxication had hardly anything to do with it.

We'd heard about the party from some older people we knew, and the impressive lineup convinced me and 4 of my closest mates to pile into my car and head into bush. What followed was a surprisingly tame (for the area), but high vibing one-night party.

I drank a bottle of red wine and smoked some bud throughout the night, and in the early hours of the morning I squeezed in about 90 minutes of sleep in the car. I was aiming for at least 3-4 hours but was woken up by my friends, who were seeking refuge from the early morning cold. After that, I didn't think to try and get any more sleep before the drive home - it just wasn't something I was thinking about at all.

"I DIDN'T WANT TO SEEM WEAK OR SOFT IN FRONT OF MY FRIENDS, BUT AS A RESULT, I PUT THEIR LIVES IN DANGER..."

We just wandered around the party taking it easy in the morning, and decided to make tracks in the early afternoon. I had smoked a joint earlier, probably 5 hours before driving. Although still somewhat affected, I really wouldn't personally consider this an unacceptable state to drive in, particularly back then. Looking back though, I'm willing to accept it may have played a role in what happened next.

When we got into the car, I felt great, buzzed but relaxed. Everyone was in a great mood, talking about their night. I don't even remember feeling that tired. About 15 minutes after we'd left, after the conversation had died down, I fell into a microsleep. The momentum of the car spinning out woke me up instantly, and I was luckily able to gain enough control to veer back to my side of the road.

If we weren't on a wide road with lots of space either side, things could've gone seriously bad. The car had spun 180 degrees and came to a stop a couple of metres from a tree. Thankfully, no one was hurt, and the car wasn't damaged, but it remains one of the most terrifying experiences of my life. After stopping to power nap at a park on the side of the road, we safely returned home.

I wanted to share my story to highlight how important it is to keep track of your own exhaustion levels before you start driving and while behind the wheel. These days, most partygoers tend to think about intoxication and driving, both in terms of safety and in avoiding police drug tests on the way home. However,

sleep deprivation and exhaustion aren't given anywhere near enough consideration.

I think the final factor in this accident was the increased social pressure, real or perceived, that is present in groups of young people. My friends wanted to go home, so it was time to drive home – that was the logic. I didn't want to seem 'weak' or 'soft' in front of my friends, but as a result, I put my friends lives in danger, not to mention my own. Looking back, I don't think they would've minded staying an hour or two longer for me to sleep.

No harm no foul, right? Not true. Driving aside, being exhausted and sleep deprived is not good for your general health and wellbeing. It can also make the comedowns from party drugs worse. Knowing what I know now, I tell everyone the same thing: if your driving home, make sure you've had at least 3-5 hours sleep in the last 24 hours, for your passenger's sake if not your own. I also now know how to recognise the signs of fatigue, like heavy eyelids and yawning, and I don't drive back from a party unless I'm 100% rested.

Looking back at my years of partying in the area, I honestly can see just how dangerous the scene was. At the time, me and my mates just laughed it off as being 'heaps loose'. Flicking through the mental photo book, however, I've come to realise how close people in the scene were to death or serious injury. We all are a lot safer in our partying now thankfully, and I'm going to be doofing for years to come - you won't catch me ending up as another statistic!

MOBILE DRUG TESTING

WHAT HAPPENS IN AN MDT?

If you are pulled over for an MDT, you will have to do a mouth swab. The tests detects the presence of MDMA, cannabis, cocaine, and methamphetamine in your saliva. If the test comes up positive for one of those four drugs, you'll be taken to a roadside testing van or bus, or back to a police station to provide a saliva sample for a second test.

If you fail that second test, you will immediately have a 24-hour driving ban placed on you, your car will be left at the side of the road, and the test will be sent to a laboratory for further analysing.

If you pass the second test, you're able to return to your vehicle and continue driving – but your sample will still be sent to a laboratory to be analysed further. If it's negative, you won't hear from the police again.

If the laboratory confirms the positive roadside result, police will contact you and charge you with driving with the presence of an illegal drug. If this happens, your license will be suspended, and you'll also have to pay a fine.

NSW Police can test drivers for drugs anytime or anywhere, for no reason at all – MDT is random.

However, there are some other reasons that the Police might decide to conduct an MDT, including: something about you or your vehicle makes a police officer suspicious of you, a police officer knows you as a person who uses drugs, you are driving oddly or dangerously, or if you are in an accident.

If you test positive for illicit drugs and have been driving erratically, you might cop another charge - driving under the influence (DUI). DUI is a more serious offence than regular drug driving, and you could lose your license for a longer amount of time, be required to pay a larger fine, and may even face jail time.

Remember that if you drive with the presence of an illegal drug, your insurance and registration are null and void. This could have significant financial repercussions if you have an accident.

Mobile Drug Testing (MDT), also known as Roadside Drug Testing (RDT), is a roadside test for drivers, similar to a Random Breath Test. By using saliva sticks, MDT tests for ecstasy, cannabis, cocaine, and methamphetamine (including speed and ice).

Drug driving is a serious offence - the official crime is driving with the presence of an illicit drug. It is also an offence if you refuse to take a drug test. Penalties can include loss of licence, fines and even prison terms.

Unlike Random Breath Tests (RBTs), MDTs don't test how much of the drug is in your body, which would give an indication as to how affected a driver is. Instead, MDTs only test for the presence of these drugs – the crime is just having them in your system, whether or not it's affecting your driving.

HOW DO I PASS AN MDT?

The only way to ensure that you will pass a MDT is to ensure that you are free from the influence of any drugs. The numbers provided below are a rough guide, there is still no sure way to tell if an amount is still in your system.

Other factors such as hydration, body mass and the potency of the substance are also still all relevant to the time the drug will take to pass through your system. The more regularly you use a drug, the longer it will remain detectable in MDTs and other tests

Approximate times that drugs remain detectable in your system

Cannabis: 12 – 24 hours

MDMA & Methamphetamine: 24 – 48 hours

Cocaine – 14 – 24 hours

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS?

Remember: you do not have to tell police anything except your name, date of birth and address as well as showing your driver's licence. If they ask you about your drug use, you do not have to tell them anything, even if the MDT comes up positive. The best advice is to be polite and respectful, and to say as little as possible. **At every stage of the legal/arrest process, you have a right to silence.** However, in some circumstances, for example traffic offences, you do have to give the police some information - your name, address and license.

If you do tell Police that you consumed or self-administered drugs the previous day, they will record this information on what's known as a Fact Sheet. Fact Sheets are submitted to the court and usually seen by magistrates as an accurate reflection of events leading to you being charged. Remember how the saying goes: "Everything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law". So keep it under wraps, at least until you speak to a lawyer.

Passengers in the vehicle are not subject to MDT unless: 1) the passenger is supervising a learner driver, or 2) if the police reasonably believe the person was driving the vehicle, such as witnessing the drivers changing seats prior to approaching police. Additionally, passengers are under no obligation to tell the police about the driver's drug use.

If a driver does submit an MDT and result comes back negative, the police do not have the power to force the driver to undergo further testing, such as blood and/or urine sample testing.

However, if you are unable to provide a sample or refuse to provide a sample the police can require you to provide blood for drug testing. Police can also require a driver or person sitting next to a learner driver to undergo blood and urine testing if the learner driver has been involved in a potentially fatal accident.

Unreliable Testing Regime?

MDT does not test for drug impairment. It tests for the presence of drugs. The test may come up positive for drugs, even several days after using them. It's hard to know how many days after using you might test positive. Drugs stay in people's bodies for different lengths of time, depending on things like gender, weight and general health. Drugs also tend to stay longer in people's bodies if they are living with kidney disease, liver disease or cirrhosis of the liver.

A one-off use of a drug will pass through your body more quickly than if you have used for several days in a row. When thinking about how long drugs stay in your body, consider that small amounts may remain within your system for more than a week.

Recent research conducted at the University of Sydney found that the two saliva swab tests used by NSW police, the Securetec DrugWipe and the Draeger DrugTest 5000, consistently returned incorrect results for cannabis. Researchers found that the tests gave a **false positive** for THC/cannabis when there was none up to 10% of the time. They also found that when THC was present in the test subjects' saliva, the tests returned a **false negative** result for up to 16% of the time. Make of this what you will, but the one thing we know is that the technology isn't perfect!

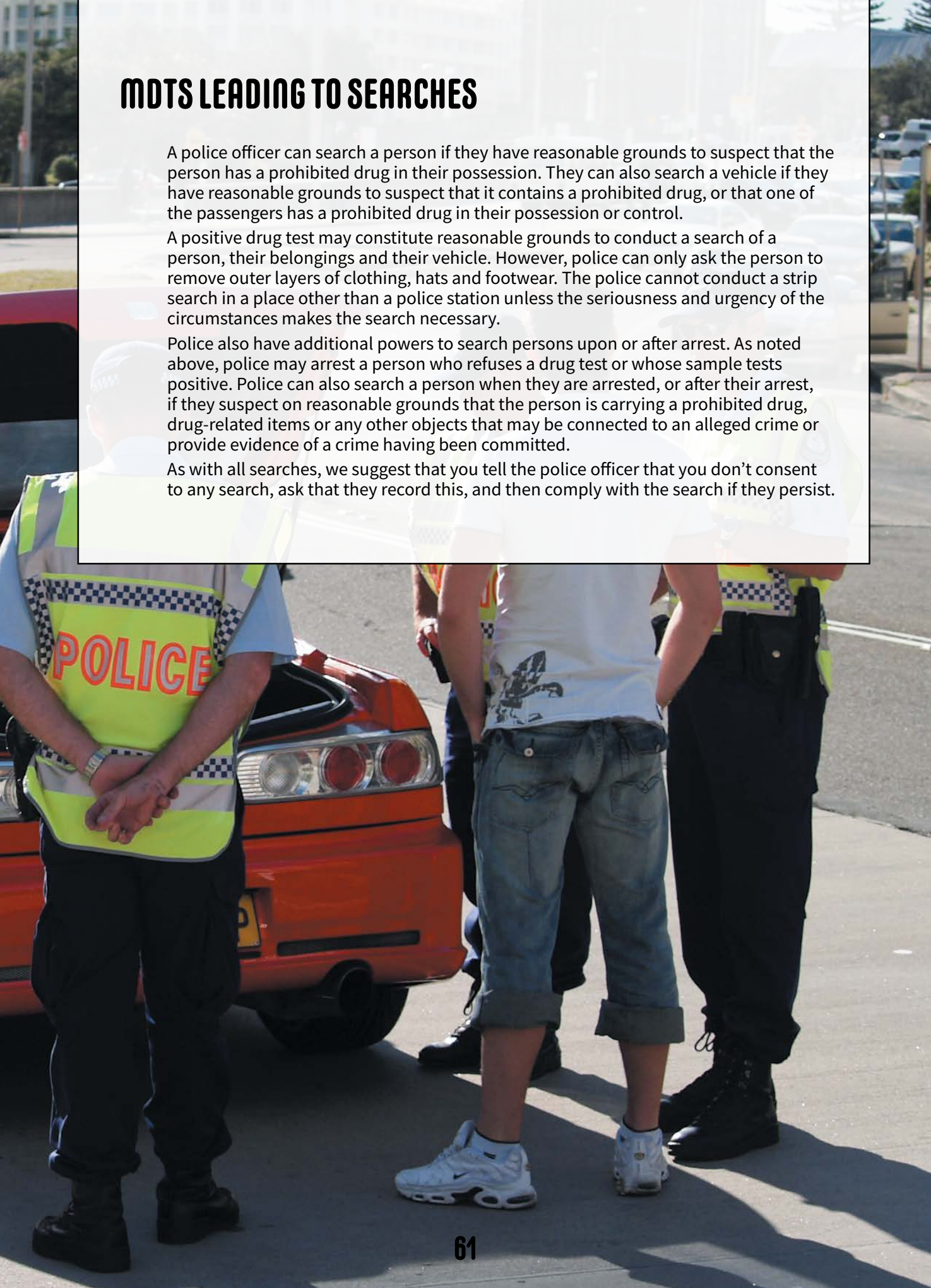
MDTS LEADING TO SEARCHES

A police officer can search a person if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the person has a prohibited drug in their possession. They can also search a vehicle if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that it contains a prohibited drug, or that one of the passengers has a prohibited drug in their possession or control.

A positive drug test may constitute reasonable grounds to conduct a search of a person, their belongings and their vehicle. However, police can only ask the person to remove outer layers of clothing, hats and footwear. The police cannot conduct a strip search in a place other than a police station unless the seriousness and urgency of the circumstances makes the search necessary.

Police also have additional powers to search persons upon or after arrest. As noted above, police may arrest a person who refuses a drug test or whose sample tests positive. Police can also search a person when they are arrested, or after their arrest, if they suspect on reasonable grounds that the person is carrying a prohibited drug, drug-related items or any other objects that may be connected to an alleged crime or provide evidence of a crime having been committed.

As with all searches, we suggest that you tell the police officer that you don't consent to any search, ask that they record this, and then comply with the search if they persist.



TRIPSITTING 101

Helping a friend through a difficult experience

Psychedelic experiences can often be transformative processes of awakening, healing, and ultimately celebrating life. Acting as a catalyst or amplifier of mental processes, challenging psychedelic experiences are not uncommon. The psychedelic state, with its limitless sensations, expressions, and dynamics, can be disorienting, confusing, and at times frightening.

If someone you know is having a difficult experience, follow this guide to help support them through the experience in a non-judgmental and respectful way.

Check if it is a medical emergency

It is important to ensure that the person is not experiencing a medical emergency. This involves:

- Identifying the substances consumed (including any medication); and
- Looking for signs of medical emergencies (responsiveness, sweating, temperature, vomiting, breathing etc.)

Be open with your communication during this process, make sure the person is included, and given the opportunity to voice any concerns about their physical health.

Respect and normalise their experience

Showing genuine respect and engaging with the person is an important step in connecting with the person. It is important to actively listen and show empathy. Gently showing appropriate concern and interest in the experience will help you to establish a bond and build trust between yourself and the person.

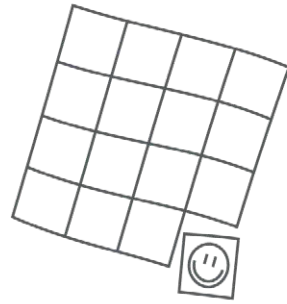
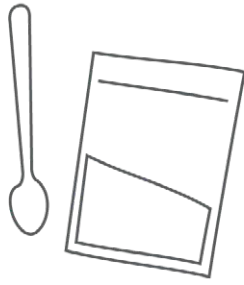
Do not try to “talk down” or dismiss a person’s experience. This will lead to resistance and a breakdown of trust. Instead, allow space for, and acknowledge, emotional expressions.

When someone is having a challenging time, it can be helpful to normalise their experiences as they are expressed - no matter how weird they sound. Anyone who’s tripped before knows things can get pretty weird at times... but that’s the point! Remind the person you are with that what they are experiencing is an entirely normal reaction to what they’ve taken.

Helpful phrases include “that’s not unusual” or “some people experience...” In addition, you can reflect statements to convey meaning and positive framing when appropriate: “That sounds like...”

Some tips to consider:

- Encourage them to lay down, with eyes closed
- Only talk if you are responding, or if you need to check something for safety
- Remind them they are safe, and you will be there for them
- Encourage them to explore the state they’re in with curiosity.



Holding Space

The presence of a grounded, compassionate individual can go a long way in helping someone feel safe in a time of crisis. Approach with kindness and openness, creating an environment of acceptance and compassion. Let the person know that they are in a safe place and that their experience is welcome.

Holding space involves considering both the physical space and interpersonal space.

Physical space: We must first seek to establish a safe setting for the person to work through any internal processes that may come about. Is the person comfortable? Do they have enough room to move? Do they have any physical needs not being met? Is the temperature okay? What is the noise level, is it too loud?

Interpersonal space: It is also important to ensure the person feels safe by considering their interpersonal surroundings. Who else is in the space? Do they feel they can trust them? Is there a better space for them?

Encourage Reflection and Growth

Remind them that this experience is temporary, and encourage exploration.

Be mindful that they may have anxieties relating to being “stuck” in the trip, or feeling like it is lasting too long. It can be beneficial to communicate how helpful it is to be present in the moment without resisting.

Reassure them they are safe. Feelings of safety can allow them to let go of resistance to the experience.

Integration and Aftercare

What happens after the experience is an extremely important part of the psychedelic journey. The person may be experiencing a lot of different emotions after having been through such a vulnerable experience and it is important to spend time validating, normalising and inquiring about any reflections they have about their experience.

Integration is when somebody takes their psychedelic experience, and applies what they’ve uncovered into their day to day life. It can help to ask the person you’re helping whether they have plans to try and integrate their experience into their life. It can also help to ask them how they plan on caring for themselves in the upcoming days.

Check in with them after the experience if possible, when they’ve had some time to process their trip. Make sure you let them know you’re there to support them if they’re having trouble coping.



FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHT TO PARTY

STUDENTS FOR SENSIBLE DRUG POLICY AND THE LONG ROAD TO LAW REFORM

Everyone knows that university students like drugs. Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP) really, really like drugs though. Like, a lot. Since launching in 1998, Students for Sensible Drug Policy has expanded from a handful of internet-savvy uni students in New York to over 300 chapters worldwide. User's News caught up with Beau and Sofia, who are key organisers in the NSW Branch, to talk policy, partying, police, and privilege.

UN: Alright team, give it to me straight. What is SSDP all about?

SSDP: Students for Sensible Drug Policy is a youth-led movement advocating for better drug policies. At the moment, our main focus is on tackling overpolicing (i.e. increased strip searches and Police Assistance Dog (PAD) operations), and shifting public conversations around drugs away from prohibition models, and towards alternative policy frameworks like harm reduction.

UN: So, how is SSDP working to change these conversations? What does it actually mean to influence public debate and how does that translate into policy change?

SSDP: This year, SSDP launched our ‘Be Heard Not Harmed’ (#BHNH) campaign. It’s a campaign operating across the country, and primarily focuses on putting the voices and experiences of young people who use drugs at the centre of festival harm reduction debates occurring right now in Australia.

#BHNH started as a drug-checking campaign, but quickly expanded to night life in general. It is now guided by 4 principles; community-led safety; harm reduction over prohibition; ending over-policing of people who use drugs; and celebrating the practices, values and communities of night life culture in Australia.

To answer the second part of your question, we have six key policy asks which make up the #BHNH campaign. These are:

- The development and implementation of static and mobile drug checking services, linked to an early warning system;
- Abolish the PAD program (i.e. get rid of sniffer dogs);
- Eliminate or significantly reduce user-pay policing at festivals;
- Expand and develop peer-led harm reduction initiatives;
- Establish a Night Life advisory group; and
- Inquiry and research into safe supply models for drugs.

That last point basically means one of SSDP’s primary goals is ending prohibition. So obviously

we’re aiming high. But by demanding changes and advocating for inquiries and trials, we do see real and meaningful changes on the ground. One example would be the pill testing trials ran at Groovin’ the Moo Festival over the last two years.

UN: It’s good to see that you’re advocating for both fixed and mobile site drug checking. It’s



been a big concern of ours that ‘pill testing’ only really targets people using drugs at festivals, essentially providing a health service only to a privileged sect of drug users, while excluding others.

SSDP: Yeah, drug checking is a much broader term, which is good because it is definitely needed in more contexts than just festivals. As well as simply testing the drugs to find out what they contain, drug checking also provides a point of contact between people who use drugs and harm reduction workers, which can allow for interventions, education, and referrals to other health services. A fixed site service, where anyone could just go and test any drugs they were planning on taking, means much less of a barrier to access drug checking.

We do have to acknowledge that as festival goers and students, we are treated better and generally afforded more respect in society than a lot of other people who use drugs. What is important is using and leveraging privilege to make change that benefits everyone, and we can do this by focusing on practicality and looking at what is likely to change.

Pill testing at festivals is a hot topic in the media and it's looking more likely that it'll be introduced in NSW sometime soon. By building on this momentum and advocating for fixed site testing, we can hopefully make sure this change will benefit everyone who uses drugs, their families, and the wider communities – not just festival-goers.

UN: I'd imagine we don't need to convince our readers that these are all very good initiatives. What is it actually like to be a part of SSDP though? What does it look like? How does it work?

Sofia: It depends on your level of involvement – there's a lot to do. We are involved with lots of grassroots events and initiatives that celebrate and support people who use drugs, from street actions, to stalls at festivals, to running workshops. For the most part, being in SSDP means grassroots advocacy and activism. Basically, the beauty of the operation is in having people with different skills, interests, experience and passions split across a country wide network. There are going to be some people who can commit more than others, and that's fine! Everyone just does what they can. SSDP is a grass-roots movement, led by young people.

Beau: Yeah, I'd agree with all that. For me, being in SSDP means sitting on panels, hosting events and parties, and getting involved in rallies, advocacy and activism. It's pretty rewarding stuff. If you want to get involved, you can sign up by heading to our website, ssdp.org.au. The best thing though is to show up to the meetings and the rallies.

Recently, SSDP Sydney ran an event for International Overdose Awareness Day. We had a range of people speak at it, including medical professionals and community organisers, and ran workshops on recognising and responding to overdoses. We also had a BBQ lunch in the sun, with some DJs spinning downtempo music.

UN: On the topic of overdose, I wanted to ask you about the new law which was introduced in NSW earlier this year - drug supply resulting in death. How do you think this will affect people over the upcoming festival season?

SSDP: After the high-profile music festival deaths in NSW last summer, the NSW state government, headed by Premier Gladys Berejiklian, rushed through this new law: "drug supply resulting in death".

Basically, this law means that if a someone supplies a drug to another person for "financial or material gain", and someone (not necessarily the original buyer) dies as a result of this, the supplier can be liable for up to 20 years imprisonment.

There have been similar laws made in the USA, and basically the evidence suggests that such laws actually increase the risk of death to people who use drugs. The person supplying drugs is much less likely to help someone in distress. They aren't likely to stick around when there's a potential manslaughter charge hanging over them.

It's worth mentioning that these suppliers are usually friends or just partygoers funding their own hobbies. This law shifts the blame onto individuals and thus not only fails to target high-level drug suppliers, manufacturers & organised crime, it completely ignores the true culprit – drug prohibition.

There was no consultation with community members before introducing this law and they didn't consult with criminal and medical experts. It's just tokenistic – the government wanted to look like they're 'fixing' the 'problem' of festival deaths in the lead up to the state election, so what do they do? Rush through ill-thought out laws and cancel DEFQON.1 festival. All they're doing is targeting low-hanging fruit, without addressing any of the structural or cultural elements that contribute to risky drug use.





"ALL THEY'RE DOING IS TARGETING LOW-HANGING FRUIT, WITHOUT ADDRESSING ANY OF THE STRUCTURAL OR CULTURAL ELEMENTS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO RISKY DRUG USE."

UN: So what's on for SSDP in the future?

SSDP: The festival seasons just started, and SSDP will be at Lost Paradise and Strawberry Fields (in Victoria) to spread our message and get more people involved.

Hopefully, in the future, we'll be able to work together more with other groups in this space. We're currently working towards a collaboration with Redfern Legal Centre's 'Safe&Sound' project and Sniff Off – but you'll hear more about that soon!

Although we're going to keep advocating for systemic change, we also acknowledge that what we do is only a small part of making festivals and drug using in general less dangerous for everyone. We can't wait for policy to change or the government to act – not when people are dying. That's why a lot of us are involved in frontline services, like DanceWize NSW, that are making a difference on the ground.



MARCEL'S STORY

OR: WHY YOU SHOULD ALWAYS TEST THE DRUGS YOUR MATE FINDS ON THE FLOOR BEFORE DOING THEM.

I've been taking all sorts of drugs for the past 6 years and I used to think I was pretty good at it. I'd never had a bad trip, blown-out or put myself in the k-hole. I figured I had a pretty good handle on how to party 'safely'. I found out the hard way that letting your guard down – even a little bit – can have serious consequences.

It was New Year's Day 2017, the morning after a big house party with some of my best friends. I'd taken LSD and MDMA throughout the night and had a fantastic time. By this point, we'd been reduced to lounging around the backyard; basking in the sun, listening to music, and talking shit. Life was good.

Around 10AM, a mate brought out a small bag of what looked like semi-crushed prescription pills that he'd found a few weeks earlier whilst volunteering at Subsonic Festival. I could make out small numbers and letters printed in the pills, as well as a small amount of powder in the bag which I assumed was just residue from the crushed pills.

"Yep, that's definitely Xanax," my other friend Jake said as he inspected the bag. "You can see the code stamped into the pills. I used to have a script for it, it'll chill you out and help you sleep."

I'd never taken Xanax before, but I was tired and knew I wouldn't be able to sleep without some sort of chemical assistance. After watching my friends go first, I fished out a small fragment and washed it down with some fruit juice. Probably wouldn't do much, I thought.

About half an hour later I said goodbye to my friends and started my short walk home. I started to feel a little uneasy... whenever a car drove past, I thought I could hear voices calling to me from it. I wrote it off as effects from the tail-end of the acid trip. I just need to go to bed, I figured. I'll be fine.

I made it home, took my shoes off and drank some water, but something didn't feel right. I could hear the blood in my ears; my heart was pounding way harder than seemed normal. This must be the Xanax, I reasoned, but it didn't feel relaxing at all. I drank some more water and tried to stay calm, but the pounding seemed to get louder and louder. I tried to call friends back at the party to see how they were feeling, but no-one was picking up.

The feeling of unease grew more and more intense, and I started pacing the hallway, breathing deeply, trying to stay calm. You only took a small amount, I thought to myself, you'll be fine. The pounding was getting louder and faster.

Then my vision started to warp. I was tripping. **Maybe this isn't Xanax**, I thought.

I tried to make sense of what was going on, but it became harder and harder to get a grip on reality. This was unlike anything I'd ever experienced before. My chest felt like it was going to explode, and I felt like I was being torn apart, physically and mentally. Everything was a swirling, disorienting nightmare. I remember the universe telling me that I was either going to die or go insane, and that it was all my fault. Thankfully, my housemates were home. When they saw me and how I was acting they called an ambulance straight away.

After that, I don't remember too much; brief waking flashes of terror, throwing up, not knowing who I was or when I was born, being told by a nurse that I should've made better life choices. The next clear memory I have was groggily waking up in hospital days later, covered in bruises with my Mum there telling me what had happened.

By the time the ambulance made it to the hospital, my heart was only beating 4 times per minute. I had to be put in an induced coma and transferred to the Intensive Care Unit. They tried to wake me a few times, but I would lash out in terror and they had to hold me down – which was how I got the bruises. My parents were worried I'd been permanently brain-damaged.

After a couple of days, I was able to comprehend reality again. It took about a week to recover and to get my head around what had happened. I talked to my friends at the party, and found out that everyone's experience of the 'Xanax' was slightly different. A few people simply fell asleep, some vomited and then passed out, while another friend felt similar effects as me, although not as severe.

We sent the bag of 'Xanax' off to a toxicologist to be tested, but the results were inconclusive. I did a bunch of research, including looking at trip

reports on erowid.org. The drug that matched my experience most closely was a 'research chemical' called 25i-NBOMe. All the symptoms matched up: the word salad, the blackouts, the vomiting, the terror, the increased heart-rate. It seems unlikely, but my best guess is that the crushed-pills were Xanax and the powder at the bottom was NBOMe.

Thankfully, I haven't had any long-term effects. The worst thing was the guilt, putting my Mum, brothers and best friends through that experience. Although my mum had never taken illicit drugs herself, I believe she trusted me to be careful, and I felt like I had betrayed that trust. She worries about me and my brothers enough as it is, and I can't imagine what it would've been like to see me in that state, trying desperately to understand what had happened to her son.

I felt a need to turn the experience into something positive, but I wasn't sure where to start. I thought that maybe I could warn others and prevent another hospitalisation. I did a first-aid course, but then I learned about DanceWize NSW. I joined the volunteer team, and before long I was practising harm-reduction at events and festivals across New South Wales.

I could never imagine how rewarding and validating working with Dancewize NSW has been. It felt appropriate to be volunteering at Lost Paradise this past News Years Eve, almost exactly two years after being hospitalised, educating and helping out others, and witnessing first-hand the impact we've had. My Mum thinks it's a great initiative as well and is pretty proud that I'm a part of it.

I still feel some guilt about what happened, and I'm eternally grateful to my best friends who took me to hospital. I feel incredibly lucky to survive, and to have an opportunity to teach others to learn from my mistakes. Mostly though, I'm just happy to be alive.

**WE'RE HAPPY YOU'RE ALIVE TOO MARCEL <3
STAY SAFE OUT THERE TEAM...**

DRUG CHECKING // PILL TESTING

What is drug checking?

Drug checking, also known as ‘pill testing’ or ‘drug safety testing’, is a harm reduction practice that empowers people who use drugs by providing them with information about the ingredients and purity of substances. This information is important, as it allows us to make informed decisions about the substances that we choose to consume.

How does it work?

Simply put, drug checking is the testing of drugs to find their contents, purity or the presence of harmful or fatal contaminants. There are a range of technologies and methods used for drug checking, but the important thing for us is to know what is available now, and what the future may hold.

Reagent testing kits

Reagent testing kits are the only legal way to check your drugs in NSW at the moment. These kits are simple, cheap, and are for personal use, but they are quite limited in what they can tell you.

These kits include one or more colour reagent tests. The reagents are liquids that change colour in the presence of specific substances and drugs. However, they aren’t able to give a reliable indication of purity, and you need to know what you’re looking for. For example, a positive result for MDMA wouldn’t necessarily mean that your drugs aren’t cut with something else – it just means that there is MDMA present in the sample.

Lab-quality testing

Lab-quality drug checking equipment is much more reliable and accurate than reagent tests, but unfortunately isn’t available for punters festivals in NSW just yet. This is the type of equipment that researchers used at the recent pill testing trials in ACT at Groovin’ the Moo festival.

These machines can give detailed information about the contents of drugs and are the best possible drug checking technology. While the equipment used for these tests will vary in some ways, they typically give an in-depth analysis into the ingredients of a substance and the level of purity.

When ‘pill testing’ is brought up in the media, generally the term refers to ‘Front of House’ testing. This is where a person brings their drugs in to be tested, and has a face-to-face interaction with someone working at the service about the drugs being tested, and harm reduction more broadly.

There is also ‘Back of House’ pill testing, where drugs that are discarded or seized by police/security are tested to gather information about drug trends. Back of house drug checking does not have an education or harm reduction aspect to it - it is largely for the benefit of law enforcement agencies.

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

What's all the fuss about?

Drug checking has become a hotly contested subject in Australia, and debates about 'pill testing' seem to have become a permanent fixture of our media landscape. From all the controversy, you'd be forgiven for thinking drug checking is new. Globally, however, this type of harm reduction practice has been in place for decades.

In fact, there are over 30 drug checking services operating around the world. Over the last three decades these services have built a strong evidence base, and are proven to reduce the potential for overdoses, reduce drug related harms, and connect people who use drugs to harm reduction services.

It is also important to note that in Australia 'drug checking' has already been happening for decades in an unmonitored and unsanctioned manner, as our community has found innovative ways to keep one another safe. However, the only legal trials of 'pill testing' in Australia were conducted at the 2018 and 2019 editions of Groovin' the Moo festival in the ACT.

These trials were conducted by a group called Pill Testing Australia (formerly known as the STA-SAFE Consortium), and showed patrons, promoters and politicians alike that drug checking services are effective at decreasing drug-related harms when available at Australian festivals.

Is drug checking just for people at festivals?

No, drug checking is for anyone who uses drugs! Although the public conversation about 'pill testing' focuses on testing so-called "party drugs" (e.g. MDMA) in festival environments, drug checking services can operate in many different settings. Globally, we've seen drug checking services run successfully at drug health services and in community-based settings, in addition to music festivals.

The Loop Australia, a not-for-profit organisation, has emerged as a leading voice in this area since being established in 2018. The Loop Australia advocates for drug checking services that are freely accessible to people who may use drugs, including in community-based settings and drug health services. Fixed-site drug checking is a health service that should be available for all people who use drugs. These services also give harm reduction workers the opportunity to educate people who use drugs on the specific risks of drugs that may be circulating (e.g. if there is a bad batch of heroin going around that is causing people to overdose).

Therefore, while it is important to have these services established at festival sites, it is also important that we remember this only benefits a portion of our community. We need to be advocating for drug checking services at festivals and fixed-site locations, so that they are available to our whole community and we can all get our substances tested and make informed choices about our drug use!



NANGS

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NANGS

Nangs, whip-its, chargers, bulbs, Nos, laughing gas – whatever you call Nitrous Oxide, there’s probably a lot you don’t know about this substance loved by dentists, pastry chefs and party people alike. Nitrous is legally available to purchase, but it is illegal to use it to get high (although anecdotal reports suggest eating whipped cream can lead to feelings of euphoria, elation, and nausea...)

Perhaps you don’t know much about nangs at all – you might’ve just seen the empty steel cartridges littering a dance floor, heard a distinct screeching sound coming from someone’s tent, or naively thought that your fellow party-goers who seem to be blowing up a lot of balloons are just working on their campsite decorations.

Although in our circles it’s primarily known as a party drug, nitrous oxide has been used since the 1960s in race car engines, since the 1930s to make whipped cream, and since the 1840s as a painkiller and anaesthetic in dentistry and surgery. But even further back in history, nitrous oxide was first used in the 1790s by the British upper class... where they’d huff bags full of it at “laughing gas parties”! That’s right – nitrous oxide was being used recreationally for more than 40 years before it was used for anything else!

While nitrous oxide is on the World Health Organisation’s List of Essential Medicines, which details the most effective and safe medicines needed in a health system, recreational use is not necessarily safe. There are some potential harms which you should know about, to make sure that you’re looking after yourself while partying.

Crackers, Nanganators and Tanks

There are two ways that people can get nitrous oxide – in small ‘cream chargers’ or ‘bulbs’, AKA nangs, and in larger medical gas cannisters (which look like a scuba tank).

Cream chargers are designed to be used with whipped cream dispensers, often referred to as ‘nanganators’. They can also be used with smaller hand-held ‘crackers’, which look like small metal tube.

The gas cannisters are used by surgeons and dentists to administer nitrous oxide to patients, as a painkiller or to sedate them. The cannisters, when used recreationally, may have a breathing mask attached to them which you put over your mouth/nose. More commonly, however, the cannisters are used to fill balloons with nitrous oxide, which is then inhaled.

What’s the go with balloons?

There are two main reasons why people release the nitrous oxide into balloons. Firstly, nitrous oxide is stored under pressure both in cream chargers and cannisters, meaning that when it is released, it will come out FAST and will be freezing cold. This can cause some serious damage to your lungs if you inhale it directly, so when using hand-held crackers and cannisters it’s always important to inflate a balloon with the nitrous first.

The second reason is that nitrous oxide isn’t processed (or ‘metabolised’) very well by our bodies - on average, less than 0.01% is metabolised every time you have a nang. This doesn’t mean you’re missing out on 99% of the high though – it just means that your body doesn't need to break it down for it to affect you. People often breathe the nitrous oxide in and out of a balloon to maximise the effects of the drug.

Nanganators have a metal cylinder where the gas is cracked into. You can let the nitrous cool down in there, and then slowly release it into your lungs without needing to use a balloon.

Breathe Easy

Nitrous oxide is only minimally metabolised (processed) by the body, so people often repeatedly breathe their hit in and out of a balloon to get the most effect from it.

Obviously, none of us like the idea of drugs going to waste. However, if you are going to use a balloon to maximise the effects of the nang, you need to think about that other super important gas – oxygen.

Breathing in and out of a balloon on repeat means that you are going to be depriving yourself of oxygen, which can cause some serious damage. Oxygen deprivation, also known as hypoxia, can occur very quickly. Your reflex to breathe is triggered by a build-up of carbon dioxide in your lungs, not a lack of oxygen, so you might not realise you’re becoming oxygen deprived as you won’t necessarily have a build-up of carbon dioxide in your body telling you to breathe.

Oxygen deprivation can be serious! Some of the potential effects include problems with your memory, as well as loss of bodily control and organ damage. If you’re standing up while you have it, you could collapse.

If you’re going to be breathing nitrous in and out of a balloon, you should make sure that you’re still getting sufficient oxygen. Instead of simply breathing in and out, in and out, in and out until you can’t anymore, you should try get some oxygen in between breathes.

It should look a bit more like: Breath in the nitrous, hold for a few seconds, blow it back into the balloon, have a few breaths of fresh air, and repeat 2 or 3 times. If you find that this is too complicated for you, you’re probably already high enough.

Filter First

Most, if not all, brands of cream chargers contain a dark oily substance, which we think is grease left over from the manufacturing. If you use a nanganator, you can see this grease if you run your finger around the inside of it, or you might notice a yellow stain on the nozzle or inside the dispenser.

Small particles of metal are also released into the gas when nangs are cracked. These can be up to three millimetres long, but are quite often microscopic – too small to see with the naked eye.

No one wants a 3mm shard of stainless steel in their lungs, so if you're going to use nangs you should always try filter them. If inhaling directly from a nanganator, you should breathe in through a piece of fabric, like your shirt, a bandanna, or a handkerchief.

If you prefer to use a balloon, you are still able to filter your nangs with a piece of fabric fixed to your nanganator or cracker. To find out how to filter your nangs, have a look at our step by step guide on the next page over.



Pictured: Grease and shards of metal can be seen on a tissue used to wipe out the inside of a nanganator.

Keep it classy!

Nangs, and by extension the people who use them, have a bit of a bad reputation in some party scenes. As single use items, they produce a lot of waste, and most scrap metal places won't accept them for recycling. People could roll their ankles on a rogue nang left on the dancefloor, and they just look ugly littering a beautiful festival site.

If you're going to use nangs at a festival or a doof, keep it classy! First rule is to chuck em in the bin, not on the ground! Or better yet, take them home with you and throw them out there – that way, the event organisers won't be left with 800KG of spent nangs to deal with at the end of the event.

If you're an environmentally minded person, you may want to reconsider your consumption of single use items when you go to festivals, raves or doofs. 24 packs of 600mL water bottles, balloons, and nangs all result in a lot of unnecessary waste. Limiting your use of these items is a simple yet effective way we can reduce our environmental impact.

Jelly Legs

Believe it or not, the most common injury that comes from using nangs is falling over! Nitrous oxide can lead to an immediate and complete loss of bodily control, and you may or may not pass out as well.

For this reason, you should only do nangs while sitting down. There have been countless injuries from people collapsing after inhaling nitrous oxide – there are even some reports of people dying as a result of collapsing (where they've fallen and hit their head).

Vitamin B12

Vitamin B12, also known as *cyanocobalamin*, is an essential nutrient that our bodies use to make red blood cells, repair body tissue, and keep our nerves healthy.

Using nitrous oxide can lead to a vitamin B12 deficiency because it inactivates your body's supplies of vitamin B12. However, because the B12 is still in your body, a test won't show you have low levels. This is especially important to think about if you are vegan or vegetarian, because your diet will likely already be low in B12.

B12 deficiency is serious and can lead to long-term problems – symptoms include extreme fatigue/feeling tired all the time, pins and needles or numbness in the fingers and toes, and muscle weakness which can lead to problems with walking. We advise regularly taking a B12 supplement if you're doing nangs – you can get these over the counter as tablets, or might prefer getting a B12 injection from a GP.

FILTERING NANGS

STEP 1: Collect your equipment. You will need:

2 balloons, a small piece of cloth (we cut up a hessian bag for ours), nitrous oxide bulb, and a whipped cream dispenser or handheld cracker

Cut the lip off one of the balloons - this is the ring at the end that you blow into. You can throw away the rest of that balloon.



STEP 2:

Position the piece of cloth over the end of the cracker that the gas is released from. If using a whipped cream dispenser, put the cloth over the nozzle



STEP 3:

Use the lip from the balloon to secure the cloth in place as shown. It needs to be tightly secured, so you will most likely need to double it over itself before putting it on.



Cream chargers, AKA nangs, contain food-grade nitrous oxide - it's not the same as the medical-grade nitrous oxide used in surgery and dentistry. When you crack a nang, the gas can contain a range of impurities, such as industrial grease left over from manufacturing, and tiny particles of steel from the pierced metal. If you're going to do nangs, you should filter them to make sure you're not breathing anything in that you don't want to. Below is a step-by-step guide to making a filter for your cracker or nangator, which still allows you to fill balloons.



STEP 4:

Your nangator or cracker should look like one of the two pictures above, with the cloth tightly secured by the snipped off balloon lip.

Now, put the balloon you're cracking the nang into over the cloth, as shown to the left.



STEP 5:

Put your bulb in, crack it, and fill your balloon! Enjoy your nang without worrying about the grease and tiny shards of metal filling your lungs!



PEDRO'S STORY

TRAPPED IN THE NANG VOID...



I'm 22 and until recently had been doing nangs (nitrous oxide) pretty much every weekend for a year and a half. I'd been around people doing them since about age fifteen, although it took me a while to try them myself. I didn't know the risks in doing them until much later.

When I had my first nang, I was alone and didn't know what I was doing, but I was determined to do it anyway. I'd seen people cracking them into the balloons but didn't get why. I had one of the small hand-held crackers, twisted the nang into it, and wrapped my lips around. When I unscrewed it, the gas was forced into my lungs, and my lips instantly froze to the metal – I ripped them away and tore a massive chunk of flesh off my lips. It bled a lot, I didn't get high, and for about twenty minutes was struggling to breathe.

In the last couple of years, I started using them a lot more. Nangs became something we'd take with other drugs, instead of by themselves, at festivals, raves, house parties, kick-ons, you name it.

"I REMEMBER CRACKING THE BULB, FILLING THE BALLOON, PUTTING IT TO MY LIPS, AND THEN – NOTHING."

They've also blown up in popularity. So much has been written about them online and in the media, which makes people curious and more likely to try them. Plus, they're legal and easily-available. You can get them online, at tobacconists and convenience stores, and even IGA sells them.

One of the main issues with nangs is the amount people do. My mates and I would just sit there and go nang after nang after nang until we'd basically be passing out. It's definitely hard to stop at just one, probably because the high is so intense yet so fleeting. If you're already on something else, you get caught in the loop and just keep doing more.

A lot of people also don't think about the physical dangers that can come with doing nangs. Once, while me and my mate were having a sesh, his metal cracker fully split down the side and shot the cold gas all over his hand – he ended up with a pretty hectic scar from the frostbite. I also always get my mates to sit down when they have them, because it's not uncommon for people to

collapse mid-breath. I've seen someone fall over mid-nang and hit their head, and I've also seen someone else fall down a set of stairs before.

Seeing all that was intense, but the main reason I've slowed down on the nangs is that I had a really scary experience about 4 months ago. My mates and I had just gotten back from a one-night festival where we'd been drinking, taking caps and doing coke, and someone busted out the cream chargers. I remember cracking the bulb, filling the balloon, putting it to my lips, and then – nothing. Everything went black.

I was shaking and trembling for a bit before laying still for around ten minutes, according to my mates who were freaking out. I'm told that although my eyes were open, I was completely non-responsive, even when my friend slapped me in the face! After a while I came to, but I didn't remember any of it. It really shook me to be honest.

That experience alone would have been enough for me to stop, but I was also worried about the other effects on my health. I really think that nitrous has started to affect me. I've been getting pins and needles in my feet, which I think is related to the effect nitrous oxide has on your Vitamin B12 levels. I also get a sharp stabbing pain in my abdomen after doing heaps in one night. Even if nothing 'bad' happens when I take them and I only have a few, the next day I have a cracking headache and feel like I can't breathe properly for up to a week afterwards. It also feels like my vision is now blurry for about 10 minutes after I have a nang, which isn't normal.

I'm not going to say that doing nangs is bad and that people should stop because it can be a lot of fun and it can be quite social. Sitting with three friends and all having a balloon at the same time is great and it makes everything seem funny. I like that they're an acceptable drug in most social circles, pretty much everyone enjoys them, or at least gets a laugh out of others doing them. Basically, if it's the kind of party you can smoke a joint at, it's the kind of party you can do nangs at – much more socially acceptable than smashing lines of ketamine.

Before, I'd just keep doing them and doing them until I convinced myself I was having fun. Only now have I become the type of person who can say no when offered, and if I have one and I don't enjoy it, I can walk away.

NUAA is your peer-run drug user organisation... GET INVOLVED!

Membership

Members of NUAA, including people in prison, receive print editions of User's News, as well as invitations to upcoming training and events

Volunteering

NUAA are always looking for volunteers for our various programs, including our Needle Syringe Program (NSP) and DanceWize NSW

To find out how to get involved, visit our website at

nuaa.org.au

or call us on

1800 644 413

