

cut back on alcohol and other drugs

(to help your headspace)





“When I started I could have a few drinks and just have a good time. But that developed into getting absolutely smashed. And blacking out. It started to dawn on me that not everyone was drinking as much as me.”

Gus, hY NRG member
(headspace Youth National Reference Group)

When you limit alcohol and other drugs you can clear your mind, improve your energy, and boost your motivation. And, you have a better chance of keeping your headspace healthy!

Drugs, alcohol and your mood

Alcohol and other drugs can seem like a normal part of life for many young people. We totally get it – it can be fun, lift your mood and boost your confidence.

But the issue is that these substances can also seriously harm your headspace. When the high wears off, the after-effect can leave you feeling worse than before. Anxiety can increase, your mood can drop and any difficulties with family or friends can be harder to manage.

If you’ve been struggling, it’s a good idea to look at whether your alcohol or drug use is playing a part.

In fact, cutting back on alcohol and other drugs can be one of the most important things you can do for your headspace – but it isn’t always easy. If you’re having trouble quitting, or you want some help or advice, you should speak to your doctor or contact us here at headspace.

Here’s how reducing, or cutting back on, alcohol and other drugs can improve your headspace. It can

- keep your mind alert
- reduce the side effects of hangovers and come downs
- improve your motivation
- improve your sleep.

Ask an expert – how can I reduce my alcohol and other drug intake?

Professor Yvonne Bonomo is an Alcohol and other Drugs expert from St Vincent Hospital.

- Start by working out how alcohol or other drugs are impacting your life. Ask yourself: “Have I been anxious or upset more than usual? Could this be related to my alcohol or other drug use?”

- Start slow. Try beginning with a short break (try a few days, then a week, then a month). This will help you reset and see the impact it's having.
- Be patient. It might take a few days before you start to see positive changes, so be patient and give your body and mind time to reset.
- Stay healthy. When you cut back it’s normal to struggle and feel a little off, so look after yourself – eat well, do a little bit of exercise, spend some time with people you care about.
- When an urge comes up try to sit with it. Recognise: “OK, this urge usually happens before I drink or use drugs, but this time I'm not going to act on it.” This takes a bit of practice, but the more you do it, the easier it becomes.
- Don’t be too hard on yourself. Whether you’re cutting back or quitting, it’s normal to have ups and downs. Lapses are common. Remember it’s a process and you learn every time you try again.



“After a particularly rough period, I was introduced to headspace. I spoke with a young counsellor who was just really helpful. He was aware of the issues that young people face. He told me how important it was to reduce my intake and have a strong support network around me.

I built my support network out from just headspace and included my family and girlfriend. It hasn’t been an easy process. But my support network has been so helpful.”

Gus, hY NRG member
(headspace Youth National Reference Group)

Healthy habits

When you’re feeling low or stressed it’s important to put healthy habits in place that build your emotional strength – to prepare yourself for riding life’s ups and downs.

Taking steps to cut back on drugs and alcohol is a really important step in helping keep your headspace healthy, but it’s not the only thing. Focusing on exercise, sleeping well, and spending time with people you care about – are also important in achieving all-round good mental health.



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)



If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

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Tip 7.

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Cutting back on alcohol and other drugs is good for my mental health because it:

- helps me to remember and concentrate better
- helps me to avoid hangovers and comedowns
- gives me motivation
- helps me to sleep well
- helps me to cope with tough times.

How can I cut back? I can:

- **start slow:** choose to take a short break that feels okay for me. Maybe choose one more alcohol or other drug free night per week.
- **be patient:** making changes takes time. I know I need to give my body and mind time to reset.
- **stay healthy:** eating well, staying active, getting enough sleep and spending time with people who care about me helps me to cut back.
- **be kind to myself:** ups and downs are normal. I know that I will get better at cutting back every time I try.



Tip 7. cut back on alcohol and other drugs

How do alcohol or other drugs impact my life?

My
relationships

My mood

My work
or study

My activities

**Things I would like to change about my alcohol or other
drug use:**

One change I will make this week is: