

UNDERSTANDING DRUG USE AND GAMBLING



LONG HISTORY: Human cultures have been using drugs and gambling for thousands of years. Our relationships with drugs and gambling are long and complex. They involve interconnected social, economic and political factors.



DIVERSITY: Not all gambling or drug use is the same. Not all people are the same. We are diverse and ever-changing. We differ by age, gender, race, cultural background, social position and personal identity. All of these factors are influenced by our unique contexts and networks of relationships.



REASONS: To address the range of issues involved in drug use or gambling, we must pay attention to the reasons people engage in these behaviours. These include: to feel good (have fun), to feel better (deal with pain), to perform better (achieve a goal), and to explore new experiences (satisfy our curiosity).



BENEFITS & HARMS: Depending on the reasons for engaging in the behaviour, a person will be aware of certain potential benefits and, likely, some of the risks (potential harms). Helping people is not just about protecting them from risk through warning messages or direct action to prevent risky behaviour. It means helping them critically reflect on all the potential benefits and harms in light of their own life goals. This involves having meaningful and honest conversations. These conversations need to reflect the complexity and nuance involved with life in the community.



BALANCE: People thrive when they feel they are free yet still belong. This balance—individuals having an experience of integrity within themselves and of integration within their communities—constitutes what we might call well-being. In this state of balance, people have access to the resources they need and the freedom to use those resources to meet their individual needs while also building their relationships within the community.



RESILIENCE: To achieve and maintain well-being, people need resilience—the ability to face challenges or set-backs, draw on individual and community resources and maintain or regain balance. This often involves navigating complex and nuanced situations. We all need to learn how to assess risk, marshal resources to take on challenges and adapt in the face of setbacks.



WE CAN HELP: An open, curious and caring school or family environment can be a place where resilience is developed and a balance of freedom and responsibility is nurtured. Ultimately, our job as educators and parents is not to tell young people what to think or which choices to make. Our job is to help them understand their world and achieve their own goals for well-being. This includes how they make sense of the drug use and gambling common in their communities.