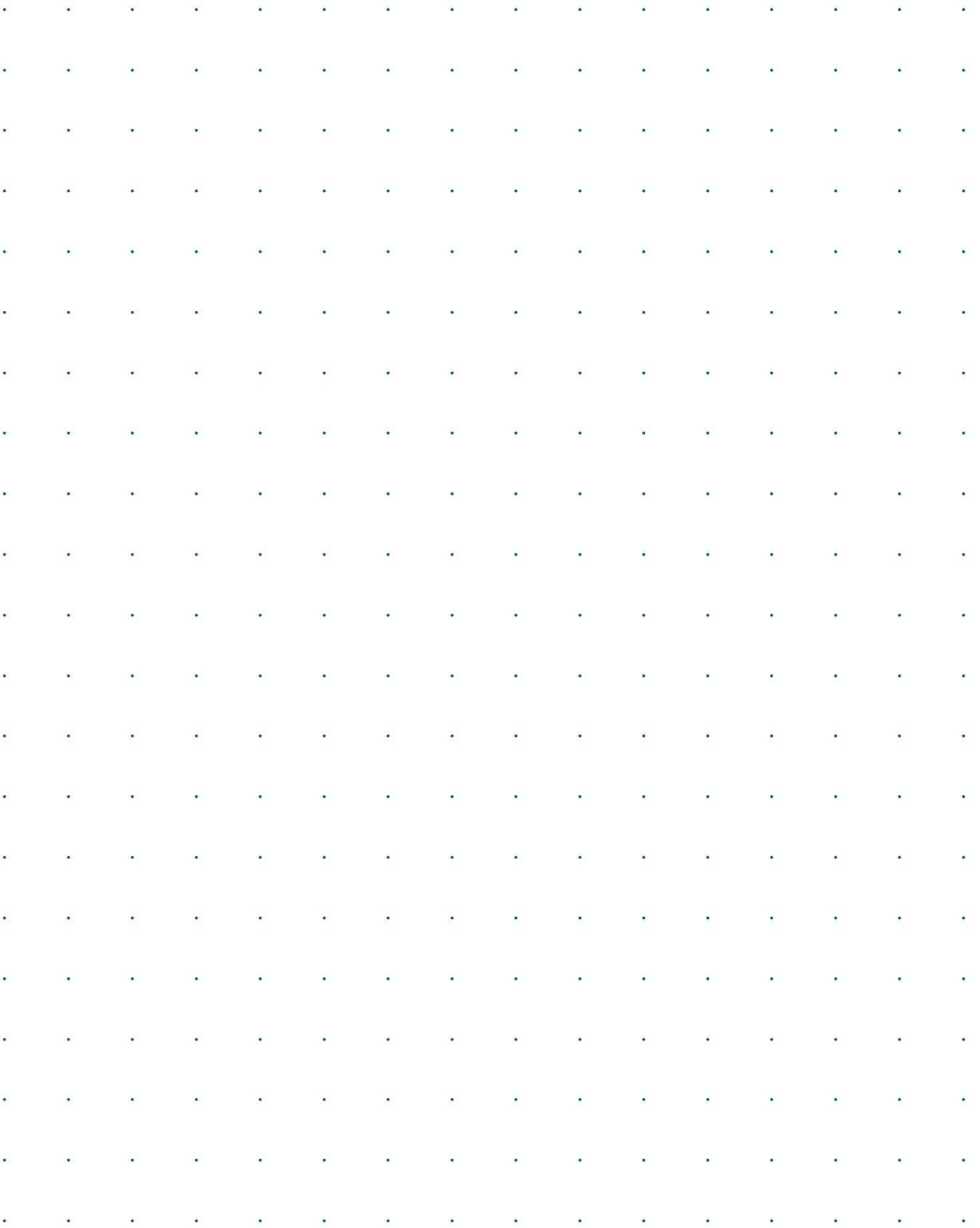




**A guide to help support you on a
substance break**





Why Take a Substance Break?

30-Day Substance Break is a guidebook for going substance-free for a month. You may have heard of Dry January—with this guidebook you can take a substance break any time of year! It's a chance to better understand your relationship with alcohol, cannabis, and other drugs, and how they might affect your daily life. You might get a better understanding of who you are and discover new ways of relating to others as well!

What If I Slip Up During the Month?

First off, we are all imperfect humans, and we can only try our best. This challenge is not about perfection, because changing or breaking habits can be difficult. If you started late or skipped a few days somewhere in the middle, your participation is not negated in any way. You can always start again the next day or restart next month.

If you're doing this challenge but you make a mistake and have a drink or two during the month, THAT'S OKAY! Slip ups happen. We in no way want to discourage or discredit anyone who is putting in a serious effort to take this month off from substances.

Lastly, we recognize that there could be a special occasion where you might want to drink or use cannabis or other drugs. Having a planned night or two during the month is also not the end of the world.

30-Day Substance Break is about removing substances for a brief period in order to examine the parts of your life (social, health, financial, etc.) that it may be affecting and make changes if you choose. You can still gain all the benefits of participating even if there is a change of plans one night.

8 Tips to Help You on Your Journey

1. Keep substances and paraphernalia out of sight.

The temptation to use is lower if you don't run into reminders during your day. If you're planning to use only on pre-planned days, it can be helpful to only purchase what you intend to use for that event. If it's not readily available, unplanned use is less likely.

2. Do this challenge with a buddy.

This challenge can be more fun when it's done with a friend. That way, if difficulties come up, you can check in with who understands and is going through it, too. You can also help hold each other accountable.

3. Keep a journal.

You are welcome to use the prompts in this guidebook. Writing down your thoughts and feelings when things get challenging can be helpful—you might get additional insight as you reflect later on what you wrote.

4. Continue to socialize.

Some people might be inclined to withdraw from social events and others when taking a break from substances, but don't fall into this trap! Connection with others is important, and while it might be challenging to go somewhere without using, give it a try. If you slip up, remember, it's okay. This is about the journey, not the destination.

5. Don't lord it over people.

We can't make you refrain from turning this into a brag-fest, but trust us, no one wants to feel shamed for not participating. This challenge works best when it is done for yourself and NOT as performative wellness.

6. This is not a punishment.

This substance break is meant to be a time for reflection, not atonement for over-consuming. Likewise, resist the urge to "reward" yourself at the end by overindulging in substances.

7. Consult a doctor.

Sometimes when we've been using a substance for an extended period of time, when we stop, we might experience withdrawals. Withdrawals can be unpleasant but are usually not life-threatening—except in some cases for withdrawals from alcohol or benzodiazepines. If you are concerned about withdrawals associated with either of these substances, please consult with a doctor before participating in this challenge. For more information on withdrawal symptoms, visit: tinyurl.com/webmdwithdrawal

8. Explore the resources in this guidebook.

Throughout this guide are references to helpful resources. Scan this code or visit hpr.wvu.edu/substance-break for links.





WWU Sobriety Resources

Counseling and Wellness Center

Old Main 540 | 360-650-3164 | cwc.wwu.edu

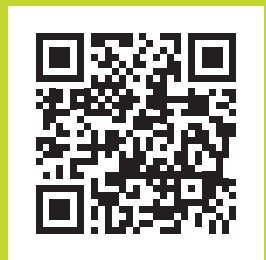
The Counseling and Wellness Center is a free resource for Western students seeking support for their mental health, including the impacts substance use may have caused. They offer confidential, non-judgmental support to students who want to talk about issues regarding alcohol or other substances. If your concern is for yourself, a roommate, or someone you care about, they can help. They offer referral options, sobriety and risk reduction support to anyone seeking positive change and can help sort out any confusion you may have regarding the role substances may be playing in your life.

Visit cwc.wwu.edu for information about support groups, upcoming workshops, and self-help wellness resources, or call 360-650-3164 to learn more about the CWC's services and to set up a phone consultation.



Follow Us on Social!

Follow [@bewellwwu](https://www.instagram.com/bewellwwu) on Instagram for well-being resources and story takeovers from our Wellness Advocates!



30 Day Substance Break

DAY 1

Write down your reasons for participating in this 30-day challenge and what YOU want to accomplish—nobody else should tell you why abstaining from substances for a month is important. What’s motivating you? What will keep you on track?

DAY 2

Are there other resolutions/changes you want to make that aren’t substance related but might be indirectly impacted by your drinking or using? Reflect on all areas of your life that are impacted by your drinking or substance use habits—social, recreational, financial, etc.

DAY 3

Decide how you will communicate your participation to friends and family. How can you signify your dedication to the challenge to folks who might be more resistant? Find your allies as well. Do you have a friend or companion who might be interested in joining you? Write this down. Consider downloading a “Dry January” app or follow [@bewellwwu](#), [@dryjanuary](#), and [@sober_otter](#), on social media for support. And, it never hurts to practice saying no once or twice before heading out for the evening.

DAY 4

Here are a few questions to reflect on that can

be a safety plan of sorts for refraining from using substances:

- What are some warning signs that you’re starting to feel over-stressed? How does your body feel? What thoughts do you notice?
- Who can you call for distraction? What places can you go to distract yourself?
- What are some coping skills besides substance use that you can use to calm yourself?
- Who can you call to talk about your stress and/or urges to drink or use?
- When you’re starting to feel stressed and you might want to drink or use, what changes can you make to your environment to help you avoid using? (Examples: Leave the apartment, don’t keep liquor in the house, play music, have a friend hold any cannabis products).

DAY 5

If your best friend told you they were trying to make a change in their life, what would you say to encourage them? How would you be present to help them? We often give great advice to others and don’t take it ourselves. Use the encouragement you wrote down for your friend for yourself!

DAY 6

We often talk about consent in terms of sexual activity, knowing that consent is freely given, not coerced, and can be revoked at any time. Reflect on college drinking culture either at WWU spe-

30 Day Substance Break

cifically or more broadly. How might alcohol or other substances not always be consumed with consent? Think about folks pressuring each other to consume, pouring a drink for someone who is already intoxicated, etc. What are the larger impacts that this might have on student's substance use behavior?

DAY 7

Everyone deserves to have healthy, positive sexual experiences that make them and their partners feel good. If alcohol or other substance use is involved in your sexual activities, it may be helpful to ask yourself these questions:

- Why am I having sex when I'm intoxicated or with partners who are intoxicated?
- How is alcohol/drug use impacting the quality of my sexual experiences?
- Does being intoxicated contribute to doing things sexually that I later regret? How do I think about that now?
- What would it be like to be more clear-minded during my sexual experiences?

DAY 8

When we drink, we feel the effects as our blood alcohol content rises. We encourage a safe, predictable, and pleasurable BAC of up to 0.06. At this level you should feel euphoria, a slight warmth, and elevated mood. Beyond 0.06 the effects can become unpleasant: dizziness, nausea, lack of coordination, impaired judgment,

etc. Blackouts typically begin with a BAC around 0.15; anything beyond 0.20 can result in an alcohol-related emergency. [Use a BAC calculator](#) to see how your BAC changes with the number of drinks and hours spent drinking. Then, reflect on what risky drinking looks like for you.

Keep in mind that BAC calculators should only be used as a guide, as many variables affect alcohol absorption rates. Also, the available BAC calculators use a gender binary, which is not inclusive to everyone. For people who do not identify on the gender binary, it can be helpful to look at the sex-linked factors the BAC calculator takes into consideration, such as weight, percentage of water in the body, hormone levels like estrogen or testosterone, and the presence of alcohol dehydrogenase and aldehyde dehydrogenase (enzymes that metabolize alcohol).

DAY 9

Think about your identity—your age, gender, race, class, physical ability levels, etc. In what ways has drinking or other substance use been determined by one or more of these factors? Has your identity impacted how other people interact with you when alcohol or drugs are involved?

DAY 10

Take this time to reflect on any noticeable changes so far. Sleep, study habits, relationships, etc., can all be impacted by frequent or heavy substance use. Taking a break is a great way to

30 Day Substance Break

hit the reset button. Write down and reflect on what you've noticed so far into this 30-day challenge. What's working and what isn't?

DAY 11

For today, practice radical self-love and self-acceptance. It's perfectly OK if the changes you've made has been difficult. Remember that a smooth sea never made a skillful sailor. Write down a list of positive qualities/affirmations about yourself. If this list starts small, that's OK. Keep it and add to it when you can.

DAY 12

Today is a great day to practice mindfulness. Studies show that when we take a break from regular substance use, we can become more focused and clearer headed. As you go through your day today, be extra aware of yourself, your overall well-being, and your surroundings.

Try the Body Scan mindfulness exercise. Lie on your back or rest in a comfortable chair, remaining still. Close your eyes and bring your whole attention to your breath, and work to bring it to a regular tempo. Slowly move your attention to the way your clothing feels, how individual body parts feel, etc. Start from the core and work your way out, and then in reverse. Don't leave any body parts out!

DAY 13

Reflect on this: I am proud of myself for

Here's a great mindfulness exercise you can use at any point throughout the next few weeks: 5-4-3-2-1 Mindfulness Exercise. This exercise helps ground you by focusing fully on one sense at a time.

Start by taking deep, cleansing breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. Clear your mind.

Once you are ready to start, look around and, one by one, choose five objects to SEE. Really look at each object. Notice it's shape, color, size. Take time to fully appreciate each object.

Next, close your eyes and find four things you can HEAR. Focus on one sound at a time and really HEAR them.

With your eyes still closed, notice three things you can FEEL. It may be where your body meets with the ground or chair you are sitting on; it may be a breeze blowing by. Take time to fully observe each sensation.

With your eyes still closed, notice two things you can SMELL (or, think of two of your favorite scents). Take the time to fully observe each scent.

Finally, open your eyes and name out loud or to yourself one thing that you love about yourself.

DAY 14

Congratulations on two weeks in! For today, find a verse, quote, song, etc., that is reflective of

30 Day Substance Break

your current state. Write it down—why you chose it, and why it’s symbolic.

DAY 15

Monique Tula is the director of the Harm Reduction Coalition, an agency focused on advocating for the health and dignity of substance users through a nonjudgmental lens. In an interview with author Adrienne Maree Brown (in her book *Pleasure Activism*), Tula says, “In practice, harm reduction is comprised of a continuum of strategies that range from working with people to maintain abstinence from substances if that’s what they choose, to reducing risks around controlled or even chaotic use. Regardless of where a person is on that continuum, they deserve to be treated respectfully and seen as an equal.” What ends of this spectrum have you fallen on before? Where do you desire to be? Which risk reduction practices can you use to keep you where you want to be?

DAY 16

Here’s another quote from Adrienne Marie Brown in her book *Pleasure Activism* to ponder:

“I smoke, vape, and/or eat edibles to help me relax, but try to be careful about numbing myself—using weed to put a fog over life. Not feeling the hard stuff means sacrificing the lessons that come with pain and heartache. And the good stuff can be numbed alongside the hard stuff.”

What stuff—good and bad—have you potentially

missed out on fully because of the fog that substances can put over our lives?

DAY 17

Be patient with yourself today. Rewriting habits can be especially hard, because the use of any psychoactive substance (YES, this includes alcohol) hijacks the brain’s reward/pleasure pathways, so our brains have a hard time telling us not to drink or use when it has learned that drinking or using is a pleasurable means for survival. In honor of our pleasure pathways, what can you do today that will truly bring you pleasure? Write down the little things, the big things and the mega things that bring you joy.

DAY 18

The PNW has pretty consistent gray skies during fall and winter—even into spring—which can be tough for many. What can you do to bring more color, brightness, and warmth into your day-to-day? Write those down and seek them out!

DAY 19

Write down a gratitude list—what are you most thankful for in this moment? In your life? If you live to be 100 years old (or whatever, just play along), what do you think you’ll be most grateful for then?

30 Day Substance Break

DAY 20

How about another mindfulness exercise? Bundle up and go outside. Hopefully the sun is shining. Find a place where you can sit or stand comfortably. Clear your mind of outside thoughts. Focus on every little thing you can see, smell, hear, taste, or touch. Be absolutely present—even if it’s just for a moment. One of the most popular AA/NA (12-step recovery program) sayings is “one day at a time,” but sometimes a day seems quite large. Take it hour by hour, or moment by moment.

DAY 21

It’s Day 21 of the 30-day challenge! They say it takes 21 days to make a habit. How are you feeling today? Are you noticing a difference in how you view alcohol/cannabis/etc.? This challenge is not an excuse to detox our bodies and then binge for the rest of the year. It’s an opportunity to take a break from a habit, evaluate what works and what doesn’t, and make the changes necessary to be the healthiest and happiest versions of ourselves. Write down your thoughts today and take pride in the journey so far.

DAY 22

It’s not uncommon to hear people say that their friend or family member isn’t quite “themselves” when they are under the influence of substances. This is because being intoxicated can alter our judgment, our body language, etc.

How would someone close to you describe what you’re like when you’re under the influence of substances? What about a random person you might meet at a party? Do either of these descriptions contain aspects you might want to change?

DAY 23

In Sonya Renee Taylor’s book, *The Body Is Not an Apology*, she walks us through interactive prompts called “Unapologetic Inquiries.” Here is Unapologetic Inquiry #30:

“As children, we loved the unconstrained power of imagination we encountered in fairy tales. We could be an opulent princess, a cunning wizard, a talking dog. There were no boundaries around our possibility. What story have you been telling yourself that is binding your possibility? What would be possible if that story were different?”

DAY 24

In *The Body Is Not an Apology*, Taylor also prompts readers with “Radical Reflections.” Here’s one from page 104:

“Humans aren’t laundry! Stop trying to compartmentalize and sort yourself out. Messy does not always mean dirty. Sometimes it just means complicated, and complicated can be beautiful! Ask yourself, how might I approach life differently if I had compassion for my beautiful mess?”

30 Day Substance Break

DAY 25

Here's one more "Radical Reflection" from page 64 of Taylor's book, *The Body Is Not an Apology*:

"Notice the next time your actions are not in alignment with your thoughts. The discomfort you feel is trying to tell you something. It is pushing you beyond just thinking or doing, toward radical self-love being." What does this reflection mean to you? When do you experience a discrepancy between what you think/believe and how you feel or act?

DAY 26

What's the best thing that's happened so far this week? This month? Reflect back on your gratitude list and see if there's anything you want to add.

DAY 27

Studies show that refraining from regular alcohol use can strengthen our immune system and taking a break from smoking any substance is a great boost to your lung health. How has your overall health been affected by this challenge? Do you ever feel that when you're regularly drinking or using, you're more likely to catch whatever bug is going around?

DAY 28

Who has been your biggest ally for during this 30-day challenge? Reach out to that person today to say thank you. If this has been a bit of a solo month, reflect on your efforts with gratitude, and thank yourself for being patient, determined, and courageous. What has been your favorite memory of this month?

DAY 29

It's almost your last night of your 30 Day Substance Break! Write a letter to the "you" you were before you started this challenge. It could be at any point in your life that you think your earlier self could have learned from the you that you are today.

DAY 30

It's the last day of the 30 Day Substance Break challenge—WAY TO GO! Reflect on your accomplishment today. What have you learned or gained from this experience? How do you think your relationship with alcohol or other substances might be different from here on out? Finishing the challenge presents the opportunity to continue the healthy habits you've established, rather than heavy drinking in response to being done. Moderation is always the safest bet. Be proud of yourself. You set a goal and you accomplished it!



Mocktails + Cozy Beverages

Hot Chocolate

Heat milk or milk substitute and mix in hot chocolate packet. Adorn with marshmallows, sprinkles, etc.

Chai Tea

Heat chai liquid with milk or milk substitute. A 1:1 ratio makes a strong flavorful cup, so go lighter on the chai if you want it more mellow.

Chaider

Heat apple cider and add a bag of chai tea, letting it steep to taste.

Warm Toddy

Add lemon juice, honey, a sprinkle of ginger and cinnamon to hot water.

Mimosober

Mix your favorite juice with seltzer water (flavored or unflavored) and adorn with a few pieces of fruit.

English Tea

Black or Earl Grey tea, with honey and a splash of milk or cream.

Dry Irish Coffee

Heat milk/cream or milk substitute and mix with coffee. Add Irish Cream flavoring or your other favorite sweetener.

Non-alcoholic Beer

Hey, some people just miss the flavor of beer, don't knock it 'til you try it!

Switchel

Sliced/diced fresh ginger, 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups water, two tablespoons of apple cider vinegar, juice of half a lemon or lime, one tablespoon honey or maple syrup or another sweetener. Refrigerate for a few hours and enjoy!

Dry Moscow Mule

Ginger beer, lime juice, and maybe a splash of seltzer water to mellow the ginger beer.

Italian Soda

Club soda almost to the top, ice, fruity syrup flavor to taste, and a splash of cream or cream substitute. Top with whipped cream if you want!

16 Self-Care Strategies



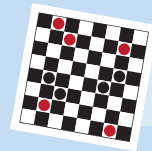
**TAKE A WARM BATH/
SHOWER**



**MAKE A MOCKTAIL OR
COZY BEVERAGE**



**TAKE A WALK
IN NATURE**



**PLAY A
BOARD GAME**



**CALL A FRIEND OR FAMILY
MEMBER**



**RESEARCH YOUR
INTERESTS**



**PRACTICE A HOBBY
YOU ENJOY**



**DRESS UP FOR
THE FUN OF IT**



**MAKE A GIFT
FOR SOMEONE**



**DONATE THINGS
YOU DON'T USE**



**ENJOY A TV SHOW OR
MOVIE**



**JOURNAL/WRITE
FOR FUN**



**READ A BOOK
FOR PLEASURE**



**PLAY
WITH PETS**



**CLEAN YOUR
LIVING SPACE**

YES!

**SELF
PLEASURE**



Sex, Drugs, Alcohol, and Consent

What role do alcohol and drugs play in your sex life?

Everyone deserves healthy, positive sexual experiences that make them (and their partners) feel good. If alcohol or other substance use is involved in your sexual activities, ask yourself:

- Why am I having sex when I'm intoxicated and/or with partners who are intoxicated?
- How is substance use impacting the quality of my sexual experiences?
- Does being intoxicated contribute to me doing things sexually that I later regret? How do I think about that now?
- What would it be like to have my sexual experiences be more clear-minded?

Intoxication vs. Incapacitation

Consent cannot be given by a person who is incapacitated by alcohol or other drugs. Therefore, it is imperative to be able to recognize the signs of incapacitation. Someone who is intoxicated by alcohol may exhibit some physical or mental impairments (clumsiness, loss of articulate speech, increased emotionality) and still be aware of and in control of their behavior and decisions. Incapacitation, however, is a state beyond drunkenness or intoxication. If your partner is showing signs of incapacitation or you're not sure, STOP.

Signs of incapacitation include but are not limited to:

- Inability to speak clearly/coherently
- Confusion on basic facts (Where am I? How did I get here? Who are you?)
- Inability to stand or walk unassisted
- Vomiting
- Glassy or unfocused eyes

- Loss of consciousness (passing out)

Can you give consent when you've been drinking/using other drugs?

Yes, you can give consent if you have been drinking or using other drugs. However, the ability to give consent depends on your ability to make decisions free from pressure, coercion, and incapacitation. If you are incapacitated from alcohol or other drugs, you cannot give consent.

Can you get consent from someone who has been drinking or using other drugs?

Yes, you can get consent from someone who has been drinking/using drugs as long as they are not incapacitated and the consent is clear and voluntary. Agreeing to have sex can only happen when it is free from pressure or coercion. Taking advantage of a person's impairment from alcohol or other drugs is not okay under any circumstances. If you see this happening around you, do what you can to intervene and stop it.

If someone has been using alcohol/other drugs and you're thinking about having any kind of sexual interaction with them, it is your responsibility to check in and find out whether they are okay with what you'd like to do before moving forward. If you are not totally sure they want to, don't do it.

What if both/all of us have been drinking/using drugs?

It's okay to have sex when drinking or using other drugs, but all the rules of consent still apply and this adds another level of responsibility to make sure consent is clear before moving forward. Even if you are intoxicated or impaired by alcohol or other drugs, you are still responsible

Sex, Drugs, Alcohol, and Consent

for making sure your partner(s) really want to engage in any type of sexual activity with you. If there is any uncertainty about whether someone is incapacitated or uncertain, don't have sex.

Things to keep in mind when drinking or using other drugs and hooking up

Sexual activity requires active and ongoing participation from both or all parties involved. People have different definitions for things like "hooking up" and "making out." Be sure you and your partner(s) are clear about what each of you actually wants.

Communication about sex can feel challenging and awkward. Adding alcohol or other drugs to the situation can make that communication even more challenging, especially with people who don't know each other very well and/or are more

uncomfortable talking about sex.

A number of factors can impact how alcohol or other drugs affect a person (e.g., body size, tolerance, gender, mood, medication use, etc.). Determining whether someone is incapacitated has less to do with how much they have consumed than how it is affecting them.

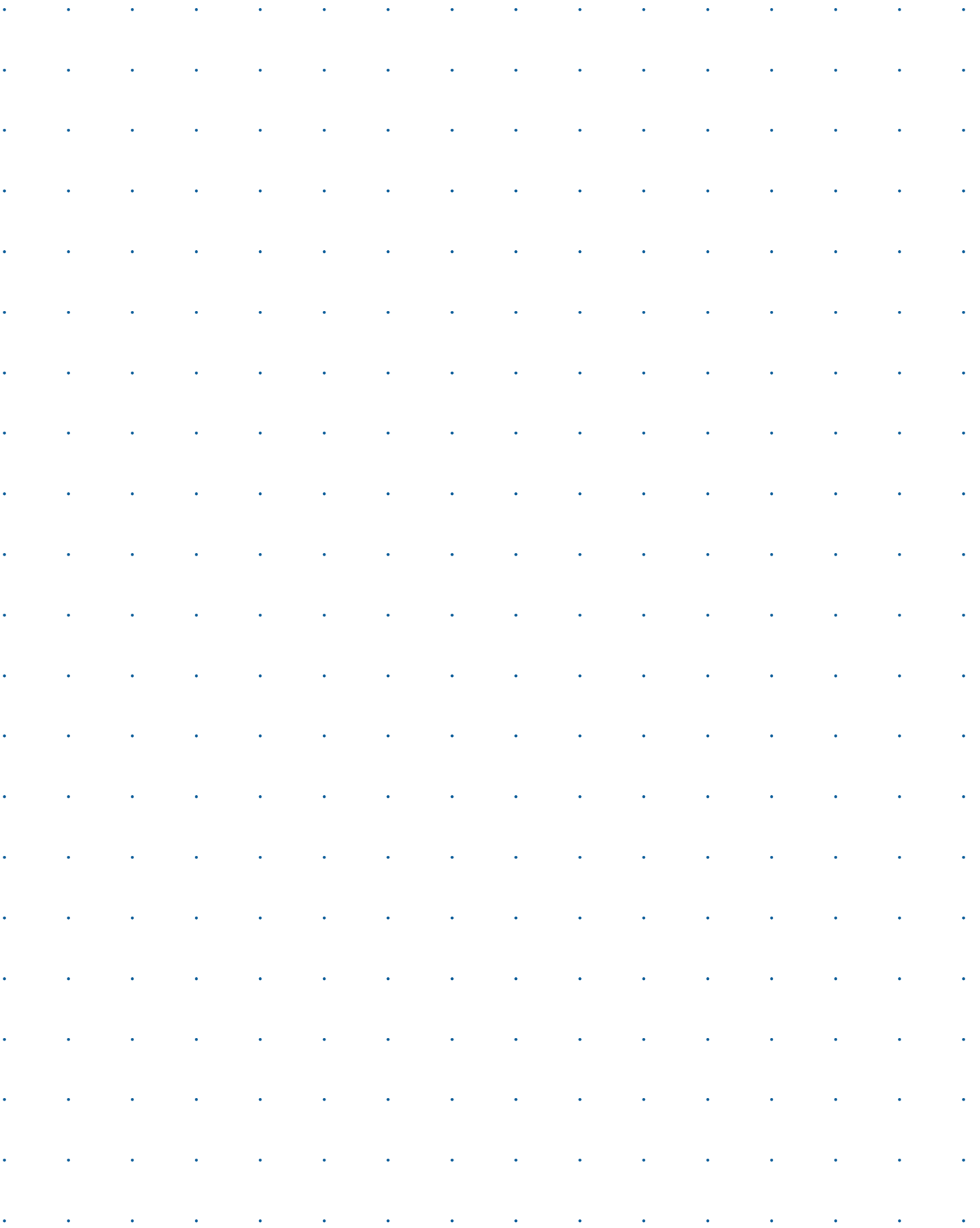
It is always best to rely on a clear verbal YES and stay attuned to your partner(s) facial expressions and body language to make sure they are in congruence. If you're getting mixed messages, or you haven't asked and received a clear yes, STOP and check in. If it's not clear, it's not consent.

Information adapted from Dartmouth College.

Reach Out for Support

If you are experiencing or have experienced, relationship abuse, sexual violence, stalking, or harassment, support is available:

cwc.wvu.edu/survivorservices



Check Your Progress

Day 1

Day 11

Day 21

Day 2

Day 12

Day 22

Day 3

Day 13

Day 23

Day 4

Day 14

Day 24

Day 5

Day 15

Day 25

Day 6

Day 16

Day 26

Day 7

Day 17

Day 27

Day 8

Day 18

Day 28

Day 9

Day 19

Day 29

Day 10

Day 20

Day 30

**HEALTH PROMOTION
AND RESILIENCE**

