

### INFORMATION FOR THE MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDER

#### SCENARIO:

Dakota has had a very rough year. In January, before school started again, her mother died after a prolonged illness. Dakota's school grades have taken a very steep slide, and her father's grief is making it impossible for anyone to talk to him about what is going on. Dakota has previously declined professional support that was offered to her at school, at the time of her mother's passing.

Several months later, Dakota presents with a depressed mood. Dakota has also started spending time with a new group of friends who are known to use cannabis. In the last few weeks, she has often come to her classes in the afternoon apparently under the influence of cannabis. She is noticeably irritable and insists her red eyes are caused by allergies.

Dakota is in your homeroom. You have been thinking about the changes in Dakota and you decide you need to have a mental health first aid conversation with her.

### INFORMATION FOR THE MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDER

#### START OF THE PRACTICE CONVERSATION

You invite Dakota into your office before school to have a chat.

#### You will start the conversation.

Try and cover the 5 ALGEE actions - below if you need a reminder.

**A** pproach, assess and assist with any crisis  
**L** isten and communicate non-judgementally  
**G** ive support and information  
**E** ncourage appropriate professional help  
**E** ncourage other supports

#### Some things you could say

- Ask Dakota how she is, “Dakota, thanks for making some time for me. I wanted to catch up to ask you how you have been going lately”.
- Acknowledge the changes in behaviour you have noticed by using ‘I statements for e.g. “Dakota I have noticed that you seem sad and withdrawn lately. Are you feeling this way?”
- Ensure you don't express judgement when speaking with Dakota especially around her substance use.
- Reassure her that you care for her and are concerned.
- If Dakota tells you things that cause you to be concerned for her mental wellbeing, engage her in further conversation about what she is thinking and how she is feeling.
- You might like to explore her reasons for not feeling comfortable in accessing professional supports.



### INFORMATION FOR DAKOTA

#### SCENARIO:

You are a 16-year-old female named Dakota. It has been a rough year for you, with your mum passing away earlier in the year. Things have changed a lot since then. Your dad who you used to be close to, is grieving and hasn't been emotionally available to talk to. The school has tried to be supportive, suggesting that you speak with the school counsellor about your loss which you haven't been keen to do. Your feeling pretty down and depressed.

But lately things are looking up for you. You have met a new group of friends who you feel connected to and like hanging around with. They are a good distraction for how bad you have been feeling lately. Except, they all smoke cannabis and have encouraged you to give it a go which you decide to do to keep hanging out with them. People around you are starting to become concerned about you taking drugs.

Today your home room teacher reaches out to have a mental health first aid conversation with you in their office before school.

### INFORMATION FOR DAKOTA

#### START OF THE PRACTICE CONVERSATION

Your home room teacher reaches out to chat with you in their office before school.

#### Your homegroup teacher will start the conversation.

They will try to use the 5 ALGEE actions during the conversation with you.

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#### Some things you could say

- When your home teacher asks how you are, you could say “I have been struggling lately, feeling sad, and upset about stuff”.
- Share why you have been feeling this way lately, “dad is still grieving, and things just aren’t the same anymore at home”.
- As you become more comfortable, acknowledge that you have started to hang out with some friends that smoke cannabis. You could say “The people I hang out with are taking it, and honestly it helps me just forget about stuff”.
- When your teacher provides you with some information about cannabis, consider if there is something new you learn, and what further information could be helpful to you.
- You might share some reasons why you have been reluctant to seek help.



### INFORMATION FOR THE MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDER

#### SCENARIO:

You have been concerned about Brian, a friend of your son's, for some time. He is a quiet young man, friendly and helpful, but lately he has seemed jittery and irritable, and is seeing less of your son than he used to.

When you ask your son about it, he says that Brian has been hanging out with some older kids and might be using alcohol and drugs. Your son and some of his friends are having a movie night at your home. Brian seemed a little tipsy when he arrived. When you bump into him in the kitchen you casually ask him how he has been, he opens up to tell you that things have been a bit rough lately, and he is experiencing a few adjustments in the family home.

You seize the opportunity to have a mental health first aid conversation about what might be happening for him at home, his mood and alcohol and drug use privately, away from the rest of the group.

### INFORMATION FOR THE MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDER

#### START OF THE PRACTICE CONVERSATION

You start the conversation by asking what might be happening for him at home, asking about his mood and alcohol and drug use privately, away from the rest of the group.

Try and cover the 5 ALGEE actions - below if you need a reminder.

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#### Some things you could say

- You start the conversation with some casual chit chat, and then start to ask about how he is, “Brian I am so glad to see you. I have wanted to catch up with you for some time”.
- Use I statements such as “Brian I have noticed that you seem nervous and irritable lately”.
- Try not to pass judgement about why Brian hasn’t been hanging out with your son lately or why he might have had some alcohol before arriving.
- Offer support and information about the impact of alcohol and drugs, and on his mood.
- Explore options for help-seeking.



### INFORMATION FOR BRIAN

#### SCENARIO:

Things are pretty full on for you at home right now with some tension brewing at home with your older sister wanting to move out, but your parents won't let her. You have problems with anxiety and depression and the arguing that's going on at home is really overwhelming you.

Some of the older boys in the neighbourhood have been inviting you to hang out with them. You agree even though you know that their get togethers usually involve alcohol and drugs. Soon this becomes a frequent part of our routine to go have a couple of drinks together and occasionally even have some cannabis. Today you have been invited to go over to a mate's house, who you have known for some time but haven't seen in a while to hang out. You have had one or two drinks before getting there.

When your friend's parent bumps into you in the kitchen to ask how you have been, you open up sharing what's been going on for you at home and the fact that you have been starting to drink and take drugs. You feel comfortable to chat privately away from the rest of the group.

### INFORMATION FOR BRIAN

#### START OF THE PRACTICE CONVERSATION

Your friend's parent reaches out to chat with you privately away from the rest of your friends.

Try and cover the 5 ALGEE actions - below if you need a reminder.

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#### Some things you could say

- When your friend's parent asks about how you are, you could say "Yeah things are pretty rough for me at home right now. My sis is planning to move out and everything feels kinda tense lately".
- You could share more about your mood and how this impacts on you "I tend to be pretty sad and down about stuff as it is, and now with everything going on, it makes it worse."
- As you become more comfortable, acknowledge that you have started to hang out with some friends that use alcohol and cannabis. You could say "I know that using alcohol and cannabis might be contributing to how I feel, but right now it helps me forget about stuff".
- When your friend's parent provides you with some information about the impact that alcohol and drugs could have on your mood, you might reflect on what things could help and what your options for help-seeking might be.