

Alcohol and substance use

Often people use substances such as alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs to help them cope with difficult situations, thoughts or feelings. It is also possible that you might feel social pressure to drink alcohol or use drugs. Some people find that using these substances makes them feel more relaxed and happy in the short term. However, in the long run, most people find that use of these substances comes with significant costs. For example, it is likely to make working on the farm challenging or dangerous, your relationships and friendships rocky, your finances unhealthy and it can even land you in trouble with the law. Here is how that cycle works for most people...



If you are at a point where you think you would like to cut down or quit, here are a few strategies that may help:

1. Consider:

- how substance use has impacted on you in the past,
- how your life might be better if you cut down or quit,
- what is likely to make cutting down or quitting difficult to do. You may find it useful to write out the pros and cons of quitting or reducing use.

2. If you decide you do want to cut down, work out what triggers you to drink or use

Ask yourself: do you often use substances in certain **places**, around certain **people**, before particular **situations**, or perhaps when you **see, hear or think particular things**? Once you have worked out the answer to this question, test out whether it helps to do something different at these times or in these situations, so that your urge is not triggered.

3. Consider other ways of taking action

- **Talk** to your family, friends and/or your GP. Explain what you hope to achieve and ask for their help and support. Keep in mind that professional advice is essential if you have been heavily dependent and decide to suddenly cut down on alcohol or drugs- in some cases it is dangerous to stop using something your body is used to having regularly, without supervision
- Set **specific goals** about what you hope to achieve. **Reward yourself** for meeting those goals, overcoming cravings or having a successful day or week
- Keep yourself healthy – aim to drink 2 litres of **water** each day and make sure you get regular **exercise**
- Stay away from social situations where you might feel tempted to give in to cravings or triggers
- Try new social activities or environments, perhaps with old friends or take up a new hobby where substance use is unlikely to be a focus (e.g. CWA, or stamp collecting!)
- In other social situations, try out different soft drinks, or practise saying “No – I don’t drink/use”
- Carry around your pros and cons list, or a note listing all of the reasons you want to cut down. There will be times when you are tempted and it helps to have a concrete reminder

Learning techniques in the ifarmwell modules will also help.