



# Respond

Don't know what to do when a young person is using **drugs or alcohol?**

## Be Prepared

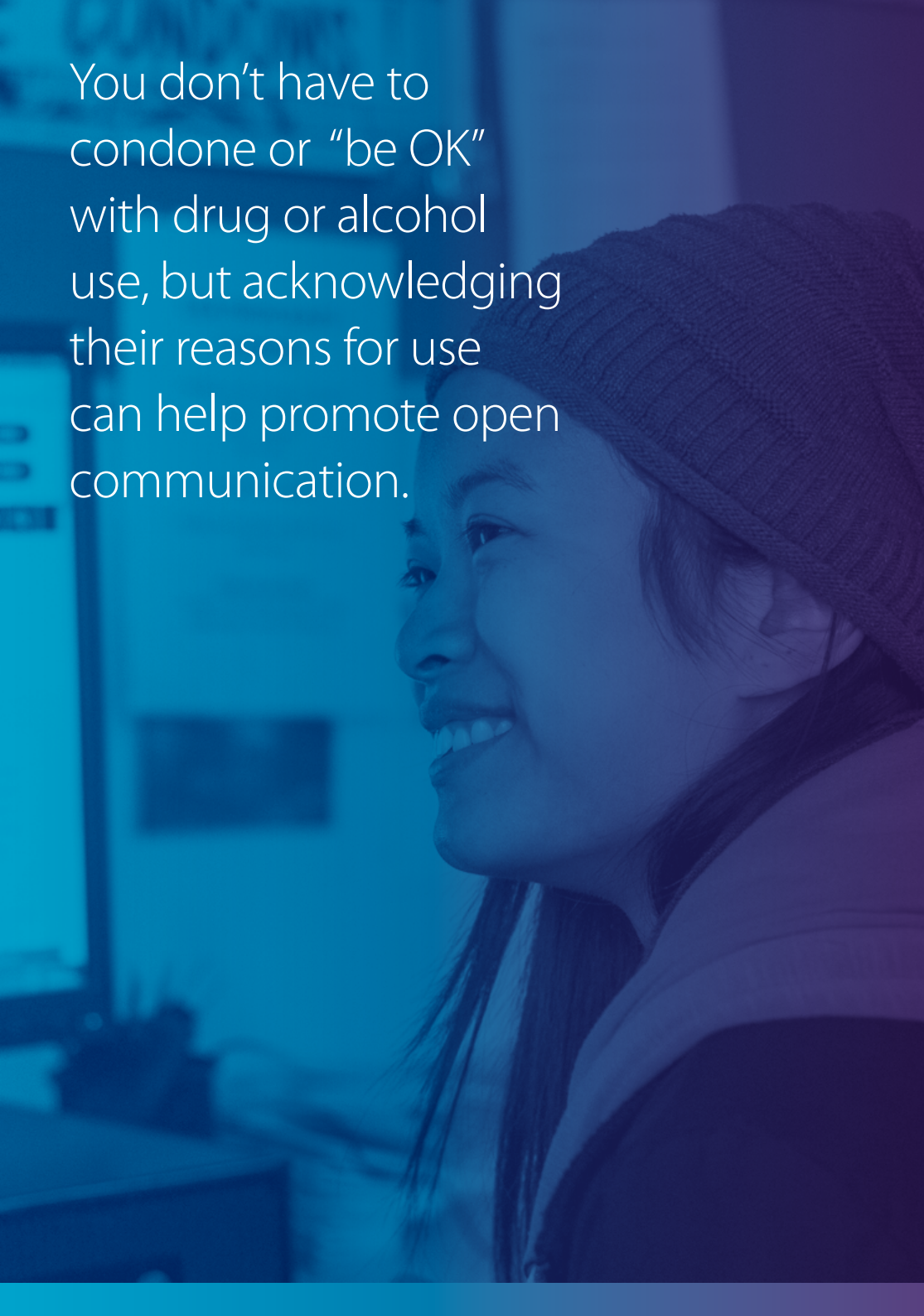
Before a situation or crisis occurs, have a think about how you would like to respond if:

- The young person admits having a drug or alcohol problem
- You find drugs or alcohol in their bedroom
- The young person comes home intoxicated

With preparation, these crisis situations can become opportunities to connect and communicate; with the potential for change rather than conflict.



You don't have to condone or "be OK" with drug or alcohol use, but acknowledging their reasons for use can help promote open communication.



## **Boundaries and Consequences**

As part of normal, healthy development all young people need clear and consistent boundaries.

*All young people will push against these.*

Boundaries and consequences should be age appropriate, protect young people, and reduce risk.

A good question to think about is: Does this boundary increase protective factors in a young person's life or does it introduce risk factors?

Think about opportunities that are going to protect young people, that draw them into the family or community, give them more purpose, belonging, and increase their self-esteem.

Sometimes it can be helpful to explore what these are together, get their input. Also offer opportunities for redemption if they break the boundaries.

The young person can then have a way to earn back your trust.

Young people are developing quickly, so boundaries also need to be renegotiated at regular intervals so they stay relevant.

*Remember, we all make mistakes.*

If there is conflict within the relationship, it is an opportunity for repair. The young person should know you will be there no matter what.

## Some DOs



- Keep communication open, encourage them to talk about what's happening in their life including drug and alcohol use.
- Focus on the positives about your young person, not just the negatives
- Be available without being intrusive or pushy
- Plan conversations by finding a time and place where you are both calm and comfortable
- Ask them their opinion
- Be interested in what they are doing and make time for them
- Listen and be patient
- Be creative; try email or letters to communicate if the young person doesn't want to talk

## Some DON'Ts



- Don't blame or make accusations
- Don't be reactive by giving ultimatums or punishing consequences
- Don't be directive, tell them they need to get help or stop. This will only put up a barrier to the young person seeking help and support.
- Avoid using hidden agendas or strategies to get what you want

A faded background image showing the lower halves of several young people sitting on a concrete bench. They are wearing casual clothing like jeans, leggings, and sneakers. One person's hand is visible, pointing towards the ground.

## Support Change

There are some things that really help a young person make changes:

- Supportive relationships
- Feeling connected to positive friends
- Safe, stable environment
- Have meaningful education, employment or activity options
- Have experiences that enhance self-esteem and build a sense of worth
- Opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and self-belief

Remember, young people **WILL** change however, they may not always get it on the first go and their motivation will vary. The most important thing is that they know you are there to support them.

## **Don't neglect yourself. You are important too!**

Caring for a young person can be extremely rewarding, but also challenging at times. In order to provide the safe and healthy conditions for young people to thrive, you need to be healthy and supported too!

- Surround yourself with supportive people
- Consider seeing a counsellor
- Role-model help-seeking to your young person
- Talk to people who understand, such as other carers
- Take time out for yourself

## Taking care of yourself strengthens you for the journey ahead.





## **Identify quickly and respond effectively**

The OoHC Toolbox provides effective and easily accessible information for the supporters and carers of young people (12 - 18) in Out of Home Care.

Use the sections to identify quickly and respond effectively to issues and concerns commonly experienced by young people in OoHC.

[OoHCtoolbox.org.au](http://OoHCtoolbox.org.au)



A [ysas.org.au](http://ysas.org.au) initiative.

For advice call 1800 458 685

Or visit [www.yodaa.org.au](http://www.yodaa.org.au)

