

# SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE WHO USE SUBSTANCES

Key principles  
for good practice



## WHERE ARE YOU AT?

For young people to feel safe, the most effective thing we can do is to be grounded and present. These practices help us access our body's natural responses so we can come into a place where we feel relaxed, ready and safe to engage with the world having access to all of our resources and skills.



### 1. Breathe

Connecting to the breath and focusing on a slow exhale signals to our body that we are safe in that moment, supporting us to be present and have access to the parts of our brain involved in problem solving, empathy and insight.



### 2. Centre

Placing our right hand on our heart sends an internal message to our nervous system that we are safe enough and its ok to calm, rest and 'down regulate'.



### 3. Orient

Taking a slow, purposeful scan of our environment focuses our attention to the present moment and lets our body know that there is no threat and we are safe enough to settle into a 'relaxed and ready' state.



### 4. Ground

Sensing your body in space by feeling our feet on the ground allows us to strengthen the feeling of being inside our bodies and connected to the earth, helping to reduce activation and be present.



### 5. Contain

Squeezing our big muscles or tapping our skin and body outline helps us feel 'contained' so we are better able to navigate feelings of overwhelm.



### 6. Connect

Making eye contact with another safe and regulated person, allows us to feel safe and present and able to experience a wide range of emotions without becoming overwhelmed.

## EVERY BEHAVIOUR MEETS A NEED

Explore the function, meaning and purpose of substance use for a young person through curiosity and empathy.

**SAFETY** Feel safe, protected from harm and able to respond to crises

**STABILITY** Have stability and the ability to meet their basic needs

**CONTROL** Have control over their own health-compromising issues and behaviours

**PARTICIPATION** Participate in activities that are enjoyable, meaningful and allow new experiences

**CONNECTION** Feel connected to and have helpful relationships with supportive people, culture and community

**IDENTITY** Have a clear sense of self, a coherent identity and place in the world

## YOUNG PEOPLE ARE DOING THE BEST THEY CAN WITH THE RESOURCES THEY HAVE

Our job is to protect, provide, connect, develop and advocate for young people to have the tools and resources to meet their needs.

**ABILITIES** Skills and abilities that promote health, well-being and future prospects

**BELIEFS** Helpful beliefs and attitudes about themselves, others and the world

**MATERIAL** Access to material resources

**PEOPLE** Support from positive people in their lives and community

**SOCIO-CULTURAL** Create belonging through spiritual or cultural places and participation in meaningful activity

**SERVICES** Real access to services and supports when needed

Important – This guide has been designed to complement but not replace your organisational guidelines, policies and procedures; please refer to and follow them.

