

Brief interventions in alcohol-related risk and reduce hazardous and harmful drinking behaviour

It is likely that demand for health care will always outstrip supply. Stepped care approaches provide a partial solution by aiming to detect health problems at an early stage and offering efficient, less costly, low-intensity interventions before problems become more complex and less tractable. Known as the prevention paradox (Kreitman, 1986; Spurling & Vinson, 2005), more problems can be averted by intervening with a large number of people at low risk than with a small number of people who are already at high levels of risk. Brief interventions target people with health-compromising behaviours at the lower end of the risk spectrum who are not formally seeking help, but are offered the intervention opportunistically whenever they present to health professionals including psychologists.

Here we focus on brief interventions for alcohol use. The aim of these interventions is to raise awareness of alcohol-related risk and reduce hazardous and harmful drinking behaviour. There are at least two reasons why clinical psychology trainees need to develop competencies in brief interventions for alcohol. First, many patients when presenting to the clinician focus on their primary presenting symptoms (e.g., depression or anxiety) and may not mention alcohol use or any associated problems. The brief intervention protocol allows the clinician in just a few minutes to conduct a formal screening for potentially risky alcohol use and – if indicated – provide personalized advice to motivate the client to do something about it. Unidentified alcohol use problems can otherwise hinder therapy progress with the primary presenting problems. Second, the motivational interviewing principles and strategies that often complement the brief feedback and advice are universally applicable in all types of interventions (brief or intense) aimed at positive behaviour change.

Brief interventions for alcohol address four levels of alcohol risk as identified by the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT; Babor & Higgins-Biddle, 2001). Education and positive reinforcement are provided to individuals at low risk including abstainers. Simple advice including personalized feedback and information about strategies to reduce drinking and avoid hazardous drinking is provided to those identified as risky drinkers. This is often combined with brief counselling and motivational interviewing especially for those at higher levels of risk. Finally, those at the highest, possibly dependent, level of risk are strongly encouraged to seek specialist help.

The effectiveness of brief interventions at reducing alcohol-related problems is well established especially in primary health care (O'Donnell et al., 2014) and university settings (Carey, Scott-Sheldon, Elliot, Garey, & Carey, 2012). However, the evidence to date does not support the effectiveness of brief interventions for drinkers in the dependent range who will require specialist care and more intense monitoring and support (Saitz, 2010). Nonetheless, as it is inevitable that excessive drinkers at the dependence end of the spectrum will be

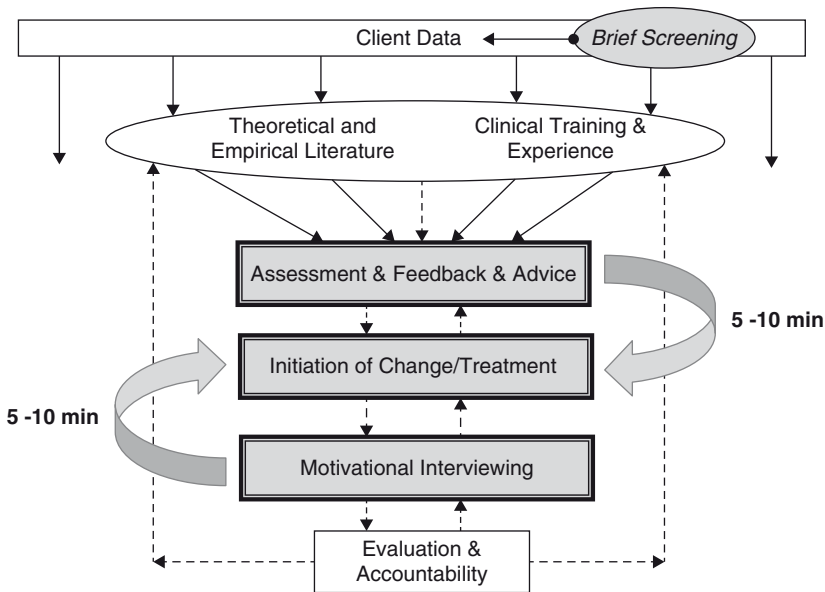


Figure 7.1 Adapting clinical psychology practice for brief interventions.

identified through routine screening, the brief intervention contact can be used to encourage the person to consider and accept a specialist referral.

Figure 7.1 shows that the client data to inform the brief intervention are gathered via a brief screening instrument. A copy of the AUDIT adapted for Australian standard drinks is shown in Figure 7.2 (a copy of a version used in the UK can be found in Kaner, Newbury-Birch, & Heather, 2009). In *brief* interventions, assessment information is limited and targeted. It is not used to inform a comprehensive case formulation, but the screening score is used to immediately provide feedback following guidelines for a given risk category, and offer advice on how to act on that feedback. If a person is willing, this can flow on into a brief motivational interviewing segment to increase the likelihood that a person initiates behaviour change by following the strategies listed in a brochure handed out during the intervention, or if possible dependence is identified by accepting specialist referral information. These interventions typically last between 5 and 25 minutes (O'Donnell et al., 2014), and the key steps in the intervention are based on the '5 As' model – Ask, Assess, Advise, Assist, and Arrange.

1. Persons are **asked** if they would be willing to fill out a short questionnaire and discuss their drinking.
2. Their drinking (and risk of alcohol-related harm) is **assessed** using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT).
3. Persons are **advised** about the meaning of their AUDIT score, the likely consequences of their drinking pattern, and provided with simple strategies for modifying their drinking (if necessary). A structured information brochure is typically used to facilitate this feedback (for an example see Kaner et al., 2009).
4. Students who drink at levels considered to be risky or very risky are encouraged to discuss their motivation for change. The aim of this motivational interviewing segment is to **assist** students to increase their motivation to change.

was developed in collaboration between our clinical psychology training programme at the University of Western Australia and our university's health promotion unit and medical centre. Students undergo training in a half-day workshop, followed by supervised experience in the delivery of brief interventions to the campus community.

Step 1: ASK – begin the AUDIT

The first step in the intervention is to ASK the student if he/she is interested in completing an alcohol use questionnaire.

'Would you like some feedback about your current drinking levels?'

If the student says 'yes':

'Great. I'll get you to fill out this form. I'll then be able to provide you with some feedback on your drinking.'

Responding to students who say they do not drink

If the student responds that he/she does not drink, then ask question 1 from the AUDIT to clarify this.

- If the student never drinks, do not complete the full AUDIT (i.e., skip Step 2)
- Then provide the student with some feedback and positive reinforcement about their decision not to drink, referring to Step 3a (Feedback for low-risk drinkers).
- If the student drinks occasionally, then complete the AUDIT as usual.

Step 2: ASSESS – complete and score the AUDIT

Once the student has agreed to complete the AUDIT, you are ready to ASSESS how risky the student's drinking pattern is.

'Now I'll ask you to fill in this questionnaire called the AUDIT, which will only take a minute or two. It was developed by the World Health Organization and is extensively used worldwide. Some of the questions ask about standard drinks. There's some information at the top of the form that will help you work out how many standard drinks you normally have each time you drink. What do you drink most often?'

As an example, the student may answer that he or she usually drinks beer. Use this to point out the number of standard drinks in the student's usual alcoholic drink.

'Ok, well you can see here that there's 1 standard drink in a middy, 1.4 standard drinks in a can, and 2 standard drinks in a pint.'

Once the student has completed the AUDIT, you need to work out his/her total score.

'Thanks for filling this in. I'll add up your score now and give you some feedback about your results.'

Troubleshooting

If a student says he or she drinks a beverage that is not featured at the top of the AUDIT, you can refer to the **Standard Drink Chart**. This chart contains a wider range of drinks than listed on the AUDIT – use this to work out how many standard drinks the student typically consumes.

After calculating the AUDIT score, determine the category into which the student's score falls (low risk, risky, very risky, or possible dependence).

Scoring procedure for the AUDIT

- The response to each item is scored from 0–4, according to the number at the top of the response column.
- Write this number into the column titled 'Your Score'.
- Sum the scores for each response to give a total score and write this at the bottom of the page next to 'Total'.
- Determine which drinking category the total score falls into.
 - Scores from 0–7 are categorized as 'low risk'.
 - Scores from 8–15 are categorized as 'risky'.
 - Scores from 16–19 are categorized as 'very risky'.
 - Scores from 20–40 are categorized as 'possible alcohol dependence'.

Step 3: ADVISE and ASSIST – give feedback about the AUDIT score

After scoring the AUDIT, you need to **ADVISE** and **ASSIST** the student by:

- providing **feedback** about his/her AUDIT score
- where necessary, providing **simple advice** about how to reduce alcohol consumption.

During this step you should use the **Drink Check Brochure** to guide the discussion.

This step should take two minutes or less to complete.

The intervention will progress differently depending on the student's AUDIT score.

- (a) If the student scores in the **low risk** range, provide feedback, simple advice and positive reinforcement.
- (b) If the student scores in the **risky** or **very risky** range, provide feedback and simple advice and encourage the student to participate in a brief individualized discussion about their drinking, using motivational interviewing.
- (c) If the student scores in the **possible dependence** range, provide feedback and simple advice that focuses on the importance of seeking a referral for further assistance and advice about drinking. If the student is resistant to this idea, encourage him/her to participate in a brief discussion about referral using motivational interviewing, with the intention of encouraging the student to take up the referral.

These steps are now described in detail, according to the AUDIT score.

STEP 3a: feedback for low risk drinkers (score 0–7)

The main goal of feedback with low risk drinkers is to provide positive reinforcement and encouragement for them to continue drinking at safe levels. You need to:

- Tell the student that their level of drinking falls in the low risk range.
- Point out that, like them, most UWA students are low risk drinkers.
- Reinforce the benefits of low risk drinking.
- Encourage the student to continue drinking at a low risk level.

Steps in detail

Important

As you work through the Drink Check Brochure with risky, very risky, and dependent drinkers, it is important to try and engage the student in conversation, rather than talking *at* them.

Showing respect for the student and their views may encourage them to participate in the Motivational Interviewing part of the intervention.

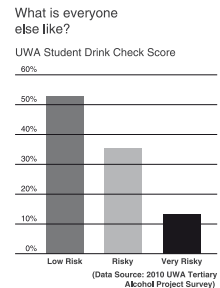
Write the student's score on the beer glass on the **How Risky is My Drinking?** section of the Drink Check Brochure.

'Your AUDIT score is X.'



Point to the graph titled **What is everyone else like?**

'Congratulations, this means that you're drinking at a low risk level. About 53% of UWA students are also low risk drinkers.'



Point to the **What does your score mean?** section of the brochure.

'Compared with students who drink at risky levels, you're likely to feel better, study more effectively, and are unlikely to suffer from health problems. Basically, drinking is unlikely to have a negative impact on your life.'

Low Risk

Compared to risky drinkers, you have a greater chance of...

- ↳ Feeling happy
- ↳ Feeling relaxed
- ↳ Feeling sociable
- ↳ Studying effectively
- ↳ Being physically healthy
- ↳ Being mentally healthy
- ↳ Staying safe
- ↳ Having good relationships

Motion to the relevant parts of the brochure as necessary.

'This brochure also provides information for those students who are drinking at more risky levels, with suggestions on how to cut down and support services available on campus should you or someone you know ever need them.'

Provide encouragement.

'I'll leave the brochure with you. Keep up the low risk drinking! Enjoy the rest of your day.'

STEP 3b: Feedback for risky (score 8–15) and very risky (score 16–19) drinkers

For students with an AUDIT score in the *Risky* or *Very Risky* range:

- Tell the student that his/her score falls in the *Risky* or *Very Risky* range.
- Point out that most UWA students are low risk drinkers.
- Point out the negative consequences of risky/high risk drinking.

- Point out the potential benefits of reduced drinking.
- Show the student the list of drinking targets.
- Advise the student about where he/she can access further information and support.

Steps in detail

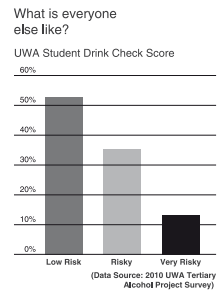
Write the student's score on the beer glass on the **How Risky is My Drinking?** section of the Drink Check Brochure.

'Your AUDIT score is X.'



Point to the graph titled **What is everyone else like?**

'This is in the risky/very risky category. About 32%/13% of UWA students fall into this category. Most UWA students are low risk drinkers. Does that surprise you?'



Point to the **What does your score mean?** section of the brochure.

'If you continue to drink at your current level, you may experience some negative effects, like poor judgement and decision-making, hangovers, and health problems. Have any of these things been a problem for you?'

Risky

Compared to low risk drinkers, you are more likely to be affected by these problems...

↘ Impaired judgement

↘ Sexual encounters

↘ Slurred speech

that you later regret

Point to the section titled **Drinking Targets.**

'This shows Australian drinking guidelines to help avoid alcohol related problems. It's recommended that people should have no more than 2 standard drinks a day on average, with no more than 4 drinks at a time, and should have at least 2 alcohol free days each week.'

Drinking targets

- ↘ Aim for 2 or fewer standard drinks per day
- ↘ Have no more than 4 standard drinks at any one time, no more than 3 times a week
- ↘ Make at least 2 days each week alcohol free

Remember, if at first you don't succeed, try again!

Motion to the section titled **Benefits of Reducing Your Drinking.**

'If you reduce how much you drink you'll experience some of the benefits listed here, like having more money and energy, and you'll be less likely to experience health problems.'

Benefits of reducing your drinking

- ↘ Improve your relationships with friends and family
- ↘ More positive mood
- ↘ More likely to make sensible decisions

Motion to the **Ways to Cut Down** section.

'If you want to reduce your drinking then there are some strategies listed here that other students have found helpful, such as drinking more slowly and having water in between drinks. Are there any things that you already do to try to slow down your drinking?'

Ways to cut down

↘ Eat before and during drinking

↘ Count how many drinks you have

Motion to the **Further Information** section of the brochure.

'You could visit or telephone these centres if you'd like more information.'

Give the student the brochure to keep, and **seek permission** to undertake the Motivational Interview.

'If you have a few more minutes I'd like to talk to you about whether you'd like to make any changes to your drinking and how you might do that. Is that OK?'

If the student declines, give them the **Self-Help Booklet** to take away.

'That's fine. I'll give you this to take away – you could use it to help you decide whether changing your drinking pattern is something you'd like to do. Enjoy the rest of your day.'

If the student consents, move on to the fourth A – Assist (i.e., conduct a Motivational Interview). This is discussed below; but first we show how to give feedback to someone in the possibly dependent range.

STEP 3c: Feedback for drinkers who are possibly dependent (score 20–40)

For students with an AUDIT score in the *Dependent* range

- Tell the student that his/her score falls in the Very Risky range, and that a score above 20 usually indicates alcohol dependence.
- Point out that most UWA students are low risk drinkers.
- Point out the negative consequences of high risk drinking.
- Point out the potential benefits of reduced drinking.
- Show the student the list of drinking targets.
- Show the student the contact details for further support.
- Encourage the student to make an appointment with a health professional.

Steps in detail

Write the student's score on the beer glass on the **How Risky is My Drinking?** section of the Drink Check brochure.

'Your AUDIT score is X.'

Point to the graph titled **What is everyone else like?**

'This is in the very risky category. As you can see here, most UWA students are low risk drinkers. About 13% of UWA students are like you, which is a high risk drinker. However, not many students score over 20 – only around 6%. A score of 20 or more suggests you might be experiencing alcohol dependence. Do you know what that means?'

Further information

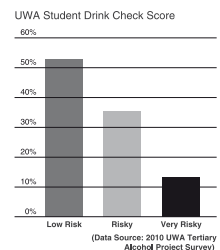
Alcohol and Drug Information Service
Provide 24 hour confidential telephone counselling, information and referral
(08) 9442 5000

For Support on Campus
University Medical Centre
(08) 6488 2118
Drug and Alcohol Counsellor
(08) 6488 2423
UWA Psychology Robin Winkler Clinic
(08) 6488 2644
or get a confidential, personalized alcohol assessment online at www.tap.uwa.edu.au

How risky is my drinking?



What is everyone else like?



Encourage the student to talk to you. If necessary, give the following explanation of dependence:

‘Dependence means that your alcohol use can cause a lot of problems but you might feel like you can’t, or don’t know how to, reduce how much you drink.’

Point to the **What does your score mean?** section of the brochure – discuss both the ‘Risky’ and ‘Very Risky’ sections.

‘If you continue to drink at your current level, you’re likely to experience some negative effects, like poor judgement and decision-making, hangovers, conflicts with friends and family, and you’ll be at risk of serious health problems. Do any of these things concern you?’

Motion to the section titled **Benefits of Reducing Your Drinking.**

‘If you reduced how much you drink you might experience some of the benefits listed here, like having more money and energy, and you’ll be less likely to experience health problems.’

Point to the section titled **Drinking Targets.**

‘This shows Australian drinking guidelines to help avoid alcohol related problems. It’s recommended that people should have no more than 2 standard drinks each day on average, with no more than 4 drinks at a time, and at least 2 alcohol free days each week.’

Motion to **Ways to Cut Down** section.

‘There are some strategies listed here that other students have found helped them reduce their drinking. However, because your AUDIT score was in the dependent range, it might be helpful for you to speak with a health professional like a GP or alcohol counsellor about your drinking, rather than trying to follow these strategies on your own. What do you think about that idea?’

Motion to the **Further Information** section of the brochure.

‘There is more information here about where you can get help on campus, as well as telephone lines and internet sites you might find helpful.’

Very Risky

Any of the above, plus...

- ↘ Memory loss and blackouts
- ↘ Problems getting and keeping a job

Benefits of reducing your drinking

- ↘ Improves your relationships with friends and family
- ↘ More positive mood
- ↘ More likely to make sensible decisions

Drinking targets

- ↘ Aim for 2 or fewer standard drinks per day
- ↘ Have no more than 4 standard drinks at any one time, no more than 3 times a week
- ↘ Make at least 2 days each week alcohol free

Remember, if at first you don’t succeed, try again!

Ways to cut down

- ↘ Eat before and during drinking
- ↘ Count how many drinks you have

Further information

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Provide students who have expressed an interest in getting professional help with a copy of the **referral card**.

‘The number on this card is for a person who regularly talks with students about their drinking. All you need to do is telephone and make an appointment. Do you have any other questions?... Ok, well thanks for your time today and I hope things go well when you speak with (whoever is on the referral card).’

For students who indicate that they are unsure whether they want to make an appointment – ask if they are willing to discuss this further.

‘I understand that you’re not sure what you want to do from here – many people feel the same way. Can we talk a bit more about your concerns?’

Next, move onto the **Motivational Interview**.

Step 4: ASSIST and ARRANGE – motivational interviewing (and referral if indicated)

The broad aims of the final step in the intervention are to:

- **ASSIST** students by increasing their motivation to change their drinking pattern.
- **ARRANGE** for the student to seek professional help (if this appears necessary).


These aims are achieved by conducting a brief **motivational interview** with the student. Because our protocol was designed for trainee psychologists at the beginning of their practical training, and for health promotion volunteers to administer peer-delivered brief interventions, we also designed a **flip chart** to guide both the interviewer and interviewee through this more challenging part of the intervention. This step of the intervention is only conducted with students whose AUDIT scores are in the *risky*, *very risky*, or *dependent* drinking ranges (i.e., scores of 8 through 40). The focus of the intervention differs depending on whether the student’s AUDIT score is in the risky/very risky range (8–19), or in the dependent range (20–40).

Step 4a For students with AUDIT scores between 8 and 19, the motivational interview should focus on increasing the student’s motivation to reduce their alcohol consumption.

Step 4b For students with AUDIT scores between 20 and 40, the motivational interview should focus on increasing the student’s motivation to seek help from a health professional.

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counsellor available on campus**

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for an appointment



Tertiary Alcohol
and Psychological Centre

For online resources to help
with drinking visit
<http://www.tap.uwa.edu.au>

The Motivational Interviewing Stance

When you are conducting a motivational interview, you should try to keep the following things in mind.

Be empathic

- Try to put yourself in the shoes of the student. Show a respect for and a genuine interest in the student’s concerns and views.

'People often feel unsure whether they want to make changes. This is understandable, since there are positive and negative aspects to every decision. Thinking about these positive and negative aspects might help you to clarify how you feel about drinking. First, we'll focus on your current drinking patterns.'

'Tell me some of the benefits that drinking has for you.'

'What are some things that aren't so good about your drinking at the moment?'

Some extra prompting questions about the negative aspects of drinking might be:

'What don't you like about xx?'

'How does xx affect you?'

Use a **double-sided reflection** to **summarize** what the student has said to you.

'So on the one hand you like drinking because ... On the other hand, there are things about drinking that you don't like, such as ...'

Turn to **Thinking about Drinking 2** and discuss the positives and negatives of reduced drinking.

'Now, imagine that you decide to reduce your drinking. What do you think would be some of the likely benefits of reducing your drinking?'

'OK, what would be some of the negatives of reducing your drinking?'

Use the examples in the Drink Check brochure to prompt discussion of the benefits of reducing drinking if need be.

Again, use a **double-sided reflection** to **summarize** what the student has said.

'It sounds as though it would be worthwhile for you to reduce your drinking because ... but some barriers to you deciding to reduce your drinking would be that ...'

Now move onto the page titled – **Are You Ready to Change? 1**. Ask the student to rate how important changing their drinking is, and how confident they are that they can change.

Write their answers on the back of the AUDIT.

'Now that we've talked about the pros and cons of reducing how much you drink or keeping things as they are now, how important to you is reducing your drinking, on this scale that goes from 0, for not at all important, to 10, for very important.'

Are you ready to change? ①

How *important* is it to you that you reduce your drinking?

0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

Not at all important

Very important

Are you ready to change? ②

How *confident* are you that you can reduce your drinking?

0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

Not at all confident

Very confident

Summarize the student's response. This may help him/her to elaborate upon it.

'Ok, you feel that it's not at all/somewhat/moderately/highly important to reduce your drinking.'

If the student picks a low number on the scale (e.g., 1 or 2), you could say:

'It seems that changing your drinking isn't something you think is very important at the moment.'

If the student picks a moderate number on the scale (e.g., 4, 5, 6), you might say:

'Changing your drinking is somewhat important to you, but you're not fully convinced it's something you want to do at the moment.'

If the student picks a high number on the scale (e.g., 8 or 9), you could say:

'So, reducing your drinking is very important to you.'

Then ask the student how confident they are that they can reduce their drinking, using the scale provided. Don't forget to write their response on the back of the AUDIT.

'How confident are you that you could reduce your drinking, if you decided to?'

Summarize the student's response, for example:

'Ok, you feel not at all/somewhat/moderately/very confident that you could reduce your drinking if you decided to.'

Then turn to **Are You Ready to Change? 2**. Discuss the similarity or difference between the student's perceived importance of change and their confidence in their ability to change.

Example response to a student who feels that change is not important:

'So although you're confident that you could change if you wanted to, you don't feel that change is very important at the moment. On the other hand you were telling me before that drinking has ... (list negatives of current drinking). Can you tell me a bit more about how important, or unimportant, you feel it is to change your drinking?'

Example response to a student who does not feel confident that they can reduce their drinking:

'So although reducing your drinking is very important to you, you don't feel very confident that you'll be able to do it. What makes you feel like that?'

Move on to the **Plan to Reduce Your Drinking 1** section of the flip chart. The aim of this exercise is to encourage the student to verbalize the main reason(s) for and benefits of reducing their drinking.

'It sounds as though you'd like to make some changes to your drinking'

OR

'It sounds as though you're not wanting to make changes to your drinking at the moment, but perhaps you can just imagine that you're wanting to change your drinking.'

Plan to reduce my drinking ①

- ↘ You may have decided that you would like to reduce your drinking.
- ↘ If you have not decided to reduce your drinking, then please just imagine that you are going to reduce your drinking.

What are your top 3 reasons for reducing your drinking?

Talk to the student about why they might want to reduce their drinking.

'What are your top 3 reasons for wanting to reduce your drinking?'

Reflect and validate the student's response.

'You're saying that you want to reduce your drinking because... They sound like really important reasons.'

Ask the student to imagine what would change with reduced drinking.

'Can you tell me a bit about how your life might be different if you do reduce your drinking?'

Reflect the response.

'So if you reduce your drinking you expect that...'

Turn the flip chart to **Plan to Reduce My Drinking 2**. The aim of this exercise is to clarify the student's drinking goals and develop strategies for meeting the goals.

'A good way to make something happen is to make a plan. This increases the chances that you'll be successful. First, let's think about what sort of drinking pattern you'd like to have.'

How many days each week do you want to drink?

How many drinks would you like to have each day?

What is the highest number of drinks you want to have at any one time?'

Plan to reduce my drinking ②

- ↘ How many days each week do you want to drink?
- ↘ How many drinks would you like to have each day?
- ↘ What is the highest number of drinks you want to have at any one time

Summarize and reflect the student's response, and compare them with the Australian guidelines for healthy drinking.

'So you think it would be realistic for you to have ___ drinks on ___ days each week.'

'This matches well with the Australian guidelines for healthy drinking.'

Or

'This is higher than the Australian guidelines, but seems like it would have a lot of benefits compared with how you're drinking at the moment.'

Turn to **Plan to Reduce My Drinking 3**.

Discuss strategies for meeting the student's goals, dealing with lapses, and rewards.

'Do you have any ideas about some strategies you could use to help you meet your drinking goals?'

'Those are great suggestions that should help reduce how much you drink. It is common for students who are trying to drink less to sometimes slip up and drink more than they had planned. If that happens to you, what will you do to make sure you don't slip back into old habits?'

'Some people find giving themselves a reward for sticking to their goals helps motivate them to keep sticking to their goals. Would this be helpful for you? What rewards would you give yourself?'

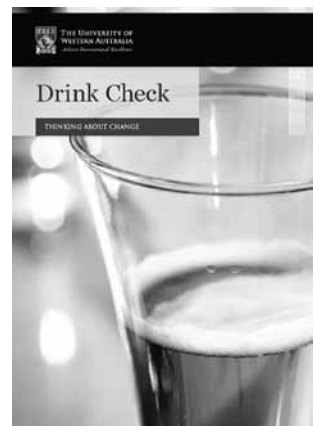
Finally, give the student a copy of the **Self-Help Booklet**, thank them for their participation and encourage them to reduce their drinking.

'Thanks for talking to me today. I'll give you this handout to keep, which covers everything we just talked about. It might be helpful if you filled it in, particularly the plan, and put it in a place where you'll see it regularly, like

Plan to reduce my drinking ③

- ↘ Can you think of some strategies you could use to reduce your drinking?
- ↘ What will you do when you have a lapse (drink more than you planned)?
- ↘ How will you reward yourself for drinking less?

Reducing your drinking is challenging, but you can do it!



on your fridge or next to your bed. Thanks again for talking to me today, and good luck in reducing your drinking. Enjoy the rest of your day.'

STEP 4b: Assisting possibly dependent drinkers (AUDIT scores 20–40)

- The **interview** should focus on encouraging the student to **seek professional help** to reduce their alcohol consumption.
- Use the **flip chart** to guide the interview.
- The same information covered in the flip chart and interview is in the **Self-Help Booklet**, which the student will take away after the interview.

Steps in detail

You will have just said something along the lines of:

'I understand that you're not sure what you want to do from here – many people feel the same way. Can we talk a bit more about your concerns about your drinking and about making a more formal appointment?'

If the student consents, work through the **flip chart**.

Start with the **Thinking about Drinking 1** page.

The goal is for the student to think about the negative consequences of their drinking, in order to increase their motivation to seek professional help.

'People often feel unsure whether they want to make changes. This is understandable, since there are positive and negative aspects to every decision. Thinking about these positive and negative aspects might help you to clarify how you feel about drinking. What are some things that you like about drinking? What are some things that you don't like about your drinking at the moment?'

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Use a **double-sided reflection** to **summarize** what the student has said to you.

'So on the one hand you like drinking because ... On the other hand, there are things about drinking that you don't like, such as ...'

Now turn to **Thinking About Drinking 2** and discuss the pros and cons of reduced drinking.

'Now, imagine that you decide to reduce your drinking. What do you think would be some of the likely benefits of reducing your drinking?'

'OK, what would be some of the negatives of reducing your drinking?'

Use the examples in the **Drink Check Brochure** to prompt discussion of the benefits of reducing drinking if need be.

Again, use a **double-sided reflection** to **summarize** what the student has said.

'It sounds as though it would be worthwhile for you to reduce your drinking because ... but some barriers to you deciding to reduce your drinking would be that ...'

Move onto **Are You Ready to Change? 1** and **Are You Ready to Change? 2** and have the student answer the questions about the importance of reduced drinking.

Are you ready to change? ❶

How *important* is it to you that you reduce your drinking?

0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

Not at all important

Very important

Are you ready to change? ❷

How *confident* are you that you can reduce your drinking?

0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

Not at all confident

Very confident

'Now that we've talked about the pros and cons of reducing how much you drink or keeping things as they are now, how important to you is reducing your drinking, on this scale that goes from 0, for not at all important, to 10, for very important.'

Write the student's answers on the back of the AUDIT.

Summarize the student's response. This may help him/her to elaborate upon it.

'Ok, you feel that it's not at all/somewhat/moderately/highly important to reduce your drinking.'

If the student picks a low number on the scale, (e.g., 1 or 2), you could say:

'It seems that changing your drinking isn't something you think is very important at the moment.'

If the student picks a moderate number on the scale (e.g., 4, 5, 6), you might say:

'Changing your drinking is somewhat important to you, but you're not fully convinced it's something you want to do at the moment.'

If the student picks a high number on the scale (e.g., 8 or 9), you could say:

'So, reducing your drinking is very important to you.'

Then ask the student how confident they are that they can reduce their drinking, using the scale provided. Don't forget to write their response on the back of the AUDIT.

'How confident are you that you could reduce your drinking, if you decided to?'

Summarize the student's response, for example:

'Ok, you feel not at all/somewhat/moderately/very confident that you could reduce your drinking if you decided to.'

Now, discuss the similarity or difference between the student's perceived importance of change and their confidence in their ability to change.

Example response to a student who feels that change is not important:

'So although you're confident that you could change if you wanted to, you don't feel that change is very important at the moment. On the other hand you were telling me before that drinking has ... (list negatives of current drinking). Will you tell me a bit more about how important, or unimportant, you feel it is to change your drinking?'

Example response to a student who does not feel confident that they can reduce their drinking:

'So although reducing your drinking is very important to you, you don't feel very confident that you'll be able to do it. What makes you feel like that?'

Turn to **Are You Ready to Change? 3** and discuss whether the student will talk to a health professional. You might say:

Are you ready to change? ③

1. How *important* do you think it is that you talk to a health professional (like a doctor or counsellor) about your drinking?

0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

Not at all important

Very important

2. How *ready* are you to talk to a health professional?

0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

Not at all ready

Very ready

'Earlier on you were saying you weren't keen on talking to a health professional about your drinking. Now that we've talked some more about the pros and cons of your current drinking pattern, and the benefits of reducing how much you drink, has anything changed? How important to you is it that you speak with a health professional about your drinking?'

'Ok, so you feel that it's not at all/somewhat/moderately/highly important that you speak with a health professional about your drinking.'

'How ready are you to speak with a health professional about your drinking?'

If the student is keen to reduce his/her alcohol consumption but not keen to talk to a professional, highlight this discrepancy.

'It sounds as though on the one hand it's important to you that you reduce your drinking, but on the other hand you're not keen to talk to a health professional about how to do that. Will you tell more about that?'

Some prompters for this question might be:

'What would make you more likely to talk to a health professional?'

'What would be some of the pros and cons of this?'

Then move on to **Plan to Reduce My Drinking 1**.

'What would be your top 3 reasons for wanting to reduce your drinking?'

'Ok, you're saying that you want to reduce your drinking because ...'

'They sound like really important reasons.'

'How might your life be different if you do reduce your drinking?'

'So if you reduce your drinking you expect that ...'

Plan to reduce my drinking ①

↘ You may have decided that you would like to reduce your drinking.

↘ If you have not decided to reduce your drinking, then please just imagine that you are going to reduce your drinking.

What are your top 3 reasons for reducing your drinking?

Turn to **Plan to Reduce My Drinking 2** and discuss the student's goals.

'A good way to make something happen is to make a plan. This increases the chances that you'll be successful. First, let's think about what sort of a drinking pattern you'd like to have.'

How many days each week do you want to drink?

Plan to reduce my drinking 2

How many drinks would you like to have each day?

↳ How many days each week do you want to drink?

What is the highest number of drinks you want to have at any one time?

↳ How many drinks would you like to have each day?

So you think it would be realistic for you to have ___ drinks on ___ days each week.

↳ What is the most number of drinks you want to have at any one time?

'This matches well with the Australian guidelines for healthy drinking'

Or

'This is higher than the Australian guidelines, but seems like it would have a lot of benefits compared with how you're drinking at the moment.'

Turn to **Speaking with a Health Professional**.

Reinforce the importance and likely benefits of speaking with a health professional. Point out that talking to a professional is a recommended strategy for reducing very risky drinking patterns.

'Given the things we've discussed today, what would you like to do next? Would you like to make an appointment to speak with someone further?'

Yes

- Give the student a referral card.

'The number on this card is for someone who regularly talks with students about their drinking. All you need to do is telephone and make an appointment. I hope things go well when you speak with ...'

No, appointment not wanted

'There is more information here on the brochure about where you can get help if you change your mind later. Remember that if you decide to reduce your drinking it might be hard, but you can do it, and there is lots of support on and off campus if you want to access it.'

Finish by giving the student a copy of the **Self-Help Booklet**, irrespective of whether they've made an appointment to speak with someone further.

'I'll also give you this handout to keep. It would be a good idea if you filled it in at home, particularly the plan, and put it in a place where you will see it regularly, like on your fridge or next to your bed. Do you have any other questions? Ok, well, thanks for your time today and for talking with me. Enjoy the rest of your day.'

Free confidential drug and alcohol counsellor available on campus

Call (08) 6488 2423
for an appointment



For online resources to help
with drinking visit
<http://www.tap.uwa.edu.au>

Further information

Alcohol and Drug Information Service
Provide 24 hour confidential telephone counselling,
information and referral
(08) 9442 5000

For Support on Campus
University Medical Centre
(08) 6488 2118
Drug and Alcohol Counsellor
(08) 6488 2423
UWA Psychology Robin Winkler Clinic
(08) 6488 2644
or get a confidential, personalized alcohol assessment
online at www.tap.uwa.edu.au

Brief interventions are available for a number of health compromising behaviours other than alcohol use such as for smoking cessation (Aveyard, Begh, Parsons, & West, 2011) or suicide attempters (Fleischmann et al., 2008). Online versions of brief interventions are also becoming increasingly utilized (McCambridge & Cunningham, 2013), as well as freely available, self-directed, online training programmes (e.g., <http://ndri.curtin.edu.au/btitp/>). Such efficient, low-intensity interventions respond to an important public health need, but there remains a vital need for more intense speciality care in the delivery of psychological interventions. An alternative to brief interventions to achieve efficiencies in care is the delivery of interventions in a group format. Group treatments can be delivered just as intensely as one-on-one treatments, but are efficient in that they benefit a larger number of people at the same time. In the next chapter, we turn to the competencies involved in delivering a group treatment programme.