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Objective

This flipchart is designed for use by health professionals, community workers, educators, Aboriginal health workers, Aboriginal mental health workers, drug and alcohol workers, students and community members.

It can be used to accompany an alcohol treatment program, or as an educational resource.

This resource is part of a series that also includes the following flipcharts:

- The Gunja (Yarndi) Brain Story
- The Mental Health Brain Story
- Sniffing and the Brain
- When Boys and Men Sniff
- When Girls and Women Sniff

It is designed for use mainly with Indigenous people in urban, rural and

remote settings.

It uses plain English language and informative images to provide straightforward and clear information, about:

- how a healthy brain and nervous system work
- the effects of alcohol (also known as grog) on the brain, nervous system and lifestyle
- addiction
- how and why alcohol treatment programs work.

Tips for users

- Read the flipchart a couple of times before you use it with others, to educate yourself or refresh your knowledge.
- Use the glossary to make sure you understand all of the words used.
- Ask a doctor or nurse to explain anything that you do not understand.
- When using the flipchart, the image page faces the client or students and the text page faces the health educator.
- The text is a guide to the images.
- Refer to the images regularly.
- Feel free to elaborate or add familiar examples and stories.
- Encourage comments and questions from the client/students.
- Thinking of the natural chemicals in the brain and nervous system as

a river system (as shown on pages 23 and 24) that needs to be kept in balance will help you to understand the role of chemicals in the brain and nervous system as a similar natural system that needs to be kept in balance.

• If using other flipcharts from this series in combination (*The Gunja* (*Yarndi*) Brain Story, Sniffing and the Brain or The Mental Health Brain Story), you may want to skip 'Part 1: Healthy Brain', as this section is the same or similar for all of these flipcharts.

Glossary

Understanding and remembering these words will help you to use the flipchart.

Use the pictures in 'Part 1: Healthy Brain' to help you.

- Nervous system a system made up of millions and millions of nerve cells (neurons) that control everything we do. It carries messages around the brain and between the brain and body. It is like the body's knowledge system.

• Neurons - very small parts that make up the nervous system. They carry messages around the brain and between the brain and body. Messages are carried along neurons like electricity through wires.

• Synapse - the gap between neurons where messages change from electrical to chemical messages and back again.

• Neurotransmitters - natural chemicals released by neurons to

communicate with each other. The chemicals allow messages to cross the

gap, or synapse, between different neurons.

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HEALTHY BRAIN

The brain

Inside your head is your brain.

- The brain is like our control centre.
- The brain controls our thinking about who we are, our feelings and the things we do.
- It is where our personality, our actions and emotions are controlled.
- The brain also controls our memory, our language and our creativity.
- It controls how we relate to other people and to the world around us.
- Everybody's brain is different.
 - The brain is very important. It makes us who we are.





The brain







The brain





HEALTHY BRAIN

Jobs of the brain

- Each area of the brain has a special job to do. This picture shows where each different job is controlled in the brain.
- The **dark blue** area (frontal cortex) is like the headquarters or the control centre of the brain. This area controls the rest of the brain. This is where we put together our stories.
 - At the top of the brain, the **light blue** area (sensory cortex) is sent messages FROM the body that tell it how the body is moving or what it is feeling.
- The orange area (motor cortex) sends messages TO the body telling it how and when to move.
- The green area (limbic system) in the middle of the brain is very important for emotions, family matters and feelings like worries, shame and happiness.
 - The **pink** area (hippocampus) is where memory is organised.
 - The **purple** area (reward system) is the 'yippee' or 'feel-good' area of the brain. When you drink grog or take drugs, this part of the brain is stimulated and it makes you feel really good. It makes you want to do it again and again.
- The red area (cerebellum) at the bottom of the brain balances our body, both when it is moving and when it is still.



The **brown** area (brain stem) connects the brain with the rest of the body. This part controls breathing and the heart. This part of the brain keeps us alive.

These different areas are always working together and talking to each other.







Jobs of the brain



LIFE! Heartbeat and breathing (brainstem)



HEALTHY BRAIN

Messages between brain and body

- This picture shows how messages go between the brain and body.
- In the picture, the finger is too close to the fire and it is getting hot. If the finger doesn't move away from the fire, it will burn and get hurt and damaged.
- Let's see how the nervous system works to stop the finger from getting burnt.
- When the finger gets hot, a message goes from the finger to the **'feel body'** area of the brain, also known as the sensory cortex (shown in light blue), saying that the finger is hot.
- A message is then sent to the **'move body'** area, also known as the motor cortex (shown in orange), saying that the finger needs to move away from the fire.
- The **'move body'** area then sends a message to the finger telling it to move away.
 - The finger then moves away from the fire.
 - These messages travel so fast that we don't even notice them.







Messages between brain and body





HEALTHY BRAIN

The nervous system

Messages are carried around the brain and body by the nervous system.

- The nervous system is the name for the brain and all the **nerves** that join the brain with the body.
- The nervous system is like our body's 'knowledge system'.
- It carries messages from the brain to the body and the body to the brain.
- The nervous system lets the brain and body talk to each other to control everything that we do.
 - We also use our nervous system to manage our relationship with the outside world.
 - There are two ways that messages are carried around the nervous system.
 - One way is **electrical**, like electricity in lights and wires. There is electricity like this in our bodies. The other way is **chemical**, like salt in food. There are natural chemicals like these in our bodies.
 - Now we will see how this happens.









The nervous system



The nervous system carries messages around your brain and body.



HEALTHY BRAIN

Neurons

Inside the nervous system are millions and millions of very small parts called 'neurons'.

- The neurons have long bits coming off them that reach out like the branches or roots of a tree.
- The messages go through these neurons and their branches to get around the nervous system, like electricity through wires.
- This is the electrical part of our nervous system.
- **Neurons** are too small for our eyes to see.
- This is a photo of two neurons taken under a very powerful microscope. In reality they are much smaller than this.
 - The message has to 'jump' across the gap between the branches to pass the message on to the next neuron.
- This gap is called a 'synapse'.





Neurons



This is a picture of two neurons. Messages travel along the branches of each neuron like electricity through wires. The synapse is the gap that messages have to jump across to get to the next neuron.





Neurons



This is a picture of two neurons. Messages travel along the branches of each neuron like electricity through wires. The synapse is the gap that messages have to jump across to get to the next neuron.



HEALTHY BRAIN

Synapse (gap)

In the **synapse**, messages that were electrical become chemical so they can get to the next neuron and become electrical again.

- This picture shows how this happens.
- The electrical message moves along the neuron's branches until it gets to the synapse. Here it triggers natural chemicals (shown in green) and pushes them into the synapse gap.
- The chemicals then move across to the next neuron where there are special places (in blue) called **receptors** that catch them.
 - When these chemicals get to the next neuron, they start a new electrical signal in that neuron.
 - So the messages change from **electrical** to **chemical** and back to **electrical**.
 - This way the messages get passed on from neuron to neuron in our body's nervous system.





🔰 Synapse (gap)



The messages are carried across the synapse by natural chemicals (in green).





Synapse (gap)



The messages are carried across the synapse by natural chemicals (in green).



HEALTHY BRAIN

The brain makes its own chemicals

Now let's look at the chemicals in the brain.

- The brain makes its own chemicals.
- These chemicals are always working together to help our brain and body to stay balanced.
- They help us do everything that we do.
- These are some of the things that these chemicals can change:
 - feeling happy or sad
 - feeling hungry or tired
 - getting energy from food
 - feeling angry or worried
 - good moods or bad moods
 - feeling stressed or relaxed
 - feeling strong.
- One chemical that is very important in our brain is called **dopamine**. If we have the right amount of **dopamine** in our brain, we feel good. If we don't have enough we can't feel good at all.

It is important for the chemicals in our brain to stay balanced for us to be healthy and strong.







The brain makes its own chemicals





HEALTHY BRAIN

Living a healthy life keeps the chemicals in our brain balanced

When we live a healthy way, the chemicals in our brain stay balanced and we feel good.

- Living in a healthy way means:
 - eating healthy food
 - being active (playing sport, hunting)
 - getting out bush
 - staying away from bad food, drugs and grog
 - having good relationships
 - studying and working
 - looking after our families and children
 - being a good role model for younger people
 - treating ourselves and people around us with love and respect.
- These things will keep the chemicals in our brain balanced, and then our bodies and relationships will be healthy.
 - It is important to keep the balance!





Living a healthy life keeps the chemicals in our brain balanced





Living a healthy life keeps the chemicals in our brain balanced





HEALTHY BRAIN

Healthy nervous system

Our brain and nervous system are like a river system.

- When the chemicals in our brain change, the changes can affect the whole body through the nervous system.
- Then it can change our relationships with the people and country around us.
 - When the chemicals in our brain and nervous system are balanced and we are healthy, it is like the clean water in a healthy river system.
 - Clear messages can get to all parts of our body.
 - Then we have good communication and understanding with the people and the world around us.
 - This is like a healthy river system where clean water gets to all of the plants and animals along the river, keeping them all healthy and alive.





Healthy nervous system







Healthy nervous system





HEALTHY BRAIN

Healthy brains

These photos are of people with healthy brains.

- All of the chemicals in their brains are balanced and all parts of the brain are working together properly.
- Because their brains are healthy and strong, they can do great things.
 - Cyril Rioli has used his healthy brain and body to become a champion footballer.
 - This band called **Yilila** use their healthy brains to play music and dance in front of big crowds of people.
 - Leisa McCarthy uses her healthy brain in her research studies of healthy diets for Indigenous people.





Healthy brains







Cyril Riol





Healthy brains



Yilila





Leisa McCarthy

Cyril Rioli





GROG AND THE BRAIN

What is alcohol (grog)?

- **Alcohol** is a type of a drug. The main types of alcohol are beer, wine and spirits.
- When people drink alcohol, it depresses or slows down their nervous system and changes the way they feel and act.
 - People drink alcohol for many different reasons.
 - Some people only drink a little bit and some people drink a lot.
- Drinking too much alcohol can cause many problems for the person as well as for their family and their community.
 - When someone drinks too much alcohol, they can feel 'drunk' or intoxicated. This is because they have too much alcohol in their blood and they can't control themselves anymore.
- Alcohol is also called 'grog'. This story will use the word 'grog' instead of alcohol.





What is alcohol (grog)?







GROG AND THE BRAIN

What is alcohol (grog)?











GROG AND THE BRAIN

Grog gets in the brain and body

- This story shows what happens inside the brain and body when you drink grog.
- First, the grog goes through the mouth and into the stomach. Then it goes through the wall of the stomach and into the blood.
 - The blood then carries the grog through the nervous system into the brain, and to other organs including the liver, the kidneys and the heart.
- It only takes a few minutes for the grog to get from the mouth to the brain.
 - When there is a small amount of grog in the brain, it makes some extra 'feel-good' chemicals and the nervous system can slow down.
- This can make you feel more relaxed and confident.
- When too much grog goes into the brain, it can slow the nervous system down too much.
 - This can make you feel dizzy or sick. You can have trouble talking and walking. You may say things you wouldn't normally say or do because you are not in control of yourself.



You are not in control of your thoughts, feelings and actions anymore. The grog and the extra chemicals it releases into the brain are in control now.









GROG AND THE BRAIN

Grog gets in the brain and body





GROG AND THE BRAIN

Grog goes through the body

- When you drink grog, the body tries to break the grog down and get it out of the body. The body does this so that it can go back to normal and stay in control.
- It is the liver's job to break down the grog, but it can only do it a little bit at a time.
 - If too much grog goes through your body in a short time, your liver can't break down the grog fast enough.
- Then the grog builds up in the brain and body and confuses all of the messages in the nervous system.
- Then you cannot control how you think, feel and act. You can slow right down, fall over, argue, fight or pass out.
 - It takes one hour for most healthy people to get one standard drink out of their body and be back to normal.
 - One standard drink is:
 - 1 mid-strength beer, or
 - half a glass of wine, or
 - 1 shot (cap) of spirits (whisky, vodka, rum, gin).
 - That means if you drink 7 beers in 1 hour, it will take you 7 hours to



get back to normal. If you drink 1 bottle of wine in 1 hour, it will take you 8 hours to get back to normal!









GROG AND THE BRAIN

Grog goes through the body



The liver breaks down one standard drink in an hour.

A Cask of Wine (4 Litres)



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GROG AND THE BRAIN

Grog changes the balance of chemicals in the brain

Drinking grog changes the amount of chemicals in the nervous system.

This changes the way you think, feel and act.

These changes happen when you drink grog and after you have stopped drinking.

When grog changes the chemicals in your brain and your nervous system isn't working properly, you can:

- get tired easily
- have aches and pains
- get sick a lot
- not remember things
- have bad moods
- feel sad or lonely
- feel angry.

If the damage is more serious, you may not be able to think, talk or move properly.

Now we will see how this happens.











GROG AND THE BRAIN

Grog changes the balance of chemicals in the brain





GROG AND THE BRAIN

Unhealthy nervous system

- When someone drinks grog, extra chemicals are released into the brain and other chemicals are blocked or go away.
- When this happens, the normal messages that make the brain and body work properly are changed and different messages are sent around the brain and body.
 - Then the messages can be confused, slowed or not get through at all.
- The chemicals in the nervous system have lost their balance.
- In this way, the brain and body can't talk to each other properly.
 - This makes the nervous system become like an unhealthy river system with poisoned water or water that doesn't flow properly.
- In an unhealthy river system like this, there is no clean water to feed the plants and the people living near the river.
- In the same way, when the nervous system is unhealthy from too much grog, the person can start to have problems with their relationships



with the people and the country around them.






Unhealthy nervous system





PART 2



GROG AND THE BRAIN

Grog changes the brain being 'drunk'

- These pictures show what happens in the brain if you drink too much grog.
- The grog causes extra 'feel-good' chemicals like dopamine (shown in green) to be made in the brain.
 - All these extra 'feel-good' chemicals pass into the next neuron where they send a different message through its branches.
- This makes you feel different.
- It can make you lose control of yourself. You can lose control of how you feel and what you do. This is called being **drunk** or **intoxicated**.
- For a short time, it can make you feel good even if you are sad or there are bad things going on around you, but sometimes it can make you feel worse.
 - It can make you think, talk and move too slowly.
- It can make you lose balance and not be able to stand or walk properly.
- If you put way too much grog into your body, the brain can get so slow that you can lose all control.



Parts of the brain can stop working altogether. At worst, you can die.













Grog changes the brain being 'drunk'

When you drink grog, the brain makes extra 'feel-good' chemicals.





This changes the messages that are passed onto the next neuron.



And then it changes the way you think, feel and act.



If you drink too much grog, it can confuse your brain and slow it right down so that you can't walk or talk or think properly.





GROG AND THE BRAIN

Dependence

- When people keep drinking grog even though it is hurting them, their family and their country, it is called **alcohol dependence**.
- This means they have become **dependent** on the grog (alcohol).
 - They feel like the only thing that will make them feel good is another drink.
 - They feel like they need the grog to live.
- They need to keep drinking more and more grog to feel okay because the same amount they used to drink is not enough anymore.
 - They are now dependent on the grog. They need it to feel normal.
- O Drinking more grog has become more important than anything else in their life. It has become more important than their health, family, work, sport or fishing.
 - Their brain doesn't work properly by itself anymore because the chemicals have been changed by all the grog.











Dependence







GROG AND THE BRAIN

Addiction

- When someone is dependent on grog and their brain has changed, this is called Addiction. They are addicted to grog.
- When somebody is addicted to grog, their brain has been tricked into thinking that drinking is the only thing that can make them feel good.
- This is because when grog is in the brain, the brain makes extra 'feel-good' chemicals, but these 'feel-good' chemicals only last for a short time.
- The brain forgets how to make 'feel-good' chemicals without the grog. They can't feel good anymore without drinking grog.
- When they do something that used to make them feel good, like eating, going hunting or fishing, or looking after their family, they don't feel good anymore.
- Their brain has forgotten how to make 'feel-good' chemicals by itself without the grog.
 - The brain can learn to make 'feel-good' chemicals again by itself, but the person has to stop drinking.





Addiction





The grog helps the brain make lots of extra 'feel-good' chemicals, but they only stay for a short time.

When there is no more grog, the brain has forgotten to make feel-good' hemicals by itself







Addiction



The grog helps the brain make lots of extra 'feel-good' chemicals, but they only stay for a short time.



When there is no more grog, the brain has forgotten to make 'feel-good' chemicals by itself.









GROG AND THE BRAIN

Drinking a fair bit for years

- In the pages to come you will see pictures of the brain with a red area showing the parts of the brain that are damaged from drinking too much.
- The pictures at the bottom show the brain from the side.
- On this page you can see what can happen if you drink a fair bit for years. You can damage the front part of your brain, called the frontal cortex.
- This part of the brain makes decisions and controls our actions and emotions.
- When this part of the brain is damaged, you can start to lose your stories.
 - You may have trouble concentrating.
 - You may have trouble learning new things and feel confused a lot.
- Your body can feel tired and you may get sick more because your body is working too hard all the time, trying to get the grog out of your system.
 - If you stop drinking or cut right down now, you will be able to get completely better.





You can get better if you stop or cut right down on the grog now!

You may notice these things:

Can't make decisions

Can't control your emotions

Can't control your actions

Losing your stories

Have trouble concentrating

 Have trouble learning new thing Feel tired a lot



Drinking a fair bit for years





Drinking a fair bit for years

You may notice these things:

- Can't make decisions
- Can't control your emotions
- Can't control your actions
- Losing your stories
- Have trouble concentrating
- Have trouble learning new things
- Feel tired a lot

You can get better if you stop or cut right down on the grog now!











GROG AND THE BRAIN

Drinking heavily for years

- This picture shows what can happen if you have been drinking heavily for a long time. You can also damage a deeper part in the middle of your brain, called the limbic system.
- When this happens you can have problems with your memory and controlling your emotions.
 - You can lose your stories.
 - You can have trouble remembering things and learning new things.
- You can lose connections with your family and your country.
 - You may fight, and get worried and frightened a lot.
 - Your may get into an angry rage or burst into tears easily.
 - Your mood can change quickly.
 - Your body can feel weak and sore and you can get sick a lot, because your body is working so hard all the time to get the grog out.
 - If you stop drinking now, you can get a lot better, but it will take a long time.



 Stories gone Losing family Losing country Fighting alot · Worried all the time Can't remember things Can't learn new things

Body weak

You might have some long-term problems that won't go away.













Drinking heavily for years

You may notice these things:

- Stories gone
- Losing family
- Losing country
- Fighting alot
- Worried all the time
- Can't remember things
- Can't learn new things
- Mood changes quickly and easily
- Body weak
- Can't feel good without grog

If you stop now, you will get a bit better but it will take a long time.











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GROG AND THE BRAIN

Drinking VERY heavily for years

- Here you can see what happens if you have been drinking grog VERY heavily for years. You can also damage the part of the brain at the bottom, called the cerebellum that keeps the body balanced.
- If this happens you can lose your stories, your family and your country.
- Your body gets unhealthy because it has been pushed too hard by the grog and doesn't work properly anymore. You can get sick a lot.
- You can't talk or listen properly and may slur your words when you speak, even when you are not drinking.
 - Your body can't move properly and you can fall over a lot.
 - You may need to go to hospital.
 - You have serious brain damage.
- If you stop drinking, you can get a little bit better.
- You can learn to walk better, but may always have some problems with walking.
 - You may need medicine to help you get better and your family or



friends will have to look after you.

You may notice these things:

 Stories gone Family gone Country gone Body is sick Can't move properly Can't walk properly Can't talk properly Vomit when there's no grog May need to go to hospital

If you stop now, you will get a bit better but will always have some troubles with walking and talking.











Drinking VERY heavily for years

You may notice these things:

- Stories gone
- Family gone
- Country gone
- Body is sick
- Can't move properly
- Can't walk properly
- Can't talk properly
- Vomit when there's no grog
- May need to go to hospital

If you stop now, you will get a bit better but will always have some troubles with walking and talking.











GROG AND THE BRAIN

Drinking to death

- This picture show what can happen if you keep drinking grog heavily for too many years.
- Your body would be very unhealthy. You would be sick and weak all the time because your body has been worked too hard by the grog.
 - Your brain, heart, liver and kidneys would be small and dried out from all the drinking.
- Here you can see what happens if you get drunk too many times and your brain and body can't take it anymore.
- You can damage a part at the bottom of the brain called the **brain stem**. The brain stem controls the heartbeat and breathing.
- When this happens, you will be unconscious.
 - Your brain and your organs will give up.
 - Your heart will stop beating, and you will stop breathing. You will die.





GROG AND THE DRAI

Drinking to death

This can happen:

Body is too sick and weak
Body can't take the grog anymore
Lose consciousness
Heart stops beating
Stop breathing
You die







Drinking to death

This can happen:

- Body is too sick and weak
- Body can't take the grog anymore
- Lose consciousness
- Heart stops beating
- Stop breathing
- You die

It's too late to get better.





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PART 2



GROG AND THE BRAIN

Drinking when you are pregnant is no good for the baby

- If women drink grog when they are pregnant, the grog will go through the mother's blood and into the baby's body and brain.
- The baby (also called the 'fetus') isn't big or strong enough to fight off the grog.
 - The grog can seriously hurt the fetus and may damage the baby permanently.
 - The baby can die from the mother drinking too much grog.
- If the baby survives, it can have a sickness called 'fetal alcohol syndrome' or FAS.
 - Babies with this sickness can be delivered too early. They are too small and are at risk of dying.
 - They can have trouble breathing and can get sick very easily.





Drinking when you are pregnant is no good for the baby



Photos of the baby (ultrasound)





Mother not drinking grog

Mother drinking grog





Drinking when you are pregnant is no good for the baby



Photos of the baby (ultrasound)





Mother not drinking grog

Mother drinking grog

PART 2



GROG AND THE BRAIN

Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) - changes in the face

- If a mother drinks grog when she is pregnant, her child can have fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and can look different children with no FAS.
- The shape of their head and face may not be normal.
- This picture shows some of the changes that can happen to the face of children with FAS as they grow older.
 - They can have narrow eyes, a flat face, a short nose and a thin top lip.
- They can also have a short chin, a flat area under their nose and different ear shapes.





GRUG AND THE BRAI

Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) changes in the face







Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) - changes in the face



PART 2



GROG AND THE BRAIN

Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) problems growing older

Later, as the babies with FAS get older, their brains might not grow as well as they do with other kids, whose mothers did not drink.

Because their brains are not growing properly, children with FAS can have problems with:

- concentration
- controlling their emotions
- making decisions
- memory
- learning new things
- connecting with their stories
- connecting with their culture.
- They can have trouble at school because their brains are not growing properly and can't learn properly.
- They can also get in trouble with the police and with the law because they cannot control their behaviour.
- These children need extra support at school and in the community.
 - When they get older, they often



have bad problems with grog and drugs.

problems growing older









Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) - problems growing older



PART 2



GROG AND THE BRAIN

Grog drinkers can't look after themselves or their family

When men and women drink grog, they are hurting their brains and bodies and they are not healthy.

- They often can't think properly and don't know what they are doing. In this way, they may put themselves at risk of injury or sexual assault. They may get pregnant to someone they didn't want to get pregnant with.
- They may also break traditional laws, like being with someone from the wrong skin group, or talking with someone you're not supposed to.
- They can't get healthy food to feed their families, and can't remember what they need to do to care for their families.
 - When this happens, their families and their children suffer.
 - When parents are drinking grog, their children can get sad and lonely and think their parents don't love them. These children may drink or try taking drugs themselves to help them feel better.
- Sometimes the children might drink grog, smoke gunja, sniff petrol or take other drugs because they are copying their parents or their older brothers and sisters.

Parents who drink grog all the time are not able to protect their children from harm.

Children of heavy grog drinkers have often been victims of sexual abuse or violence from older children or adults, because their parents were drinking and did not protect them.









Grog drinkers can't look after themselves or their family







GROG AND THE BRAIN

Drinking can kill your spirit

- We can see from these stories how too much grog can make you sick, and can damage your brain and hurt you and your family.
- O Drinking too much grog can slowly destroy your brain, your body and your relationships with other people and with country.
- This is just like a river system that is dried up and has no water.
- There is no food or life in the river or in the plants, animals and people around the river.
- The river system has no life, and no spirit, just like a person who drinks too much will slowly lose their life and their spirit.
- The only way to stop this from happening is to stop drinking grog and start looking after yourself.





Drinking can kill your spirit







Drinking can kill your spirit







GETTING BETTER

Getting off the grog

- The good news is that the brain can start to get better, but only if you stop drinking or cut right down on the drinking.
- Then the brain can learn to make its own 'feel-good' chemicals again.
- Over time, the brain and nervous system can be healthy and strong again, like a healthy river system.
- How can the brain and nervous system get healthy again?
- The most important thing is to **stop drinking**. This is the hard part.
- The next step is learning to live without grog.
- This can take a long time and will need help from family, friends, a counsellor, nurse, doctor, rehabilitation centre or hospital.
- The brain, body and spirit can get strong again!





Getting off the grog







GETTING BETTER

Getting off the grog







GETTING BETTER

Withdrawal sickness

- When someone who is addicted or dependent on grog stops drinking, they can get very sick before they get strong again.
- This is called **withdrawal sickness**. It happens because the brain and body have been tricked into thinking they can't work properly without grog.
 - With withdrawal sickness, you may:
 - feel sad and confused
 - feel weak and shaky
 - get sweaty
 - vomit
 - have a fast heart beat and other heart problems
 - have trouble sleeping
 - have aches and pains
 - have mixed up thinking, see or hear things
 - feel very worried.
- The withdrawal sickness can last anywhere between 2 days and 2 weeks, depending on the person and how much they have



been drinking.

The withdrawal sickness can be so bad that they start drinking again to stop the bad feelings.

To get healthy and strong, it is important to get past the bad feelings of withdrawal sickness.







GETTING BETTER

Withdrawal sickness







GETTING BETTER

Feeling good without grog

- When someone has been drinking for a long time, the brain seems to need the grog to help it make 'feel-good' chemicals. It has become dependent on the grog.
- You can see from the picture in the middle here, that when this person stops drinking, there aren't enough 'feel-good' chemicals in their brain and they can feel very bad.
 - This is part of the withdrawal sickness.
 - Some things that used to make them feel good before may not make them feel good anymore because their brain has forgotten how to make 'feel good' chemicals without the grog.
- Because they feel so bad when they stop drinking, they think the only thing that can make them feel good again is another drink.
- Then they may start to drink again, like the person in the picture on the left.
- But the good feelings from the drinking will only last a short time and then they will keep getting sick from the drinking.
 - When they stop drinking, they have to get through the withdrawal



sickness so that the brain can learn to make 'feel-good' chemicals again without the grog.

Then they will feel good for a long time, like the person in the picture on the right.







GETTING BETTER

Feeling good without grog







The grog helps the brain make 'feel-good' chemicals, but only for a short time.

There are no 'feel-good' chemicals when the grog stops.



The brain learns to make 'feel-good' chemicals again without the grog.



GETTING BETTER

Treatment

- To get past the withdrawal sickness and get strong again, the person may need treatment from a nurse, doctor, clinic, rehabilitation centre or hospital.
- If the sickness is very bad, the treatment program can include taking medicine.
 - This medicine can stop the withdrawal sickness and help the brain and body get strong again.
- The treatment program can also include talking with a counsellor or support person to work out ways to stay off the grog and start getting strong.
- It is important to work out what people, places, events and problems make drinking grog happen or make it worse.
- Then the person can avoid these situations or learn to avoid drinking when they happen.
- They can learn to choose healthy activities and people in their life that don't involve drinking grog.





There is a list of useful contact numbers for help or information about mental health, alcohol or drug problems on the last page of this flipchart.





GETTING BETTER

Treatment







GETTING BETTER

Getting strong

Sometimes people who try to give up the grog can't get past the withdrawal sickness, or they start drinking again as soon as they leave the treatment centre.

- They end up going back on the grog because they don't start doing other more healthy things that make them feel good naturally, and because they are around other people who are still drinking.
- It is important to remember that the brain will make more and more of its own natural 'feel-good' chemicals if they can stay off the grog. Then the brain will get back in control and they can start to feel good without drinking.
- Once they have got past the withdrawal sickness, they need to do things that really make them feel good and happy and healthy. This will help the brain learn to make its own 'feel-good' chemicals again.
- This way they can teach their brain not to be tricked by the extra 'feel-good' chemicals that come with the grog and they can stay off the grog.





Getting strong







GETTING BETTER

Getting strong







GETTING BETTER

Responsible drinking

There is a way to drink grog without losing control, and without damaging the brain and body.

- This is called **responsible drinking**.
- Responsible drinking means:
 - don't drink every day
 - only have 1 standard drink in an hour
 - only have 2 drinks in 2 hours to relax and feel good and then stop drinking
 - eat food before or while you are drinking
 - drink slowly
 - drink water when drinking grog
 - drink light and mid-strength beers
 - say 'NO' when people try and make you drink too much.

Shops and pubs will not serve people who have had too much to drink. This is called responsible serving of alcohol.

This is a law to help protect people from hurting themselves and other people by not letting them drink too much grog.





Responsible drinking






Responsible drinking



PART 3



GETTING BETTER

Healthy men, women and families

- It is important for men and women to look after themselves and their families. They can't do this when they drink grog.
- Men and women can choose to be strong and healthy.
- They can be good role models for their families and their communities.
- They can show their people how to do healthy things that make them feel good.
- Drinking grog and using drugs damages your health and hurts your children, your families and your community.
- Grog hurts everybody, even people in the community who don't drink.
- Everybody can and should work together to reduce the damage caused by grog.
- People need love and support to stop drinking.
- Strong men and women can help other adults and young people to become strong and healthy.





GETTING DETTER

Healthy men, women and families







Healthy men, women and families







Staying strong

Remember these steps to getting better:

- Stop drinking grog.
- Get help from family, friends, nurse, doctor, clinic, rehabilitation centre or hospital.
- Remember that you will get withdrawal sickness when you stop drinking, but the bad feelings will go away in a few days.
- Having treatment with medicine will help you feel better until your natural 'feel-good' chemicals come back.
- You may need to stay in a hostel, rehabilitation centre or hospital while you have treatment.
- Start eating healthy food.
- Start doing healthy things that make you feel strong, like walking, fishing, being with family, hunting, working, playing sport, ceremony, making music, getting back to country.
- Don't hang around with other people who are drinking grog.
- Stay off the grog and you will



feel better.

Staying strong











Staying strong





NEED HELP?

Useful contact numbers

You can get lots of useful information if you call the numbers below. They can offer you counselling anytime or can refer you to appropriate treatment services for Indigenous people in your area. You can call all of these numbers anytime at all (24-hours a day, 7 days a week).

Mental health

If you want information or help with mental health problems, you can call Lifeline from anywhere in Australia on 13 11 14.

Alcohol or drug

You can get lots of useful information about alcohol or drug problems by calling the information service in your state. Their telephone numbers are listed below.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Community Health Helpline ph: (02) 6207 9977 (metropolitan area) ph: (02) 6207 9977 (rural area)

NEW SOUTH WALES

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) ph: (02) 9361 8000 (metropolitan area) ph: 1800 422 599 (rural area)

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) ph: (08) 8363 8618 (metropolitan area) ph: 1300 131 340 (rural area)

TASMANIA

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) ph: 1800 811 994 (metropolitan area) ph: 1800 811 994 (rural area)

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) ph: 1800 131 350 (metropolitan area) ph: 1800 131 350 (rural area)

QUEENSLAND

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) ph: 1800 177 833 (metropolitan area) ph: 1800 177 833 (rural area)

VICTORIA

DirectLine ph: 1800 888 236 (metropolitan area) ph: 1800 888 236 (rural area)

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) ph: (08) 9442 5000 (metropolitan area) ph: 1800 198 024 (rural area)