

The ASSIST Brief Intervention 9 Simple Steps

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9 STEP Program Example – the ASSIST Brief Intervention

The following is an example of how to word an ASSIST brief intervention for someone who scores in the moderate risk range for amphetamines using the ASSIST Feedback Report card for patients. You can use this example for other substances also. The ASSIST feedback report card for patient lists the health and other effects associated with the use of specific substances.

1. FEEDBACK

I'd like to share with you the results of the questionnaire you just completed.

These are your scores for each substance that we talked about. You scored a 21 for tobacco which puts you in the moderate risk group for that substance, a 6 for cannabis which also is in the moderate risk group and 14 for amphetamine type stimulants like speed, ecstasy and meth which is also in the moderate risk group. You scored in the low risk group for all other substances.

A score in the moderate risk group means that you are at risk of health and other problems from your current pattern of substance use. You may not be experiencing any problems now, but a score in the moderate risk range means that you are at risk of developing health and other problems in the future.

(Show amphetamine-related information)

Because your risk of experiencing harm from amphetamines is moderate, the kinds of things associated with your current pattern of use are (go through list) difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, dehydration, jaw clenching, headaches, muscle pain, anxiety, depression, panic, paranoia. Some people become aggressive and violent when they use amphetamines, and others may experience psychosis which is like schizophrenia. Unfortunately amphetamines and ecstasy can also cause permanent damage to brain cells and the liver. They may also cause a brain haemorrhage which may lead to a stroke and sometimes sudden death.

2. ADVICE

The best way to reduce the likelihood of these things happening to you is to cut down or stop using amphetamines.

3. RESPONSIBILITY

What you do with this information is up to you. We're just here to let you know the risks associated with your current pattern of use.

(Turn back to the report card and point to amphetamine score)

4. CONCERN

What are your thoughts about your scores; particularly the one for amphetamines?

Response: *Well, I didn't realize I would have such a high score for amphetamines and that I could be at risk of those kinds of health problems. I guess I have been thinking about cutting back for a while because they do make me feel really down a couple days later and it's getting to the point where maybe it's just not worth it anymore. But they make you feel so good when you are using them, so I don't know.*

5. GOOD THINGS ABOUT USING

What are some of the good things about using amphetamines for you?

Response: *I like that I can stay up all night and party with my friends and that they just make you feel more lively and happy. We just have a really good time all together and, man, what a rush!*

6. NOT-SO-GOOD THINGS ABOUT USING

What are some of the not-so-good things about using amphetamines for you personally?

(May need to prompt with things like effects on health and relationships, work and study, any legal problems or problems with the police, any financial problems because of spending money on substances)

Response: *Definitely the crash. I feel really depressed and I get very irritable at work and at my boyfriend. He doesn't really like me using them and that's causing a few problems between us. I'm also worried about the effect that it might be having on my mood long term because I think I'm more irritable now that I used to be.*

7. SUMMARIZE

So the good things about using meth for you is that it makes you feel up and active and you can party all night with your friends and have a really good time. But on the flip side you get pretty depressed when you come down from the high and you've noticed that you're feeling more moody and irritable in general than you have in the past, and that it has caused a few problems with your boyfriend, particularly because of your irritability and mood swings.

8. CONCERN

What are some of your concerns about these not-so-good things related to using amphetamines?

Response: *Yes, I suppose I am concerned about the effect that it is having on my mood in general and also those other things that were mentioned in the score sheet, I wasn't aware of them and they do sound scary. It also worries me if this effect on my mood might be an ongoing thing, because I really don't like feeling depressed.*

9. TAKE-HOME INFORMATION

You can take this score sheet home with you and I'll also give you this information sheet on amphetamines. I'll also give this booklet ("Self-help strategies for cutting down or stopping substance use: A guide") which people often find useful to help them decide whether or not they want to cut down on using substances. If you do decide that you want to cut down or stop using, then it provides some strategies that you might find helpful.