

The 10 Steps to an ASSIST-linked Brief Intervention

1. Ask clients if they are interested in seeing their questionnaire scores
2. Provide personalised feedback to clients about their ASSIST scores using the Feedback Report Card
3. Give advice about how to reduce risk associated with substance use
4. Allow clients to take ultimate responsibility for their choices
5. Ask clients how concerned they are about their scores
6. Weigh up the good things about using the substance against;
7. Weigh up the less good things about using the substance
8. Summarise and reflect on clients' statements about their substance use with emphasis on the less good things
9. Ask clients how concerned they are by the less good things
10. Give clients take-home materials to bolster the brief intervention

Here is an example of questions to ask in an ASSIST-linked brief intervention for a person who scores in the moderate risk range for amphetamine-type stimulants. It includes the use of the ASSIST Feedback Report Card which lists the health and other effects associated with the use of specific substances. For this example, the person disclosed they used crystal methamphetamine. You can use this example as a guide for other substances.

1. ASK

"Are you interested in seeing how you scored on the questionnaire you just completed?"

2. FEEDBACK (using the ASSIST Feedback Report Card)

"These are all the substances I asked you about and here are your scores. As you can see, you scored in the low risk range for most substances, however you scored in the moderate risk range for amphetamine type stimulants. Moderate risk means that you are at risk of health, social, economic and other consequences from your current pattern of use, both now and also into the future if you keep using the same way."

"For crystal methamphetamine use, the kinds of harms I'm talking about are (pointing to the feedback report card); loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, dehydration, headaches, mood swings. It can even lead to aggressive and violent behaviour, psychosis and permanent damage to brain cells."

3. ADVICE

“The best way you can reduce your risk of these things happening to you, either now or in the future, is to cut down or stop using.”

4. RESPONSIBILITY

“What you do with this information is up to you. I am just letting you know the kinds of harms associated with your current pattern of use.”

5. CONCERN

“How concerned are you by your score for crystal methamphetamine?”

6. GOOD THINGS ABOUT USING

“What are the good things about using crystal methamphetamine for you?”

(Note that if a person is in the pre-contemplative stage, they may have already expressed the ‘good things’ so there is no need to ask again.)

7. LESS GOOD THINGS ABOUT USING

What are the less good things about using crystal methamphetamine for you personally?

(You may need to prompt with effects on health and relationships, work or study, legal problems and financial issues).

8. SUMMARISE

“So, on the one hand you said you like using crystal methamphetamine because it gives you energy and you have fun. However, on the other hand you do not like the comedowns and the impacts it is having on your work and relationships.”

9. CONCERN

“How concerned are you about the less good things?”

10. TAKE-HOME INFORMATION AND BOOKLET

“You can take this score sheet home with you and I’ll also give you this information on crystal methamphetamine. People find this booklet useful if they’re thinking about whether or not they want to cut down or stop using. If you decide you do want to cut down, then it provides useful strategies for helping to cut down or stop.”