

Prison drug-using situations - how and when to intervene?

Source: Stover, H., Trautmann, F. (2001). *Risk reduction for drug users in prisons*. Trimbos Institute, The Netherlands.

Drug using inmates regularly might run into situations where other inmates are talking about injecting drugs. They can use these situations to inform these inmates about safer behaviour. However, it is a question of careful timing to raise the issue of proper and safer injecting. In this exercise, we try to find out what a third person (a friend or inmate, for example) can do to improve injecting technique. By means of discussion and practical exercises, several situations regarding good injecting technique are reviewed.

Objectives:

1. discuss the best timing to raise the subject of proper injecting in prison situations.
2. discuss how to support drug users with good injecting techniques.
3. exercising practical support

Duration: 30 to 60 minutes

No. of participants: Minimum 4, maximum 20

Material needed: A tourniquet. The European Peer Support or another 'safer use' video tape (if available).

Exercise outline:

- Show one of the injecting parts of the video (if video tape is available)
- Ask participants: if you were in the same room as the drug user, when and how would you start a conversation about safer use.
- If video tape is not available, ask participants to think of their last use of injectable drugs: when and how could a conversation about safer use best be started

Questions to ad:

- What kind of situations are most suitable for starting a conversation about safer use with drug users in prison? Or to put it differently: As a (former) drug user, when do you definitely not want to be disturbed with a talk about safer use?
- What kind of introductions are appropriate for raising the subject of safer use (unavailability of needles, a recent case of an inmate overdosing, etc.)?



Additional elements of the exercise:

- An explicit peer support action is to help each other finding good veins. Participants look for good injection veins on their neighbor's arms. Roll up the sleeves, take the arms and examine them carefully.
- The correct use of the tourniquet is essential for many drug users. Participants practice the correct
- and incorrect use of the tourniquet. The results are watched closely (veins coming up, going down). This exercise is particularly interesting if done by people with difficult veins.
- Question: what can be done to help veins come up
 - if there is no tourniquet available,
 - if it is cold and veins are deep down.

