



# How to be assertive

Even though you may have made the decision to cut down or stop using substances, you are still going to face situations that have in the past resulted in the decision to use.

An important part of cutting down or stopping substance use is to be assertive; by learning how to say 'no' in these situations.

If you have usually said 'yes' in the past it can be hard to say that first 'no'. It can be **especially** hard to say no to your friends. But this is about your wellbeing and friends should support that. Once you've said "no thanks" once it will get easier to refuse next time. You'll feel good about yourself too!

A simple "no thanks, not tonight" can be effective.

Or you can say:

- "No thanks, I'm cutting down."
- "No thanks, I'm having a rest for a while."
- "Sorry, doctor's orders, but you have some if you want to."

You might find that people accept you saying "no" without a problem.

If it is a problem and you feel uncomfortable about being asked, you might want to think about keeping away from people you have difficulty saying "no" to – at least for a little while. If you find it hard to be with or around them, you might have to think about leaving the situation altogether.

If you think this is a high-risk situation, perhaps you need to avoid it - **a little planning can always help reduce risk.**

It is a good idea to practice being assertive. Being assertive means standing up for yourself and politely expressing your thoughts and feelings. Be careful not to be aggressive or to force your ideas on others.

Plan and practice saying no to help you deal with high-risk situations.

Create your own refusal style by using body language as well as what you say and how you say it.

**Now that you have learned how to be assertive, here are some related sheets that you might also find useful:**

[How to cope with cravings](#)

[How to challenge unhelpful thoughts](#)

[How to handle high-risk situations](#)

[How to practice mindfulness](#)

Tips for using body language	Tips for what to say
Some people find that if they look directly at the person when they answer it can help – it can make the message more effective.	Use a clear, firm, confident voice.
Stand or sit up straight – it shows you are confident in your choice	No should be the first word you say.
Don't feel guilty about refusing. It won't hurt anybody if you choose not to use. But if you think it might help, have an explanation for why you are saying no "not thanks, doctor's orders for me".	Suggest another activity if you want to do something else with that person
Leave the room if the other person keeps insisting or pushing you to use.	Tell the person offering you drugs not to ask you again, now or in the future.
	Change the subject to something else.
	State your needs, feelings, thoughts and opinions clearly. Excuses and vague answers could imply that you might change your mind.
	Use 'I' statements