

# COUNTERfit

## Harm Reduction Program

South Riverdale Community Health Centre  
955 Queen Street East, Toronto  
416.461.1925

COUNTERfit's Women's Program is for women who use drugs. We work to create spaces to talk about drug use, to educate the community, and to build knowledge about gender and drugs. We also support provide support to drug using women.

For more information, please contact the  
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# Drugs & LOVE

## Women & Harm Reduction



## Safety

### HELPFUL #'S To Have On Hand

Gerstein Crisis Centre (24 hours)	416-929-5200
Nellie's Shelter (24 hours)	416-461-1084
Salvation Army	416-340-1982
COUNTERfit	416-461-3577 ext. 235
St. Vincent de Paul	416-364-5577
A friend/neighbour	_____
Doctor	_____
A family member	_____
A local detox	_____
A worker	_____

Ideally, **LOVE** should be some or all of these things:

- respect & trust
- balance
- family
- caring & sharing
- acceptance & courage
- health
- knowledge & wisdom

As women who use drugs, life can be tough sometimes. Relationships help with certain aspects of life including:

- security
- safety
- housing
- access to drugs
- financial stability
- a sense of belonging

*"Love as deeply as you love yourself"*

This pamphlet is put together by women from COUNTERfit's Harm Reduction Program at South Riverdale Community Health Centre. We use drugs, and sometimes this makes our relationships complicated and difficult.

This pamphlet includes information about:

- using drugs with your partner,
- housing and relationships,
- warning signs about your relationships
- how to manage arguments, and stay safe
- tips to deal with all of these

We hope this information will give you ideas about building healthy relationships.

This pamphlet is meant to be relevant for anyone in an intimate relationship, regardless of gender preference.

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### Relationships &

### Drugs

**Using drugs in relationships can cause a lot of problems. For example:**

- Being asked for sexual favours for drugs (i.e. blow job for drugs)
- Each person gets high differently (i.e. doing entire rock at once, or trying to make it last longer)
- Its likely one person will worry the drugs are divided up unfairly – sometimes one person hides a stash or has a bigger piece. Sometimes one person gets greedy with their portion.
- One person is willing to share their drugs so that you can get high together – but it ends up costing one person all the time, and the other person expecting it.

All of these things cause arguments, distrust, and distance.



## Here are some things you can do to keep yourself healthy and take care of yourself

- Get involved in stuff in community
- Have activities each day, have a plan
- Make a list of things you need or want to do. It feels good to be productive
- Stay healthy. It's more attractive
- Watch for warning signs in your relationship. Know what your limits are - and what is unacceptable to you.
- Stay in touch with friends. Stay connected.
- Spending time taking care of yourself
- Stay strong and always be your own best friend!
- Build love into your life. We all need love. And you don't have to only get love through an intimate relationship. You can get love through friendships, or in programs you participate in. Or by volunteering. Love is an important part of health.

## Relationships &

## Drugs

### Here are tips to reduce the negative effects of drug use within your relationship:

- Know how your partner gets high – if you don't like it, don't let their high ruin your high. Use with people you will enjoy using with. If you get high differently, you may choose to get high separately.
- If you power smoke – remember how it affects you. Remember to slow down, or if you smoke faster than your partner, you'll run out first.
- Separate the drugs yourself or together. Split it up front so that you have your own drugs. Decide what's fair before getting high.
- Remember that you're high ... so if one of you gets a little weird or paranoid, try to understand that you're both high
- Prioritize something to do after the drugs are gone – a joint / walk / glass of wine / TV show. This can help make it calm afterwards so that you don't stop being together or argue.
- Buy drugs with your own money so you have control over the drugs

## Here are some more tips if things are going badly:

- If you're arguing, try to stay calm. Try not to rock the boat (i.e. saying things that will escalate the argument). We often push each others buttons which makes the argument much worse.
- Communication...talk it through. Say things that will de-escalate the argument. For example "I love you and I don't want to fight". It can also help to have sex, but only if you feel safe. Sex can help reduce the stress.
- Eat food. Seriously. It helps a lot. It can help calm you down. You can communicate better and manage conflict better when you've eaten. It helps your emotions. It also helps prevent you from going out and getting really high afterwards when you're upset. You can even try talking while you eat.

## Here are some suggestions on keeping your own space and having personal boundaries in your relationship:

## Housing

- See your partner once in a while, but not all the time. Don't live together so you can have your own space sometimes
- Have your own key for your place – and don't give your partner a copy. This lets you keep your space without feeling threatened, or if you're scared – you can keep yourself safe. It also helps you feel empowered to have your own space that you have control over.
- Define time to spend together. Make dates to do things like go to a show, go for a walk, go grocery shopping. Have a focus for your time other than just using (i.e. movies, skating, etc. find things you both like to do besides drugs).
- Don't put everyone else first all the time. Put yourself first.

## Relationships &

## Housing

Housing can be really hard. Many people don't have their own place.

**When you share a home with your partner, problems can come up. For example:**

- You can get sick of each other, or feel like there is too much togetherness
- You can end up doing everything together – if you break up, this makes it really hard. Sometimes it means you lose all your friends - because your friends were their friends.
- It can be harder to have your own friends. Sometimes you can end up losing friends because you're always with your partner

**"Love gives us courage to cry, laugh, and to go on."**

## More Tips if things are going badly:

- Watch for it getting worse. Either louder, angrier, meaner, or violent. Know words and warning signs about your partner and yourself that show you might lose control
- Leave the space. Don't worry about solving the problem. Keep yourself safe. Leaving gives you both time to settle down, and prevents the argument from escalating.
- Have a plan for where to go if the argument is dangerous. Know local shelters you could go to. Visit them, so you feel comfortable to go if you're in a bad spot. Meet the workers.
- Talk to someone / meet a friend for coffee
- Call a crisis line
- If it gets violent, defend yourself. Scream. Try to get out. If you can't, lock yourself in a room and scream.

## Housing

**It's important to have your own place because:**

- You can do what you want
- You have some quiet space / space for meditation
- You can have your own space if you get in a fight. Like taking a time out.
- It can help to keep you safe, if your relationship goes bad
- It is empowering to have your own home, and make decisions about how you want things to be. It's your place and your space. It also means everything doesn't have to be their way.

**What are warning signs that your relationship isn't going well / isn't safe / isn't healthy?**

- One or both of you got violent. If it happened before, it will most likely happen again.
- You only use together
- You both focus on drugs only and not other areas of life. Your relationship is all about getting drugs and getting high
- You have lost some friends (your isolated)
- The drugs aren't being shared fairly
- You put your life on hold

Follow your instincts. Let your mind be your guide. Keep your heart in check!