

HOW TO ENJOY A CONFERENCE

a Harm Reduction Guide



PURPOSE

The purpose of the guide is to create a brief and practical harm reduction resource to share with all participants attending the 2024 AWID Forum, but of course can be used in other similar spaces. This guide is meant to be for everyone but especially those who are people who use drugs, sex workers, LGBTQI+ people, people living with HIV and any those who may be curious and want to learn more, in particular women and girls with their cis and trans experiences.

WELCOME AND ENJOY!

What do we mean by Harm Reduction?

Harm reduction to us means reducing or navigating the risks for a bad situation. This can be broad, whether that be an overdose, encounters with the police, or feeling discriminated against or stigmatized.

We want an accessible and flexible approach, to promote mental well-being, and to ensure a conducive environment for self-reflection.



OWNING YOUR POWER

For all of us, forum spaces can be overwhelming so here are new tips to navigate them. The crowds can be big, they can be loud, they are (or are not) talking about our experiences which often hit trauma buttons and so much more. So here are some quick tips to navigate the crowds.





Pace Yourself - There will never be enough time in the day to do all the things that you'd like to do. So make a plan (and know that at any time it can change). We suggest that you look at the sessions for each day and choose one that you absolutely must go to, and then two other sessions that you'd like to see.

Find Your Tribe - having a few folks to lean on that have similar shared experience as you is very helpful; this can maybe look different based on your needs but find some small pockets of people to connect with as needed. Maybe this is a person to navigate the halls with, or maybe it is a person to give your head a much needed language break from all the English.

Creating Boundaries - boundaries can look differently to different people at a conference, so make your own and stick to them. For example, if you need a break, step out of the space. Leave a session that is triggering you. Let folks clearly know your limits too so they can help you navigate them.



When Speaking and Storytelling - Use first person when speaking and be mindful when sharing stories that might have difficult details about harsh realities. Also remember that things you say in your communities might not be acceptable and hurtful in other contexts.

Navigating FOMO - FOMO means "*Fear Of Missing Out*". This totally happens in conference spaces. Generally FOMO causes us to push our boundaries and while it can push us in a good direction, it can be really stressful and pushes us to over exert ourselves. Not ideal! If you make your must do list at the beginning of the forum it will help you pace yourself and manage your FOMO.

Never forget your "survival pack"

SURVIVAL PACK



- national ID and/or a passport
- a notebook and couple of pens
- at least 10-25 business cards
- daily meds
- a small snack
- a bottle of water
- conference registration information
- phone and/or computer charger



What are you responsible for and

WHAT ARE YOU **NOT** RESPONSIBLE FOR?

Interactions in movement spaces can be tricky. We are responsible for trying our best but the reality is that we are responsible for our own emotions because people aren't perfect and neither are movements. It is likely that people will use terms that could be hurtful, or be discriminatory either intentionally or unintentionally. Make sure that you are informed of the laws and regulations of the things that you might engage with and are responsible for knowing and planning as much as you can.

⚡
ASK FOR HELP, IF
NEEDED!





HARM REDUCTION +

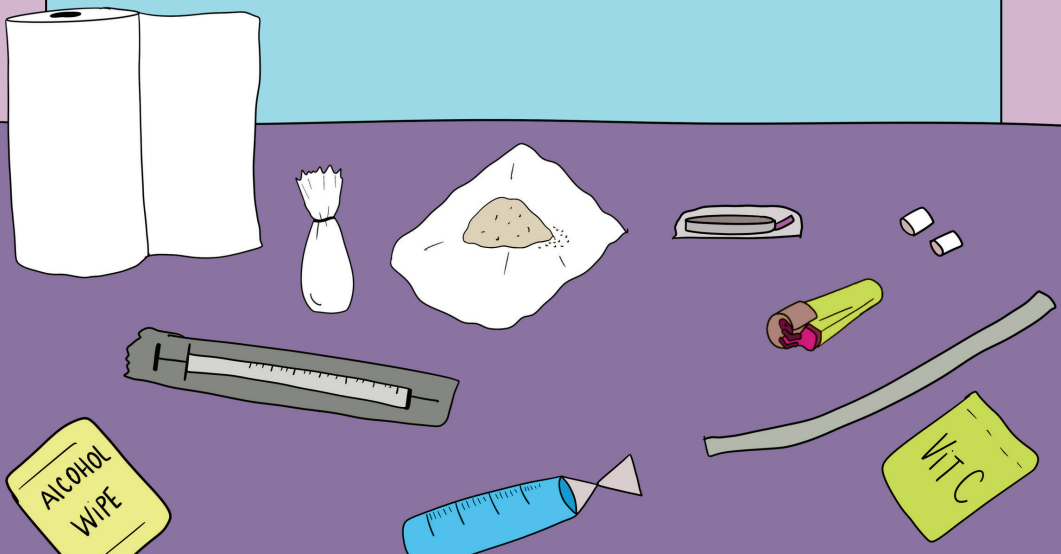
DOING DRUGS

For folks who use drugs, harm reduction can look very different and can be talked about very differently (see [Words Matter](#) by INPUD). For some it is access to a safe supply, others it is leaving their bankcard at home, or for others it is staying away from places where there are likely to be substances. Whatever your personal harm reduction protocol looks like, spend some time making a plan for various situations while at a conference.

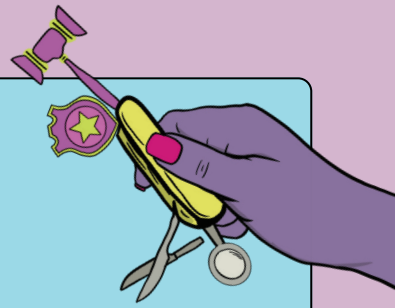


How to get access to kits, drugs and/or OAT

If you regularly use drugs and/or Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT) it is important that you are connected with a local drug advocacy group. They will have the most up to date information about the current supply in the city, what the current drug laws are and how to possibly find OAT in the city. If you are going to a new place and lack contacts, you can join the Women's Harm Reduction International Network (WHRIN) as a member and ask on their global listserv for connections. If you can, carry your own harm reduction kits with you, including Naloxone as some countries might not have them readily available.



Legal considerations



We know that there are many bad drug laws in most countries. While these laws put people in more danger, we do have to work within them to stay safe from legal issues - no one wants to end up in a prison abroad. In order to navigate this, know as much as you can about the current legal situation - which, if any, substances are legal, if so, how much can you have at one time, places where there is less risk to have police interaction, etc.

In addition to this, some countries have targeted policies for interrogating travelers and sometimes forced random drug tests upon arrival. Be aware and make informed decisions. Tools such as the Global Drug Policy Index are a helpful place to start.

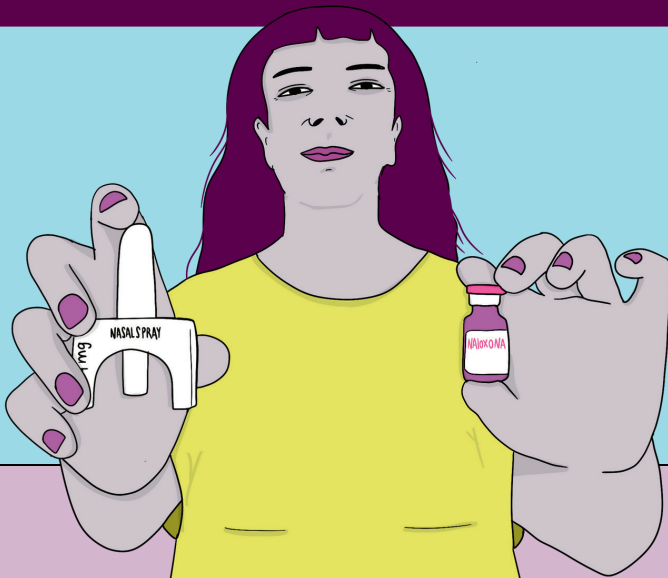


In your wallet carry the number of legal support if possible.

Harm reduction looks differently for all

Harm reduction around substances looks differently for everyone. Each person knows what is best for them, but a couple standards are

- Use with other people or when you cannot, let someone know in case you need support;
- Only take as much money to the bar as you want to spend for that evening, leave your cards at home;
- If you are not using at the moment, stay away from places and situations that might trigger you to want to use.



Traveling + Crossing Borders



Baseline we know that crossing borders is stressful at best for most people, we know that depending on people's skin color, passport they hold, their gender, and how able bodied they are perceived they are more likely to be targeted by authorities at immigration. These experiences are compounded for folks who are criminalized.

For most countries traveling across borders with the majority of drugs is prohibited. Even in countries where personal quantities of drugs are allowed, there can be different rules when you enter and exit. Traveling with OAT can also be tricky. You will need to have a letter of prescription from your doctor and when possible have a letter from the conference organizer or national harm reduction network to further support and advocate for you if needed. Sometimes saying less is better, but other times they will need to declare everything and hope for the best. At these times it is important to have all your backing documents ready.



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AND PROTECT YOURSELF!

In 2024, 8 countries still have a complete travel ban with 54 countries having varying levels of restrictions (on paper) for people living with HIV - we also know that many countries arbitrarily deny visas for travel and work purposes without formal laws as well. For people living with HIV it is important to know what the laws are in practice in a country so you can know your rights and protect yourself.

If something happens that is triggering **when traveling make sure that you have the details of a person to connect with to debrief and get support if needed.** It is helpful to also have hard copies of your hotel reservations, your travel tickets, letters of support from the conference organizers and/or your employers, as well as any other supporting documents you have acquired.



HARM REDUCTION +

HOOKING UP

Let's be real, some of the coolest people that you will meet will be at a feminist forum! And it's expected that you may have some crushes. But for some folks, makeouts and sex have different stakes particularly for those who's sexuality and/or work is criminalized.

Just remember **consent is sexy**, so if you are unsure just ask and open up lines of communication so everyone is on the same page.





Buying and Selling Sex

Hiring a sex worker is a practical no strings attached way to get what you want in terms of sex. It may be pricey at times but so could be buying someone dinner and drinks on a date. When buying sex, each city has their own red light districts and ways for engagement. In many places laws around sex work both buying and selling can be nuanced. Reviewing the Global Network of Sex Worker Projects Mapping Laws site can be helpful to understand the broad overview, but connecting with sex worker advocates on the ground will give you a better understanding of the national context.

Disclosure

Despite science proving that when people living with HIV are supported and undetectable on treatment they cannot transmit HIV, there is still a lot of ignorance and misinformation. To make matters worse nearly half of countries have some form of laws related to the criminalization of HIV with the vast majority of them

about non-disclosure. In most cases two consenting adults have sex, and one gets upset if the other didn't tell them that they had HIV (but let's face it, most people don't share everything before a steamy night) leading to legal issues. So our advice, for people living with HIV (or other STIs), is to check out the local sexual health laws to make informed choices before you play around with someone - it's good to know what's what, just to stay on the safe side. For other folks, remember that sex is always risky and you have a mutual responsibility to take care of each other's sexual health.

While we don't own disclosure of your identity or your experiences to anyone, you have the right to consent to what you disclose and your private details are not to be expected to be shared. Baseline – let's not make assumptions and try to practice open communication on all fronts - because it is not only someone else's responsibility to take care of you and your needs.

NOTE: Community is important and make sure you have connections to local support for if and when you need them. As mentioned in the Owning Your Power section – connecting with local organizations and peers to know the rules both in policy and practice is important.



HOW TO NAVIGATE

DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Dealing with Police

Yuck police. Unfortunately, many folks have to deal with them more than others and in some countries can be targeted even more. When dealing with police try to stay calm and not get triggered, even when provoked. Being in different countries when there are language gaps can further fuel misunderstandings and complicate the situation. If you are confused, try to get someone who speaks the language to help you clarify the situation or call a friend for support. If you do get picked up, alert your emergency contacts right away. Let the conference organizers know, so they can (hopefully) help you navigate the situation.

Dealing with police in a foreign country can be very intimidating and difficult, especially when you don't know the political landscape. If possible, avoid all police encounters.

Need for emergency care (OD, violence, hormonal therapy, etc.)

Lost/forgot your prescription medication - Always put your medication in your carry on. Make sure to carry a hardcopy and electronic copies for the reference of your prescription with you so you can try to get new ones. In some cases, the medications might be too expensive to replace so connect with a local organization and try to get donations or replacements at a reduced rate.

Discrimination and violence - If you are the target of harassment it can be triggering, especially if it has happened before. If you feel comfortable, tell someone you trust and jointly work on ways to solve it - you will probably need to have someone to lean on for psychological support. Maybe the solution is to tell the conference organizers, maybe confronting the person as a learning moment, or maybe it is making a police report. Whatever way forward you choose, have a small community around you to support you through it.

Overdose - It can be scary to go seek medical care when you know that you could get in legal trouble, but sometimes you need help that is beyond waiting out a bad trip or trying to sleep it off. A few things that you can do is check your drug supply, buy from someone you know or trust, do drugs with someone, and carry Naloxone. If someone does overdose around you and you need help, call someone trusted and get them the urgent help they need.

No matter the situation you are not alone. There are many others who will stand on your side. Ask for help.



THAILAND SPECIFIC

INFORMATION

For the AWID Forum we have compiled some resources and references that can support you to navigate and better understand the Thai national context. The AWID Forum will have a Mobile Health Unit located in the lower parking garage supported by Rainbow Sky Association. There you can find peers to talk to, resources and information. Also at the Festival Space there will be a couple of booths led by movements of feminists Womxn, Drugs, & Justice, ICW Feminists!, and Empower Sex Workers, plus an entire Trans and LBQ space for folks to connect and get more information from peers.



WHRIN has also created a WhatsApp group for feminists resisting the war on drugs specifically to support each other in case of need for direct support.

YOU CAN CONTACT XXXXXX

Communities and Resources to Connect with in Thailand

About Drugs and Harm Reduction

- Raks Thai Foundation - www.raksthai.org
- FAIR (Foundation for Action on Inclusion Rights)
- Network of Asian People Who Use Drugs (NAPUD) and International Network of People Who Use Drugs (INPUD) - www.inpud.net
- What is Harm Reduction - www.hri.global/what-is-harm-reduction
- Women and Harm Reduction International Network (WHRIN) - www.whrin.site
- International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) - www.idpc.net

Publications:

- Guidance for Travelers under Treatment Carrying Personal Medications Containing Narcotic Drugs/Psychotropic Substances into Thailand
- Drug laws in Thailand: the limits of reforms to relieve prison overcrowding (policy brief)
- Thailand risks reversing successful reforms, repeating drug policy failures

About Sex and Sex Work

- EMPOWER Foundation + This is Us Museum - <https://www.facebook.com/empowermuseum/>
- SWING Thailand - www.swingthailand.org/ + www.nswp.org/featured/service-workers-group-swing
- Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers - www.apnswnew.wordpress.com

Publications:

- NSWP - Thailand sex work criminalization
- Thailand - HIV and disclosure

Inclusive Health Clinics based in Bangkok

- Pribta - Tangerine Clinic (for people of all genders) - www.pribta-tangerine.com
- Rainbow Sky Association Thailand - www.rsat.info
- Pulse Clinic (including women's clinic) - www.pulse-clinic.com



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dashed lines on a light purple background.



EMERGENCY SUPPORT

Here are some names and numbers to help keep you safe.

Fill the blanks and keep it with you at all times

My Emergency Contact:

Conference Friends:

Country Embassy Contact:

Legal Aid:

Conference Emergency Number/Point

Person:

Medical Clinic:

Medical insurance policy number:



Designed by:



In collaboration with

