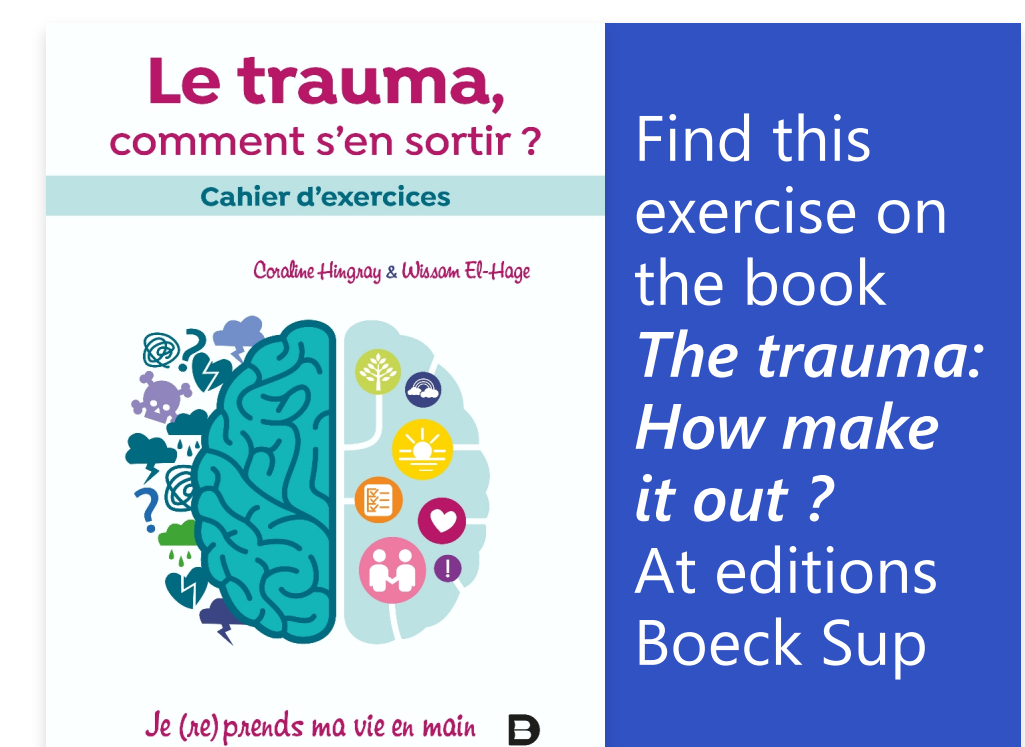


Factsheet

DO ALCOHOL, CANNABIS, ANTI-ANXIETY DRUGS REALLY DO ME ANY GOOD?



1 True or false

« **Drink to forget!** » **Wrong!** It's a really bad idea.

Aside from its harmful effects on health, alcohol doesn't help you to forget a trauma but, on the contrary, encourages reminiscence.

« **You shouldn't take anxiolytics.** » **True!** Anti-anxiety drugs, especially benzodiazepines, are not at all recommended for post-traumatic stress disorder.

« **Cannabis helps me sleep.** » **False!**

Cannabis has complex effects on sleep. The anxiolytic effect of occasional cannabis consumption makes it easier to fall asleep but this effect fades.

2 Understanding the Science

The use of psychotropic drugs, alcohol, tobacco and cannabis often increases after trauma. Consumers look for an immediate anxiolytic effect, i.e., a reduction in anxiety and internal tension. However, once the effect of the substance has worn off, the user experiences withdrawal symptoms, with a worsening of post-traumatic symptoms, prompting them to take the drug again and increasing the risk of physical and psychological dependence. The problem is that these substances also have numerous undesirable side effects. For example, cannabis disrupts sleep quality at night and increases agitation, pathological distrust and drowsiness during the day. People who suffer from nightmares are also at greater risk from the abuse of various substances, especially alcohol. Not recommended!

3 What the psychiatrist says

« Tact and moderation »

The occasional, reasonable consumption of alcohol, cannabis or anti-anxiety drugs doesn't present a major risk, but beware of excessive consumption of these products which have significant harmful effects on physical and mental health. Trauma is a major risk factor with regard to dependence, for example, alongside other risk factors such as anxiety depression, poverty and social isolation.

False comfort ...

Trauma leads to difficulty experiencing positive emotions and overwhelming negative emotions. Some people resort to drugs and alcohol to experience pleasurable sensations or to relieve stress. However, while it may provide temporary relief, it encourages users to repeat the experience. Consumption can quickly become excessive...

What's more, regular use of such substances triggers a need to absorb larger and larger quantities to get the same effect. This ever-growing tolerance to alcohol and drugs leads to addiction.

Risky situations

Excessive consumption of drugs and alcohol carries with it major risks. It alters your level of alertness and can trigger behavioural problems including aggression; it encourages risk-taking and, in so doing, increases the risk of further traumatization.

It's important to recognize the link between trauma and harmful substance use as factors that can maintain or aggravate anxiety.