

More Than The Substance

A practical day on understanding substance use,
reducing harm and guiding change with young people
with Michele Yeoman (NZ)



Most people who work alongside young people will, at some point, sit across from a young person whose drinking or other drug use has started to worry someone. For many young people, that use is experimental and passing. For some, it quietly becomes the thing carrying a bigger weight: a way to manage anxiety, numb distress, or belong somewhere. Left unexplored, substance use in adolescence can settle in alongside developing mental distress. Often the way an adult first raises the subject of substance use is what decides whether a young person talks or turns away. When the conversation feels like judgement, shame does the rest, and the young person disengages from the very people trying to help.

This one-day workshop offers a practical foundation for engaging in helpful conversations. You will build your working knowledge of alcohol and other substances and how to assess use without alienating the person in front of you. Participants will be guided to explore what to notice, which validated screening tools to reach for, and how to make sense of what a young person is saying within a harm-reduction and health-based frame. Motivational Interviewing (MI), an evidence-based, collaborative style of conversation designed to strengthen a person's own motivation to change will be highlighted as a practical tool to be added to your toolkit. Rather than trying to convince, warn or "fix," you'll practice drawing out a young person's own reasons for change, so that therapeutic engagement, the single strongest predictor of a good outcome, is where you begin, not where you hope to end up.

Key content to be covered:

- A grounded overview of alcohol and other drug use in New Zealand - what young people are actually using, drug classes and relative harms, and the continuum of use, so you can locate where a young person sits.
- Biology of addiction
- Raising the issue skilfully - using engagement skills that aim to open a conversation about use in a way that builds trust rather than shame.
- Using validated screening tools and how to feed results back and make meaning of them together.
- A practical harm-reduction approach, and delivering a brief intervention matched to where the young person is at
- The spirit and evidence base of MI, understanding ambivalence and "resistance" as a normal, workable part of change, and how the "righting reflex" can quietly push a young person the wrong way.
- Recognising, evoking and responding to change talk so you can amplify a young person's own language for change.
- Ready-to-use strategies for exploring importance and confidence, and offering information respectfully.
- Exploring possible referral pathways for AOD support

Who would benefit from attending:

This workshop is designed for the wide range of people who work alongside young people and their families and whānau, including counsellors, social workers, youth workers, nurses, psychologists, teachers and guidance staff, mental health and addiction clinicians, AOD practitioners, Whānau Ora, NGO and community workers, school and primary-health staff, and those in justice, Oranga Tamariki and residential or youth-justice settings. No prior addiction training is assumed: the day suits both those new to this work and experienced practitioners wanting to sharpen their assessment and engagement skills..



Michele Yeoman was the programme leader for addiction studies at AUT, where she developed one of the most highly regarded national addiction-training programmes. Michele is a registered nurse, registered dapaanz practitioner, and registered EMDR therapist. She has 30 years' experience as a clinician and leader in harm reduction and addiction. Michele is involved in research and supervision, runs a private practice, and is a sought-after national presenter on therapeutic topics.

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Seminar Details:

📍 **NAPIER:** 23 November 2026 | Toitoto Events Centre, 101 Hastings Street South, Hastings

AUCKLAND: 24 November 2026 | Novotel Ellerslie, 72/112 Green Lane East, Auckland

🕒 9:00am - 3:30pm

💰 \$325 (inc GST). Inc catering, printed handbook, attendance certificate & live Compass bookstore

📞 Contact the Compass Seminars NZ team on 06 759 1647 or office@compass.ac.nz

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