

Ice and violent behaviour: How to protect yourself

Use of crystal **methamphetamine** ('ice') can increase **paranoid** and **irrational thoughts**, mood swings, and **irritability**, amongst many other side effects. Not everyone who uses ice will become violent or aggressive, although these side effects can make some individuals more likely to show these behaviours.

When a person has used ice or is coming down from ice use, they may not be able to follow directions easily. Aggression is common, and this can increase the risk of harm to themselves and those around them. If this is happening to someone you know, it is important to look after yourself and others. If possible, also try to limit the physical harm the person can do to themselves.

If someone you suspect is using ice becomes violent and aggressive, here are some steps to take:

1. Try to remain calm, speak in a clear and slow voice to the person.

Try to avoid words that are emotional or angry as they may trigger or increase the persons aggressive behaviours.



2. Say the person's name and let them know that you are there to help.

For example;

"I can see how upset and angry you are right now, Jo".

"I don't mean to upset you, I care about you, and I just want to help you." Or "How can I help you feel safe?"

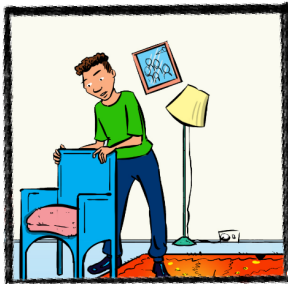
"Your behaviour is frightening me at the moment, and I'd really like to help."

3. Use an 'open' and passive body stance

with your arms open, palms up and head lowered. This will help to let the person know you are there to support them.



"I don't mean to upset you,
I care about you, and I just
want to help you."



4. Give the person some physical space

so they don't feel trapped. If possible, remove chairs, tables or other things that might be thrown from the person's immediate path. Turn down lights as bright lights may make the person feel more stimulated.

Explain what you are doing, e.g., "I am just moving some things out of your way, so that you don't hurt yourself."

5. Give the person time to think and respond.

Slow things down as much as possible. When they speak, listen to what they say, agree with them or recognise their feelings. You don't have to agree with what they are saying, but you can focus on responding to the emotions that the person is showing. For example, "That must be really upsetting" or "If that happened, I'd feel the same way".



6. Give the person a choice to help them feel like they are still in control.

For example "If you continue to be angry, I'll have to leave. If you



For example, "If you continue to be angry, I'll have to leave. If you calm down, we can find a way to help you".

If at any stage you feel like you need to leave, do so. Call the police (000) for help and take yourself and family to a safe place. This is very important to do if your way out is blocked, if the person is already too angry, unstable, fearful, or **intoxicated** to respond to you, is threatening you or others, or has a weapon.

After a violent or aggressive incident

You will have a range of feelings such as:

- Extreme Sadness
- Worry
- Shock
- Anger
- Shame

You may also feel like you have to give in to the person from now on, or avoid them, to lower the chance of another violent/aggressive incident. Don't forget that these can be common reactions to such a situation and that you might also need some support to help you. For more information on support services and where to get help, visit [What type of help is available?](#) and [When and where to get help?](#)

Tips for a Safety Plan

If you are worried about someone becoming violent or aggressive due to their use of ice, it is important to have a safety plan. Making a safety plan does not prevent a situation but it may help you to respond and get to safety faster. **Important aspects of a safety plan include:**

A list of important phone numbers in case you need to act fast. This may include:

Police, Ambulance or Fire (000)
Emergency housing and domestic violence services
Legal aid

Local hospital, clinic or mental health crisis team

Emergency medical clinics

Neighbours, friends, community elder or family who live nearby as they may be able to help to care for any children or animals.

Keep this list somewhere private, but easy to find.

Pick out or decide on a place where you can go to make a phone call without being heard.

Decide on somewhere safe where you and any loved ones can go if needed. This may be a family member's or friend's house.

Keep important documents, identification, bank details/cards and your mobile phone where you can get to them easily.

Remember if you need **emergency support**, please call **Lifeline (13 11 14)** which is a 24-hour crisis helpline or **dial '000'** for the police or an ambulance

Key Sources

This information has been adapted from the "Walking a Tightrope" pamphlet developed by NCETA and Family Drug Support. To view the full pamphlet, please click [here](#).

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