

The Drugs Wheel Game

2026 version

Instruction Manual

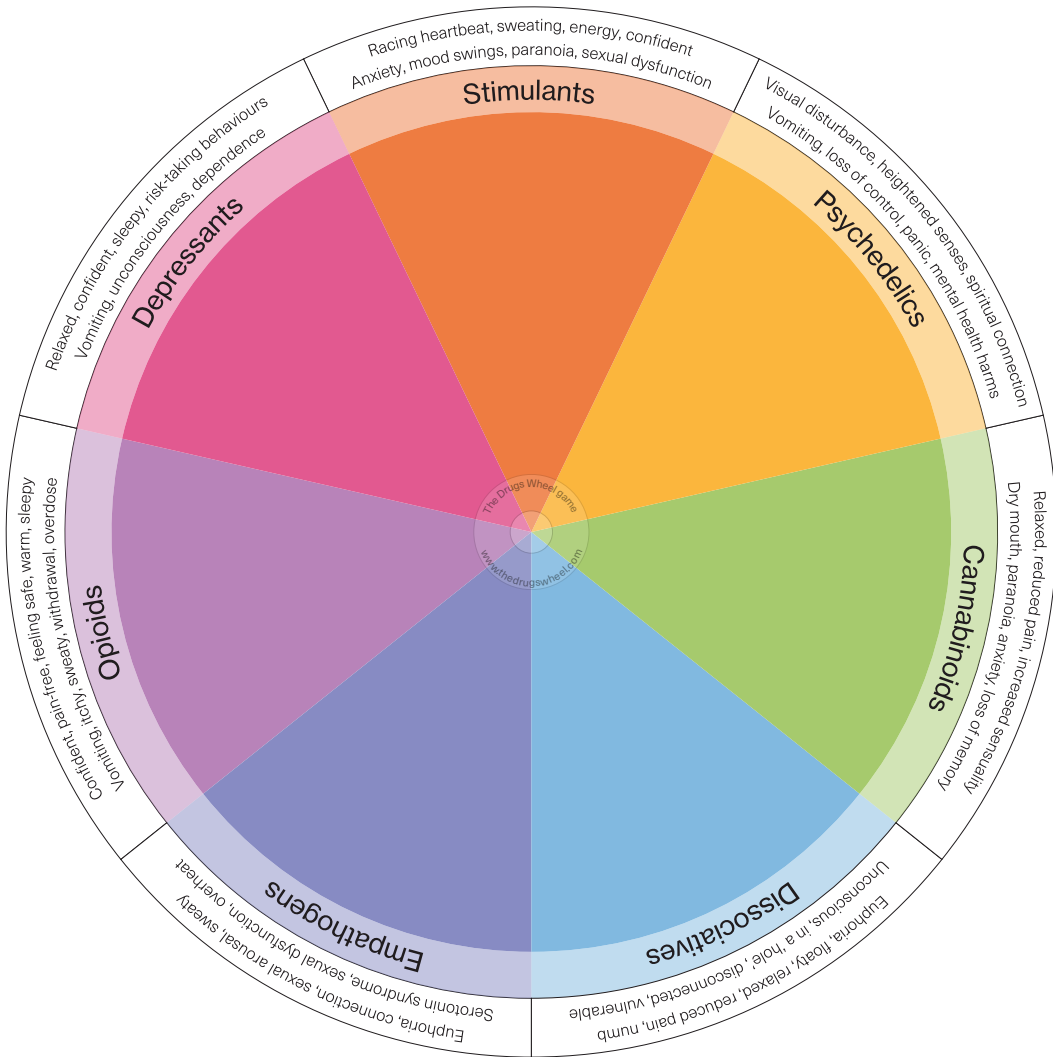


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Designed in collaboration with UK and Ireland DrugWatch:
an informal association of charities, organisations and
individuals who share an interest in establishing a robust
early warning system in the UK for all types of drugs.





The Drugs Wheel game is a free educational group activity that aims to increase awareness of different drugs and their effects.

This manual contains instructions for playing the game, and links to colour and black and white materials for you to print and cut out.

You don't have to have a printer to play the game – you might find it easier to make your own labels.

Whichever way you choose, we hope that you enjoy playing the Drugs Wheel game.

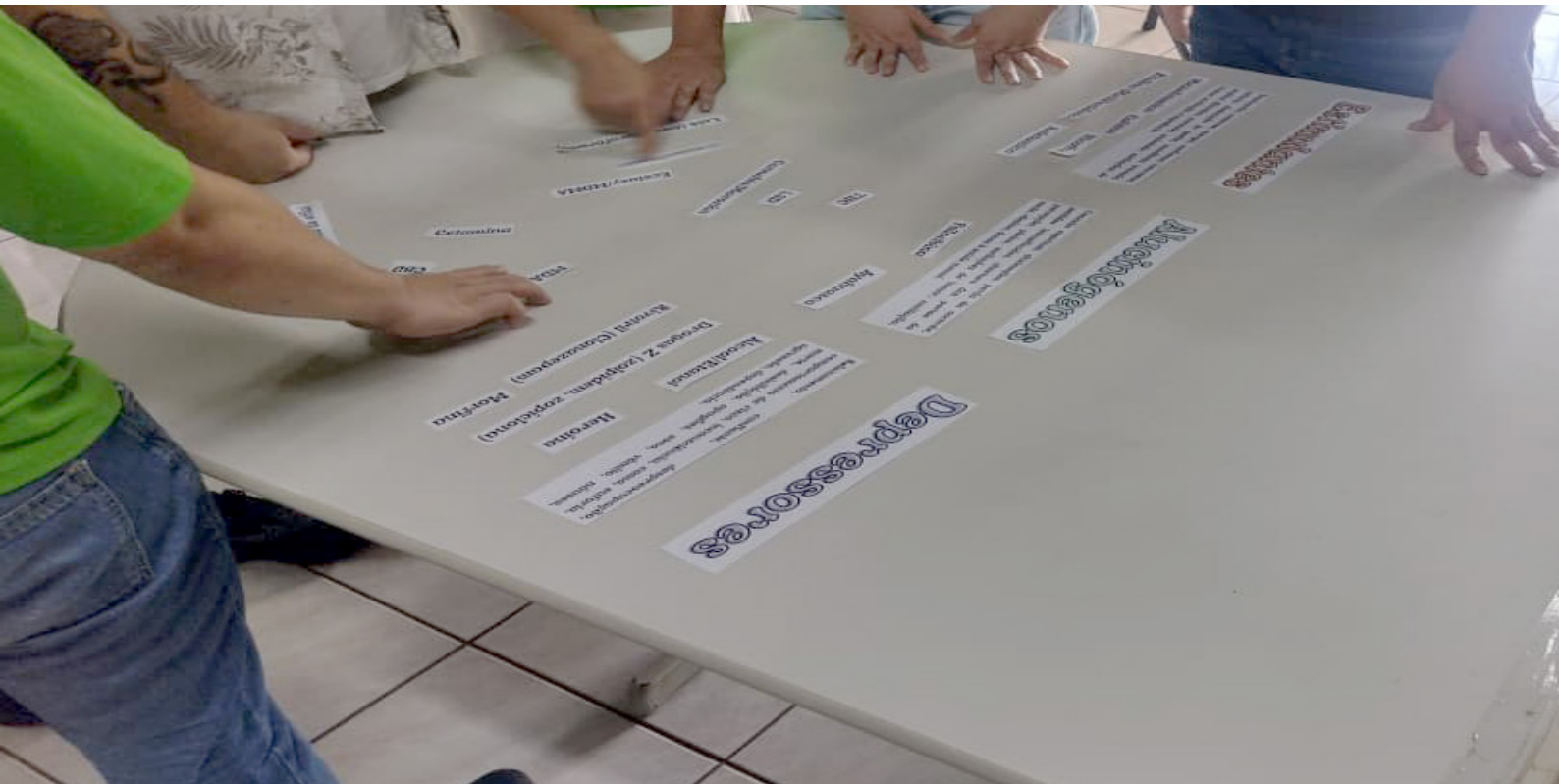
For more information, or to request a version in another language, visit:

www.thedrugswheel.com



Required materials

1. **Printed card/paper cut-outs:**
 - Traditional categories (depressants, stimulants, and hallucinogens)
 - Modern categories (psychedelics, cannabinoids, empathogens, dissociatives, and opioids)
 - Category effects
 - Drug cards (either one drug per card, or by group of drugs)
2. **Large, flat surface**
3. **Adhesive tape or putty for mounting**
3. **Timer (optional)**

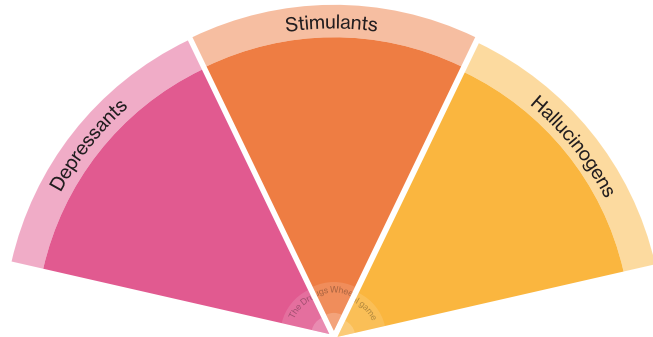


Estimated time	45 to 60 minutes
Participants	3-8 participants (single group) 6-12 participants (two groups)
Aims	To reduce harm from drug use by developing awareness of the effects of psychoactive drugs
Overview	The Drugs Wheel Game is an interactive approach to drug awareness and harm reduction. It was originally developed in 2012 as a learning tool for young people. By building on the conventional stimulant/depressant/hallucinogen model, the Drugs Wheel provides a more modern approach to drug awareness. It provides a model that can adapt to the changing landscape of drug use and availability. Using the Drugs Wheel Game helps to create rich discussions about the effects of different drugs, and allows for advice and harm reduction information to be given by category. There are links to further information on page 13.

ACTIVITY 1: TRADITIONAL CLASSIFICATION

STEP 1

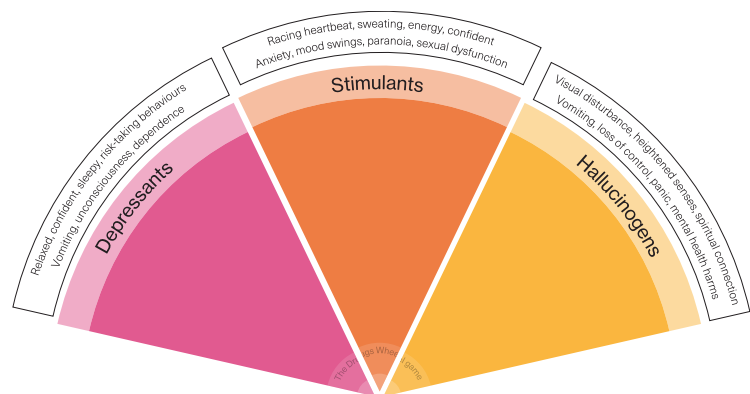
Place the three traditional categories (depressants, stimulants and hallucinogens) on the flat surface.



STEP 2

Give these three effect descriptions to the participants.

Ask participants to match each effect to the category they believe it belongs to.

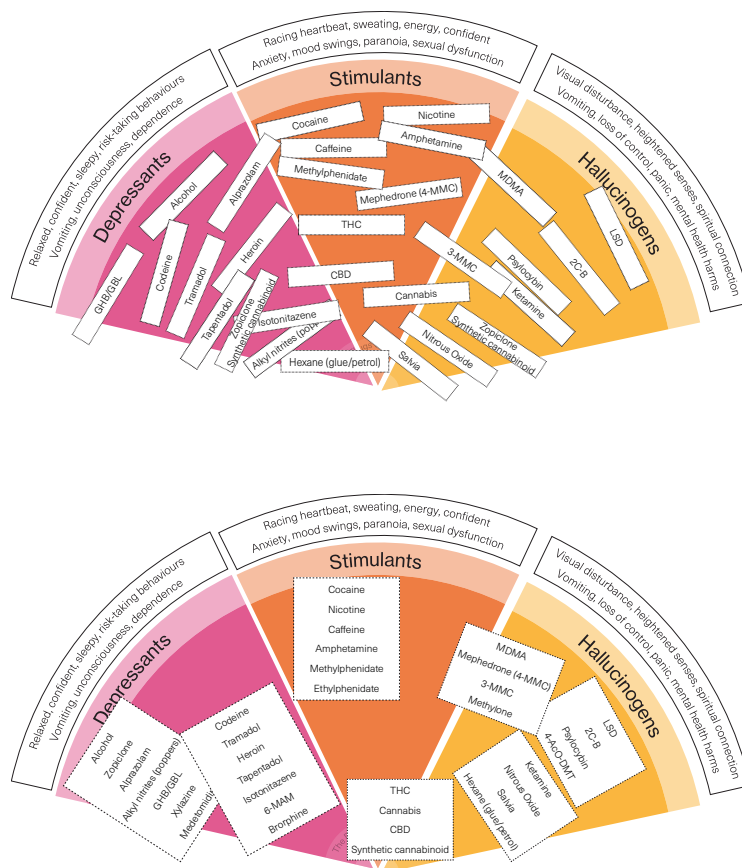


STEP 3

Hand participants the drug cards and ask them to place them into the correct category. Encourage discussion, and give information if asked.

You can place individual drugs, or grouped drugs as shown on the two images on the right.

You do not have to use all of the drug cards. With younger people for example you might use the grouped drugs, or only use a few of the drug cards.



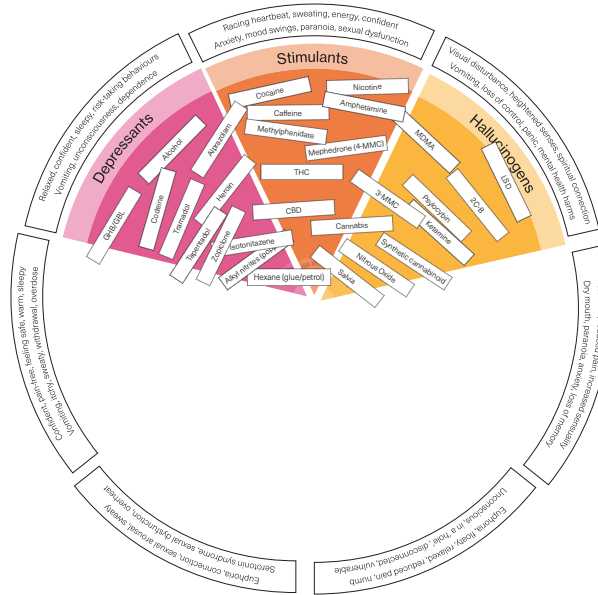
STEP 4 - GROUP DISCUSSION

As more drugs get added, not only will the categories fill up, but there might be more discussion about where certain drugs belong. For example, different forms of cannabis might fit into different categories. You might ask people whether MDMA (aka Ecstasy) go into the same category as LSD? **Remind participants that there are no right or wrong answers - the learning is in the discussion.**

ACTIVITY 2: MODERN CLASSIFICATION

STEP 1

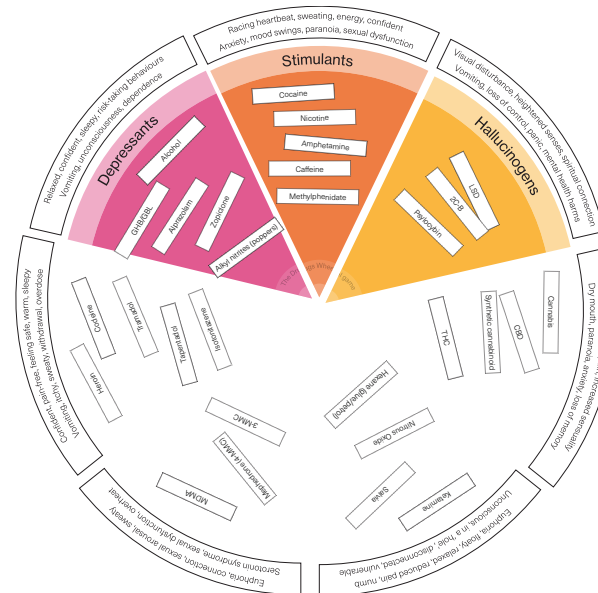
Attach the effect descriptions of the new categories (empathogens, cannabinoids, opioids and dissociatives) to the board as shown.



STEP 2

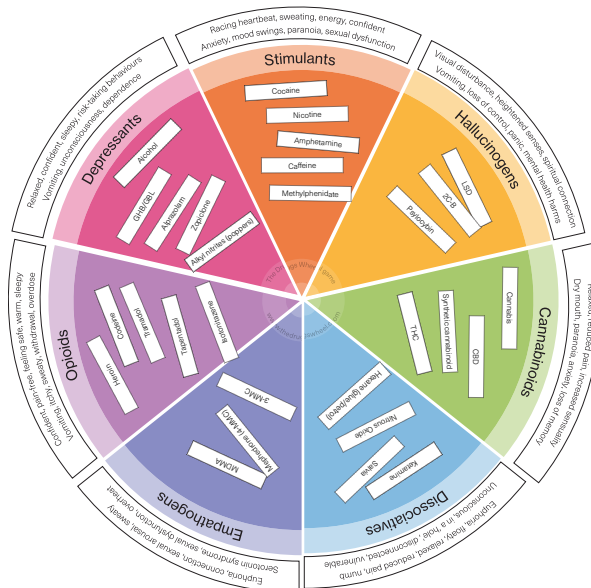
Ask someone to read out the four new effect descriptions.

Ask the group if they would like to reassign any of the drugs to any of these new categories, and to explain to the others their reasons for doing this.



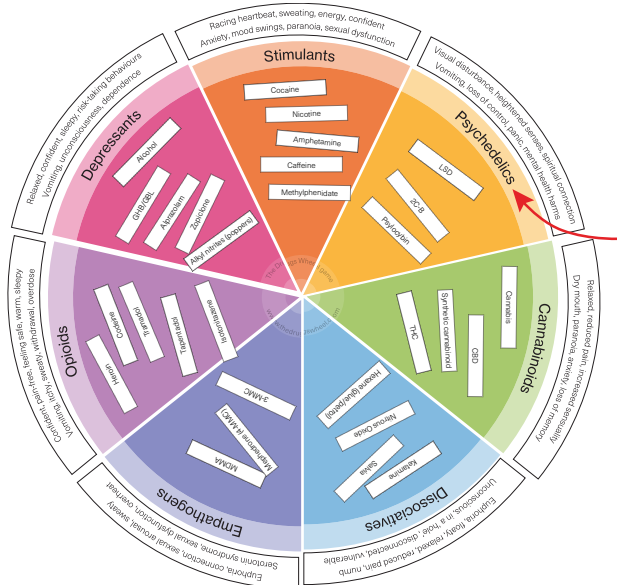
STEP 3

You can then introduce and describe the new categories of empathogens, cannabinoids, opioids and dissociatives. Participants may still want to move some more drug names around.



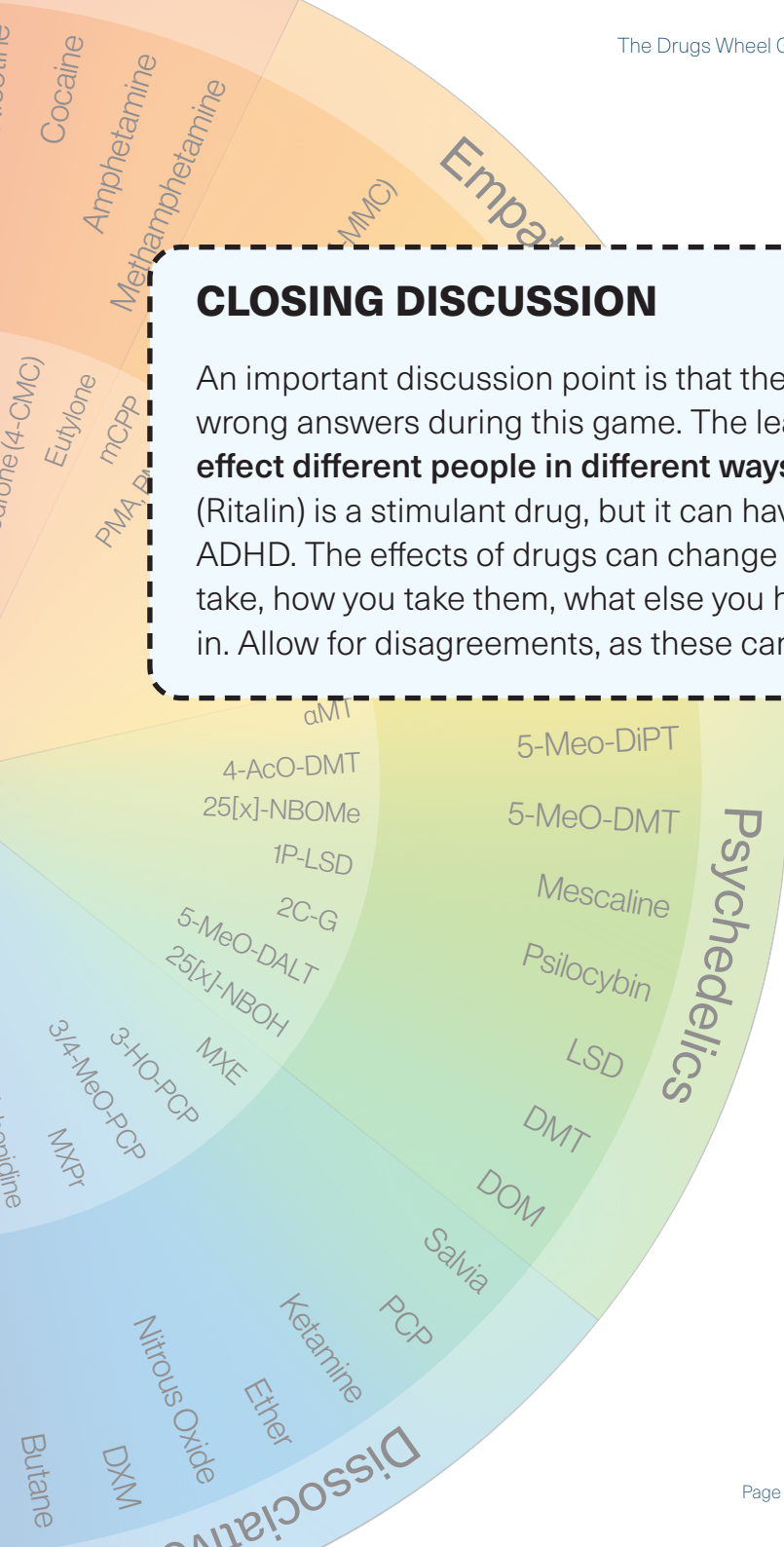
STEP 4

The last step is to replace the 'hallucinogens' category with 'psychedelics'. Many drugs cause visual disturbances which are easily recognised as an effect of the drug, making the term 'hallucinogen' misleading.



CLOSING DISCUSSION

An important discussion point is that there ultimately aren't any right or wrong answers during this game. The learning point is that **drugs can effect different people in different ways**. For example Methylphenidate (Ritalin) is a stimulant drug, but it can have different effects on people with ADHD. The effects of drugs can change a lot depending on how much you take, how you take them, what else you have taken, and the setting you are in. Allow for disagreements, as these can lead to interesting discussions.



DOWNLOAD GAME MATERIALS

The game materials are set up for colour or black-and white printing at A4 size. They can also be printed out at a larger size without loss of quality, by scaling up your print settings.

Print the materials on black and white or colour printers – ideally on heavier paper or card – and cut out with scissors.

There are two versions to choose from: Drugs Wheel segments (which will take a little more time to cut out) and easy-to-cut rectangles.



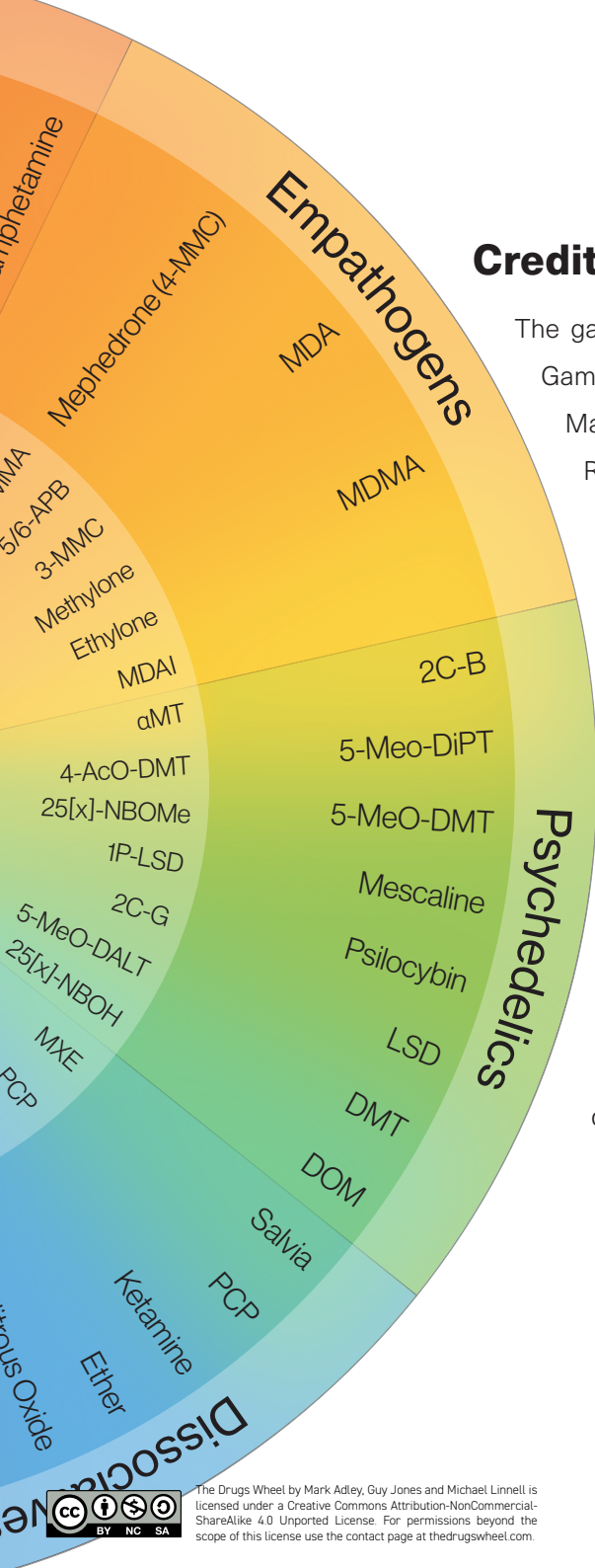


Photo: Daphne Formigoni, Prof. Dr. Marcelo Tadeu Marin, collaborators from PEnsAD, and staff from CAPS-AD Araraquara-SP in Brazil.

The gameplay for this revised version of the Drugs Wheel Game was designed by pharmacist and postgraduate student **Daphne Formigoni** and her supervisor, pharmacist and **Professor Marcelo Tadeu Marin**, from the Academic League for Research and Teaching on Alcohol and other Drugs, PEnsAD (@pensad_unesp) and the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences of **São Paulo State University** in Araraquara, Brazil. This version of the game was piloted with university students and then applied for the first time at the **Psychosocial Care Center - Alcohol and other Drugs (CAPS-AD)** in Araraquara. Daphne then collaborated with **Mark Adley** on the gameplay, with Mark creating the design elements and instructions and **Michael Linnell** and **Guy Jones** providing psychoactive oversight.

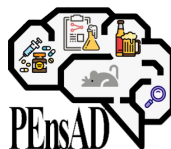
Links to more information

Name	Links	Information and advice
CNWL Club Drug Clinic	https://clubdrugclinic.cnwl.nhs.uk/club-drugs	Information on Club drugs
Controlling Chemsex	https://controllingchemsex.com/tips-and-information/information/first-aid	Chemsex first aid, legal implications, advice, information and peer support
Crew	https://www.crew.scot/drugs-information/	Drugs A-Z
Drug Science	https://www.drugscience.org.uk/drug-information	Detailed, evidence-based information on drugs and their properties, applications, effects and risks.
drugs and me	https://www.drugsand.me/drugs https://www.drugsand.me/tools/interactions	Drugs information Check how pairs of drugs interact when consumed
DrugWatch	https://michaellinnell.org.uk/drugwatch.html https://michaellinnell.org.uk/resources/downloads/DrugWatchOD_Emergency_1_0.pdf	Drug information sheets Overdose & Emergencies information
LGBTHero	https://www.lgbthero.org.uk/pages/category/safer-chems	Chemsex harm reduction
The Loop	https://wearetheloop.org/setsetting https://wearetheloop.org/training	Information on the influence of set and setting on psychoactive experiences Training packages
Project NEPTUNE	https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/24292/1/NEPTUNE-Guidance_on_clinical_management_of_club_drugs_and_novel Psychoactive_substances.pdf https://elearninghub.rcpsych.ac.uk/catalog?pagename=neptune	Guidance on the Clinical Management of Acute and Chronic Harms of Club Drugs and Novel Psychoactive Substances Training modules for front-line clinicians and practitioners
Release	https://www.release.org.uk/drugs-health-advice	Harm reduction and legal advice
Re-Solv	https://www.re-solv.org/volatile-substance-abuse/	Information on solvents, including butane and glues
THT	https://www.chemsex.co.uk/chems	Chemsex and medication interactions
Tripsit	https://combo.tripsit.me/ https://tripsit.me/factsheets https://benzos.tripsit.me/	Drug combination reference guide Drug information sheets Benzodiazepine dosage converter
Wedinos	https://www.wedinos.org/ https://www.wedinos.org/subinfo.php https://www.wedinos.org/harm-reduction-advice	Collecting, testing, and informing Drug information search tool Overview of harm reduction principles



Credits

The gameplay for this revised version of the Drugs Wheel Game was designed by Daphne Formigoni and Professor Marcelo Tadeu Marin from the Academic League for Research and Teaching on Alcohol and other Drugs (PEnsAD) and the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences of São Paulo State University in Araraquara, Brazil.



Mark Adley revised and created gameplay and design elements, with psychoactive oversight by Michael Linnell and Guy Jones.

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