



Mind-body practices for Party and Play (PnP) by two-spirit gay, bisexual, trans, and queer men (2SGBTQ)

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ABOUT THIS FACTSHEET

This factsheet is about holistic self-care for two-spirit, gay, bisexual, trans and queer men (2SGBTQ) who PnP. It provides practical information on how substances used during party n' play (PnP) impact the body and mind and includes self-care strategies and resources.

What is Self-Care?

Self-care involves regular activities and habits that people adopt to promote their physical, mental, emotional, sexual, and spiritual health.¹ All of these parts of our self are interconnected. **Emotional health** is how we feel, think, our sense of well-being, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-worth and ability to cope with life experiences, events, and the ebb and flow of positive and negative emotions which affect our **mental health** are key factors in PnP experiences.²⁻⁵ The interplay of mental and emotional states affects both our physical and sexual health.

In two-spirit, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer men (2SGBTQ), historical persecution, trauma, and internalized homo/bi/transphobia can significantly impact their well-being.⁶ As such, self-care and self-awareness are crucial. Practicing self-care means dedicating time to activities that boost our overall well-being, which can be particularly helpful in managing mental and emotional health during and after PnP experiences.

Understanding How PnP Drugs May Affect Your Body

When engaging in PnP, certain drugs stimulate (e.g. crystal methamphetamine) or depress (e.g. GHB) the sympathetic and parasympathetic parts of the **autonomic nervous system**, creating a cascading effect in the body. It can affect breathing and blood flow, increases or decreases appetite, alters mental and emotional states, and increases the levels of dopamine, serotonin and other neurotransmitters in the physical body.⁷

This diagram demonstrates what effects each system can have on the different parts of the body.

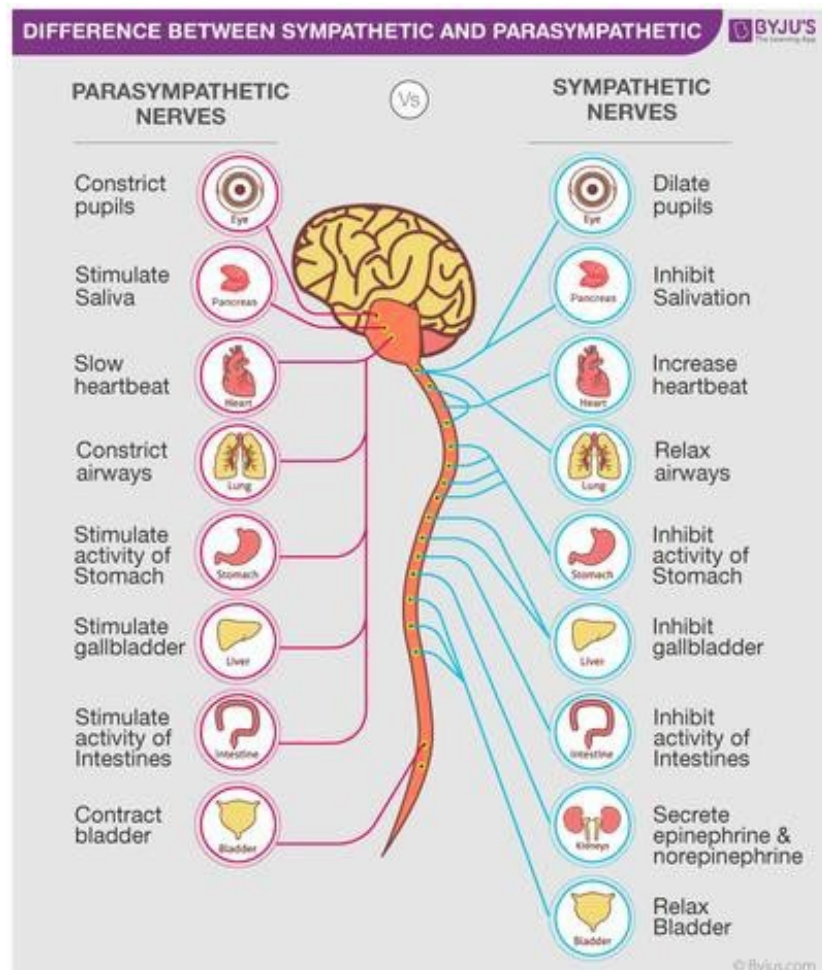


Figure 1: Difference between sympathetic and parasympathetic nerves⁸

Short-Term Effects of PnP on the Nervous System^{7,9}

Dopamine and serotonin release

These chemicals create feelings of euphoria, confidence, and increased sexual drive. However, this can also impair judgment and lead to unsafe behaviours.

Heightened alertness and sensory perception

Users may feel more aware, focused, and experience enhanced physical sensations.

Increased heart rate and blood pressure

Stimulants like methamphetamine speed up the heart, causing elevated blood pressure. This can feel like a "rush" or boost in stamina during activities.

Reduced appetite

Energy is redirected from digestion, suppressing hunger cues.

Impaired digestion

Users may experience gastrointestinal discomfort or notice their body is less able to process food.

Difficulty relaxing

The body remains active, and heightened, making it harder to rest after partying.



The **long-term effects** of PnP vary. Prolonged use can lead to significant health risks, such as cardiovascular problems, respiratory issues, increased exposure to STIs, psychosis severe dental issues, anxiety, depression and cognitive impairment.⁷ **Through self-care and safe PnP practices, users can reduce their vulnerability to these negative short and long-term effects.** If individuals are experiencing long-term effects from party n' play and substance use, extended periods of abstinence have been shown to reverse the majority of psychological and physical damage caused.⁷

Gut Microbiome in Sexual Health and Well-Being

The **gut microbiome** is a group of trillions of organisms, including archaea (organisms that live in our gut), bacteria and viruses that live in our digestive system. These microorganisms play a crucial role in our health by influencing parts of your body such as your immune system and brain.¹⁰

The gut microbiome also plays a key role in sexual health. It can influence sexual arousal and sexual response through chemicals like dopamine, serotonin, and nitric oxide.¹¹ An imbalance in the microbiome can contribute to sexual dysfunction, including anal pain, inflammation, and pelvic muscle issues.¹¹ The vagus nerve connects the brain and digestive system, forming what is known as the **gut-brain axis**. The gut-brain axis highlights the connection between gut health and emotional states.¹² Maintaining a balanced microbiome is crucial for overall well-being and may improve sexual health outcomes, especially in the context of anal sex. Bottoming can alter both the gut and oral microbiome, however, this is just one factor; diet, lifestyle, medications, and social conditions (such as experiencing discrimination) can also play a role.¹¹

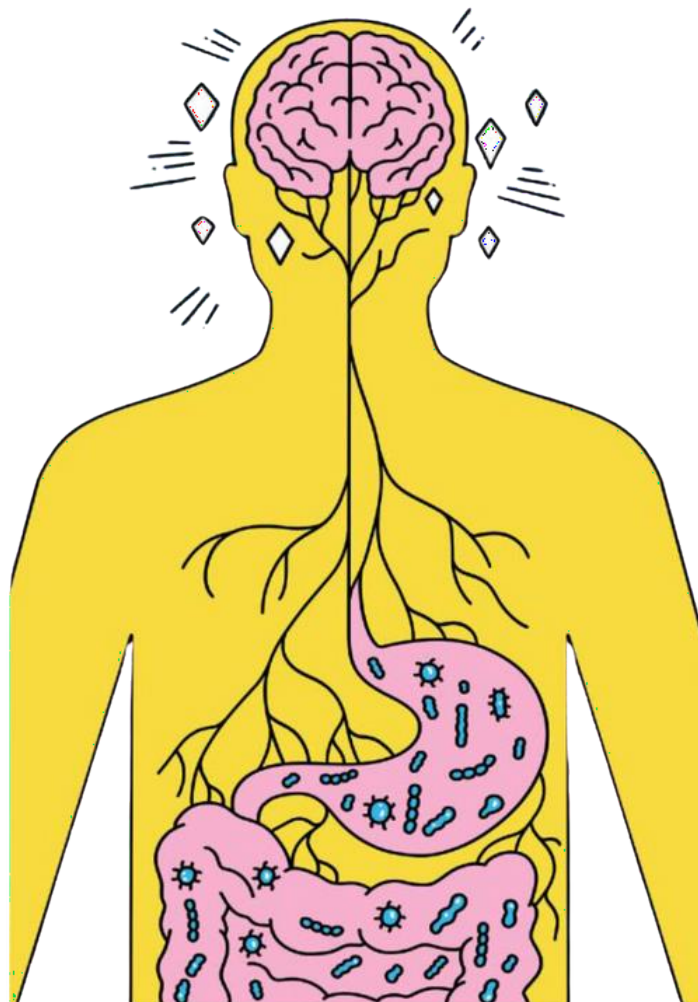


Figure 2: Exploring the Link Between Gut and Brain Health¹³

Hydrate Your Body

Staying hydrated is essential for one's overall well-being before, during and after partying. Water is crucial for maintaining bodily functions, supporting muscle activity, and regulating body temperature. While water should be your primary choice, electrolyte-rich beverages like **Gatorade™** or Gatorade powder (**we suggest the low or no sugar varieties**) and **coconut water** can also help replenish essential minerals lost through sweat.¹⁴

Nourish Your Body and Mind

Eating a balanced diet has lasting benefits for both physical health and mental well-being. Research shows that healthy dietary choices, like the Mediterranean diet, which is rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins, and avoiding foods that cause inflammation may help lower the risk of feeling depression or developing depression.^{15,16}

A diet high in fiber, healthy fats, and beneficial plant substances can help good gut bacteria thrive, breaking down food into helpful substances like short-chain fatty acids that reduce inflammation.^{17,18} Beyond what you eat, the mindful practices of cooking, grocery shopping, and sharing meals with others can greatly enhance mental health.¹⁹⁻²¹ These activities foster a sense of connection, boosting emotional resilience and promoting mental clarity.

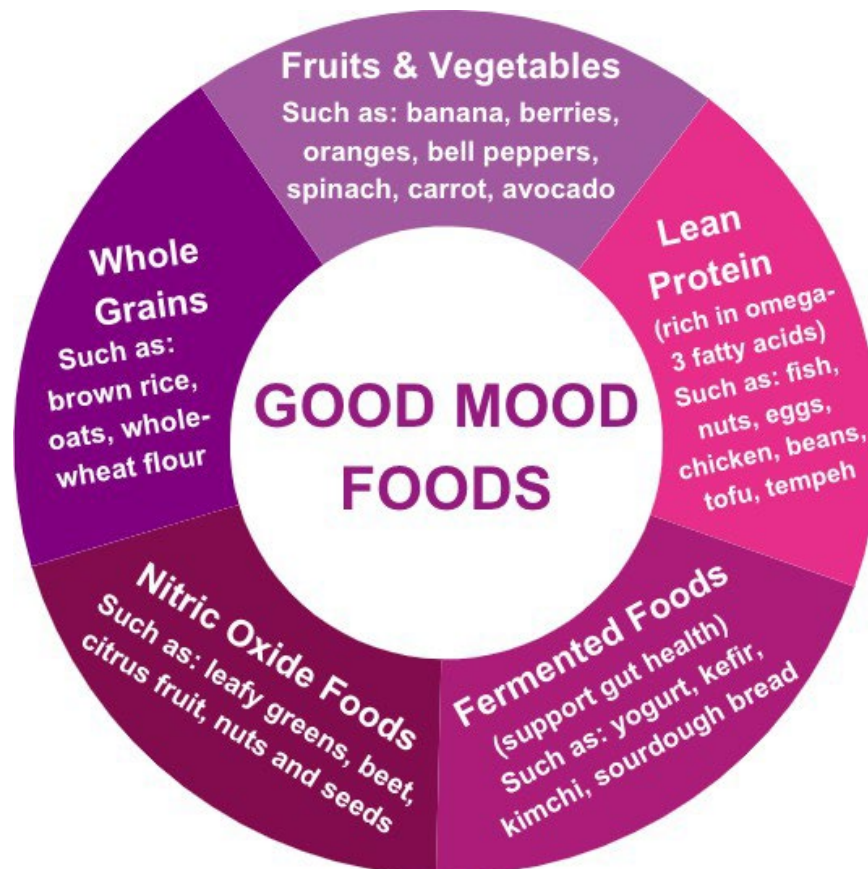


Figure 3: Foods that can improve Mood, Health and Overall Wellbeing.²²⁻²⁸

Mindfulness Practices

Mindfulness practices are crucial throughout the PnP experience. By staying present and aware, one can better manage their emotions and make more informed and safer choices.²⁹ Mindfulness encourages a deeper connection with oneself and others, enhancing the overall experience of connection while partying, leading to more meaningful and enjoyable interactions. Mindfulness may also reduce the likelihood of a negative PnP experience. Integrating mindfulness into your PnP sessions allows one to enjoy the moment fully and responsibly while fostering a positive and supportive environment.³¹

The vagus nerve plays a vital role in the parasympathetic nervous system, which controls 'rest and digest' functions.³² This nerve connects the brain to various organs, including the heart, lungs, and digestive tract, and is essential in regulating stress and anxiety.³² Trauma can impact the vagus nerve, affecting its ability to maintain calm and control. Starting at the medulla oblongata in the brainstem and traveling down to the abdomen, the vagus nerve can be stimulated through different types of breathing exercises.³³⁻³⁵ These exercises increase nitric oxide levels in the body, helping to calm the body and reduce stress.

Practice breathing and relaxing

A range of breathing and relaxation techniques can be beneficial during PnP, as well as for managing downtime and enhancing mind-body awareness.³⁶ Practicing mindfulness and relaxation is a skill and as with any skill it requires effort and ongoing practice.

Benefits include: ³⁷

- Reduced insomnia
- Lower stress
- Decreased anxiety
- Improved mood
- Enhanced sense of well-being

Additionally, it helps manage cravings, and boosts both mental and physical energy.

For video demos and free apps, please see 'Resources' page.



Figure 4: Five Breathing Techniques for Calmness.³⁸

Safer Practices:

- **Start PrEP to lower HIV risk**³⁹
- **Avoid Partying Alone**
- **Use Protection:** Try always to use condoms and change them between partners to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs)⁴⁰
- **Set Boundaries:** Establish clear boundaries and safe words with partner(s) before engaging in PnP⁴¹
- **Doxy PEP after PnP to prevent STIs**^{42,43}

Coping strategies after a PnP session:

Build a Support Network: Surround yourself with supportive friends, family, or join a support group. Having people who understand your journey can provide emotional support and accountability

Therapy and Counseling: Engage in therapy, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). Therapy can help you understand your motivations for partying, your decision-making process and help you manage the triggers that can lead to negative experiences before, during or after the party

Avoid Triggers: Identify the emotions and thoughts and avoid situations, places, or people that may trigger unwanted experiences of PnP, like partying when you don't intend to. Sometimes, avoiding triggers may include changing or choosing different social circles, social or finding new interests and hobbies.

Professional Help: Consider seeking help from peer support workers, counsellors, mental health or addiction specialists who can provide tailored treatment plans and medical support that meet you where you are at.

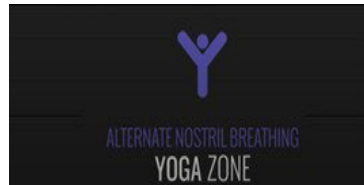
For more mental health resources and free apps, please see the next page.

Resources

Breathing Videos Demos

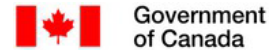


[Box Breathing](#) | [Diaphragmatic Breathing](#) | [Lion's Breath](#) | [4-7-8 Breathing](#) |



[Alternating Nostril Breathing](#)

Professional Help Services



[Toronto Community Crisis Service](#) | [CAMH: Rainbow Services](#) | [Help with Substance Use](#)
[Canadian Mental Health Association Toronto](#) | [Mental Health Support](#) |
[CAMH Mindfulness Programs](#)

Meal Planning & Budgeting Apps

 [Mealime](#) |  [My Fridge Food](#) |  [Yummly](#)

Relaxation and Mindfulness Apps

 [Healthy Minds App](#) |  [Medito App](#) |  [UCLA Mindful App](#) |

 [Insight Timer App](#) |  [Smiling Minds App](#)

Addiction and Recovery Support Apps



[Nomo Sobriety Clock App](#) | [Recovery Path App](#)

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