

Kids & Substance Abuse

Prevention Basics

Joyce Bracey
Executive Director
CADA Prevention & Recovery Center
New Orleans, LA
jbracey@cadagno.org

Nichole Dawsey
Executive Director
National Council on Alcoholism
and Drug Abuse--St. Louis Area
St. Louis, MO
Ndawsey@ncada-stl.org



The Facts...

- Each year, 4,358 young people die in alcohol-related deaths as a result of underage drinking (car crashes, homicides, alcohol poisoning, falls, burns, drowning and suicides)
- People ages 12-20 drink 11 percent of all alcohol consumed in the U.S.
- Kids ages 11-14 see approximately 1,000 alcohol ads a year.
- People who start drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to meet the criteria for alcohol dependence at some point in their lives.



Why do teens use drugs?

To feel good

Drugs act on the brain's reward pathway and produce a euphoric feeling in the user
This initial euphoria can be followed by feelings of increased alertness, confidence, satisfaction, or relaxation, for example, depending on the drug

To feel better

Drugs are often used in an attempt to relieve stress, to escape negative feelings
Stress is a key factor in every stage of addiction and recovery

To do better

Drug use to increase productivity, boost physical and cognitive performance
Examples: steroids, stimulants, etc.

Curiosity, others are doing it

Adolescents want to feel a sense of belonging, social acceptance
They may not have the necessary skills and confidence for resisting peer pressure



Drugs & The Brain

As the individual continues to use, the brain adapts

- Produces less dopamine
- Reduces the number of available dopamine receptors

The individual is less likely to enjoy the drugs and no longer finds enjoyment natural rewards (e.g., time spent with family and friends, hobbies, etc.).

This leads to the individual using larger amounts of the drug, more frequently, in an attempt to feel pleasure (*tolerance*).



The Adolescent Brain...

Adolescent brain development involves gaps in physiological and psychological maturity

The Limbic System – the area that controls emotions, response to fear and anxiety – matures early in adolescence; this region is associated with hormones and processes that trigger puberty

The Frontal Cortex – the area that governs judgment, decision-making, and behavioral regulation – develops gradually, into late 20's

Result: adolescents have emotions and behavioral drive, but lack the sufficient ability to regulate behavior and respond appropriately to impulses

They have the accelerator, but lack the brakes...



Addiction is passed down in families by nature and nurture.

Addiction is in our DNA, but it can still be prevented.



“Prevention”...

- refers to the strategies & processes that reduce, delay, or eliminate the probability of developing mental or behavioral health disorders
- acts as an inoculation against mental and behavioral health problems



Risk & Protective Factors

{ The goal of any prevention program is to reduce
{ risk factors, and enhance protective factors.



Community Risk Factors...

- **Availability of drugs**
 - Perceived availability increases risk, regardless of accuracy
- **Community laws and norms favorable toward drug use**
 - Rates of taxation, laws, and policies
 - Acceptance, expectations, and conflicting messages from key institutions
- **Transitions and mobility**
 - Elementary School to Middle School to High School
 - Instability of school and/or placement (year-to-year; within household)
 - Unscheduled, sudden transitions and frequent moves
- **Low neighborhood attachment and community disorganization**
- **Extreme economic deprivation**



Family/Home Risk Factors...

- **Family history of substance abuse**
 - Behavioral modeling (e.g., caregivers use when stressed or sad)
- **Family management problems**
 - Lack of clear expectations for behavior
 - Lack of caregiver supervision
 - Excessively severe punishment or inconsistent punishment
- **Family conflict**
 - Children raised in homes where there is persistent, serious conflict between primary caregivers and/or caregivers and children, are at increased risk
- **Parental/Caregiver attitudes and involvement in drug use**
 - Caregivers approving/tolerating/supervising moderate drinking
 - Caregivers involving children in their own use (e.g., asking child to grab a beer from the fridge)

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School Risk Factors...

- **Early and persistent antisocial behavior**
 - Aggressive children who also display behaviors like isolation or withdrawal and/or meet criteria for ADHD, are especially at risk
 - Also includes persistent antisocial behavior in early adolescence
- **Academic failure beginning in elementary school**
- **Lack of commitment to school**
 - Young person no longer sees their role of student as viable



Individual/Peer Risk Factors...

- **Alienation/Rebelliousness**
- **Friends who engage in drug use**
 - Even for young people who don't experience other risk factors, this risk factor alone is a key predictor
 - Youth who don't experience other risk factors are less likely to associate with peers who abuse drugs
- **Favorable attitude toward drug use**
 - Between elementary and middle school, a shift in attitudes may occur and youth may become more accepting of use and individuals that use
- **Early initiation of drug use**
 - The earlier people begin using, the more likely their use will contribute to substance use disorders later in life (4 times more likely to develop addiction if first use is before age 15)
- **Constitutional factors**
 - Factors that may have a biological or physiological basis – behavioral patterns present before initiation
- 12 • Examples: sensation-seeking behaviors, low harm-avoidance and lack of impulse control



Protective Factors...

- are conditions or attributes in individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that, when present, mitigate or eliminate risk in families and communities
- increase the health and well-being of children and families
- help parents or caregivers to find resources, supports, or coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively, even under stress

{for example: educational systems are effective, parents/caregivers are supportive, home life is stable, pro-social bonds are in place, etc.}



YOU
ARE
A
PROTECTIVE
FACTOR.

One person can make the difference.



What Can You Say?

{ Prevention Conversations for Every Age



At Every Age

- Ask open-ended questions and use active listening.
- Don't lecture.
- Be positive and open-minded.
- Be compassionate and empathetic.
- Model abstinence or responsible use of alcohol.
- Talk about what the child sees, hears and is exposed to with regard to substances.
- Never provide alcohol or drugs to children or teens.
- Foster open communication.
- Build the child's self-esteem.
- Encourage engagement in extra-curricular activities that the child enjoys.
- Stay engaged with the child's peers.
- Work together to establish rules and consequences for breaking them.
- Be very clear that you disapprove of their using alcohol or other drugs.



2 - 4 Years-Old

- Discuss the importance of taking good care of our bodies, so they can run and jump and play.
- Celebrate decision-making (choosing their own outfits, etc.).
- Help the child break chores and tasks down into manageable steps so they can learn to make plans.
- Daily Vitamins are good for you, but too many can make you sick, and you should only take medicine that your trusted adult gives you.
- You should only take medicine from bottles that have your name on it.
- Help them come up with their own solutions to problems they face (blocks falling, etc.).
- Point out dangerous chemicals in the home that are to be avoided (bleach, etc.)
- Discuss how violence or bad decisions can hurt people.
- Talk about the dangers of smoking and how sometimes adults make decisions that are bad for them.



5 - 8 Years-Old

- Reinforce lessons from earlier childhood (decision-making, avoiding medicine that's for other people, etc.)
- Celebrate individuality and unique aspects of child's personality.
- Ask questions about what they've heard about drugs and alcohol and how they feel about it.
- Work on problem solving (ex. help them find long-lasting solutions to a fight with a friend)
- Point out that quick fixes are not long-term solutions.
- Give kids the power to escape from situations that make them feel bad.
- Let them know that they don't need to stick with friends who don't support them.



9 - 12 Years-Old

- Establish clear & consistent rules and consequences about breaking the rules, so that when the potential for substance use comes into play, they know that you follow through.
- Keep them busy with activities they love.
- Give them scripts for saying “no” to smoking, drinking and drugs (ex. “My foster Mom drug tests me.”)
- Introduce the “throw-up” out- but never with “no questions asked”.
- Middle school is a very hard age when lots of insecurities creep up. Do what you can to enhance self esteem. Compliment progress, not perfection.
- Send the message “Don’t think that there’s anything that I can’t handle or that there’s anything you can’t talk to me about.” – and demonstrate it.
- Focus more on short-term consequences of substance use- yellow teeth and bad breath vs. lung cancer because kids are more present-focused



13 - 18 Years-Old

- Kids who are not regularly monitored by parents/caregivers are 4 times more likely to use substances.
- Reinforce the fact that most teenagers don't smoke, drink or do drugs.
- Use positive reinforcement. Don't react to every minor, negative thing they do, to try and maintain a positive relationship.
- Demonstrate an interest in their daily ups and downs to earn their trust.
- Learn about how addiction works and its effects and teach them about it.
- Help them assess their risk for addiction.
- Get them to talk about their future and their goals and how drugs would interfere.
- Be compassionate. These are tough years, but emphasize that coping with drugs or alcohol will only compound problems.
- If they do use, stay calm and don't get overly emotional. Emphasize the importance of honesty in the conversation and get information about their experiences with

20 substance use.



Signs & Symptoms of Drug Use

- **Physical Signs**
 - Changes in eating or sleeping habits
 - Poor physical coordination
 - Red, watery eyes
 - Pupils larger or smaller than usual
 - Flushed, pale or puffy face
 - Smell of drug on breath, body or clothes
 - Nausea, vomiting
 - Chronic runny nose or coughing
 - Shaking hands
 - Extreme fatigue
 - Weight loss or gain



Signs & Symptoms of Drug Use

- **Behavioral Signs**

- Changes in attitude, personality or values
- Changes in friends
- Loss of interest in hobbies, activities
- Giddiness/silliness
- Change of habits
- Difficulty paying attention
- Moodiness
- Unusual secretiveness or reclusiveness
- Changes in school performance
- Careless with grooming and hygiene
- Withdrawal from family and former friends



What if they are using?

- Don't overreact or act overly emotional. Be firm and clear.
- If it is just experimentation, use same conversation strategies as with prevention.
- Seek a professional substance abuse assessment to determine severity of problem if they are past experimental phase.
- Severity of substance abuse is defined through examination of the negative impact the use is having on one's life.
- If treatment is needed:
 - Elicit change talk
 - Use incentives
 - Use leverage as a last resort
 - If they won't go, follow through with leverage promises and encourage harm reduction



Get personalized support from Partnership for
Drug-Free Kids

[1-855-378-4373](tel:1-855-378-4373)



Resources & Citations

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
 - www.samhsa.gov
 - SAMHSA Treatment Referral Line
 - 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
 - Suicide Prevention Hotline
 - 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Moyer Foundation/Claudia Black
- National Association for Children of Alcoholics
- Partnership for Drug-Free Kids
 - www.DrugFree.org
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
 - www.drugabuse.gov
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism (NIAAA)
 - www.niaaa.nih.gov

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Facing Addiction
with NCADD

Cigna Behavioral Health Awareness

If you are a Cigna customer and have questions about Substance Use treatment or about your benefits and how to use them, please contact:

Chantelle Hoogland – 888.244.6293 x 329159

Lisa Osborne – 770.779.2023