



An Opioid and Other Drug Prevention Guide

For Mentors



Why are we designing this guide?

Our country is in the midst of an addiction epidemic. From May 2019-May 2020, there were over 81,000 drug overdose deaths in the United States. Roughly 2/3rds of these deaths involved an opioid such as heroin, fentanyl, or carfentanil. Few communities have been spared. There are many reasons for how we got to this place, but the fact remains that a lot of change needs to happen to help those already suffering and to prevent future suffering. Some of the efforts being undertaken today include: ¹

- improving access to treatment and recovery services
- promoting use of overdose-reversing drugs
- strengthening our understanding of the epidemic through better public health surveillance
- providing support for cutting-edge research on pain and addiction
- advancing better practices for pain management and prescribing
- and of course, PREVENTION!

Preventing addiction, or substance use disorder, is easier and more cost effective than treating someone once they have developed it. We know what it takes, but it is hard and requires everyone working together- youth, parents, schools, communities, and YOU-to make it happen. Through reading this guide, we hope you will learn more about the risk and protective factors for youth substance use and the role you can play in helping your mentee live a life free from addiction.

The Role of the Mentor in Substance Use Prevention

As a Big Brother or Big Sister, you are in a unique and powerful position to guide your Little towards healthy choices in their youth and instill advice, guidance, and values that will impact them well into adulthood.

Time and again studies show that the presence of caring adult relationships outside of the home are a critical protective factor in the lives of children and teens. No matter how much hardship and adversity a young person might face, a strong adult role model who is there for them makes all the difference.

When it comes to drug prevention, conversations early and often with trusted adults are critical. This world is more complicated than ever, and young people need the modeling of responsible adults to help them navigate the challenges they will face. Through this guide, we hope to provide you with education, tools and resources to increase your confidence in addressing the topic of drug use with your mentee.

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The WHYs

Why do many teens choose NOT to use?

True or false? Teen drug use is at an all-time high. This answer is false! Many teens today are steering clear of drug and alcohol use. Those who don't use often point to the following reasons:

- They don't want to disappoint important adults in their lives
- They have goals they want to achieve, and drugs could mess it up
- They are really into school, sports or other hobbies
- They are afraid of the health effects (smart!)
- They don't want to get in trouble
- They have known someone with a drug problem, and they don't want to go there
- They don't want to lose control
- It costs too much money
- They just don't want to!

Social Norms

Most young people overestimate how many of their peers are using substances. You can help to reduce pressures they feel by pointing out this common misconception and emphasizing that most teens are actually not using.

These are just a few of the reasons. We need to celebrate the young people who are making the wise and sometimes hard choice to resist alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. It is completely normal to be drug-free in middle school and high school. Research on social norms shows us that most young people overestimate the rate of risky behavior among their peers. Most teens who are polled will say that "everyone" drinks and uses marijuana. It is an incorrect assumption based on who is getting the most attention. Congratulate those who are not using, normalize non-use and help support them in achieving their important goals.

Why do SOME teens use?

There are so many reasons why some young people make the decision to use substances. Usually, an adolescent who begins experimenting with substances will start with nicotine, alcohol, or marijuana. Their use might be out of curiosity or a desire to fit in with certain peers. Once they try the drug, they will learn about how it affects them. Maybe they will take a hit of a vape and it will make them dizzy and nauseous and they will hate it. Someone else may love the dizzy feeling and the bonding experience with friends. A shy teen who takes their first drink of alcohol might learn that alcohol helps them open up. Someone else might hate the feeling of not being in control of themselves once the effects of alcohol kick in. Marijuana use might make one teen paranoid and anxious while having the opposite effect on another. Opioids might make one person tired and another energized. We are all different. While there are several reasons why someone might try a drug for the first time, there are even more reasons why a person might continue to use and risk a plethora of negative consequences.

Drugs can be tools with many functions:

- Relaxation & pleasure
- Socialization
- Avoidance of emotional pain
- A way to forget about problems
- Satisfy curiosity
- Avoid alienation
- Find excitement
- Be better at something
- Feel like part of the crowd
- Help to go to sleep or wake up
- Cope with failure
- Relieve boredom
- Rebel



Adolescence is all about learning. Not just academic learning, but also learning about who you are and how you cope with the challenges of life. We all need many tools for coping with stress and challenges- techniques like taking a deep breath when overwhelmed, talking to a trusted person about problems, managing our time well, engaging in a hobby, listening to music, and more. When a teen begins to experiment with drugs and alcohol, especially if they are struggling with overwhelming feelings, they may begin to associate substances with an escape from those feelings. Drugs and alcohol work quickly to numb feelings, more quickly than the healthy approaches, and may become the preferred method for dealing with life. Of course, substance use inevitably begins to cause more problems than it solves.

Risk and Protective Factors for Use

The most protective factor against teen substance use is a strong parent-child bond. While a nonparental role model cannot act as a substitute, there are still many avenues where you can reduce risk and strengthen protection against alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use.

The following chart outlines some of the factors that research shows can increase or decrease chances of youth substances use. Some are outside of your control, but others can be supported through your positive relationship and ongoing conversations.



 Risk Factors	 Protective Factors
Perception of parental approval	Understanding parental disapproval
Lack of parental supervision	Parental monitoring and support
Friends who use substances	Friends who don't use substances
Family members role model abuse of substances	Family members role model healthy use of substances
Low perception of harm in using substances	Realistic understanding of harm in using substances
Easy access to substances	Little or no access to substances
Weak connection to school	Strong connection to school
Poor social skills	Positive relationships!

Risk Factors for Addiction

For those youth who decide to use alcohol, tobacco or other drugs, there are some who are more likely than others to develop the chronic, progressive and incurable brain disease of addiction. Addiction is characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use despite recurring negative consequences.

Some of these risk factors include:

 Age	The younger a person is when they begin using mood and mind alerting substances, the more likely they are to develop a substance use disorder.
 Genetics	40-60% of a person's risk for developing addiction is genetic. Addiction is a brain disease that can run in families and be passed down in the genes.
 Environment	Risk factors in a child's environment could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exposure to physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or trauma • substance use or addiction in the family or among peers • access to an addictive substance • exposure to popular culture references that encourage substance use
 Psychological	These risk factors may include stress, personality traits like high impulsivity or sensation seeking, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, personality or other psychiatric disorders.

Current Trends in Teen Substance Use

For the most part, teenage drug use is at an all-time low, but there is still work to be done. Some of the reliable sources for finding trending about substance use is from surveys such as [Monitoring the Future](#), the [National Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#), the [National Teen Tobacco Survey](#) and state-specific surveys, like the [Pennsylvania Youth Survey](#).

According to Monitoring the Future Survey (2019), the following trends were found:

**2019 Monitoring the Future Survey
Key Findings: Percent Reporting Use of Selected Substances**

	8 th Grade	10 th Grade	12 th Grade		8 th Grade	10 th Grade	12 th Grade
Vaping, Any				Tobacco w/Hookah			
Past Year	20.1	35.7	40.6	Past Year			5.6
Past Month	12.2	25.0	30.9	Past Month	1.3	2.4	4.0
Vaping, Nicotine				Flavored Little Cigars			
Past Year	16.5	30.7	35.3	Past Month	2.2	3.7	7.7
Past Month	9.6	19.9	25.5	Narcotics Other than Heroin			
Vaping, Marijuana				Past Year			
Past Year	7.0	19.4	20.8	Past Month			
Past Month	3.9	12.6	14.0	Marijuana			
Vaping, Just Flavoring				Past Year			
Past Year	14.7	20.8	20.3	Past Month			
Past Month	7.7	10.5	10.7	Daily			
Cigarettes				Alcohol			
Past Month	2.3	3.4	5.7	Past Month			
Daily	0.8	1.3	2.4	Daily			
½ Pack +/Day	0.2	0.5	0.9	Binge			

Change from 2018 to 2019

■ Significant Increase ■ Significant Decrease

Alcohol



Alcohol is the mostly widely used drug by teens and adults. While teens drink about 11% of all alcohol in the United States, about 90% of that alcohol is consumed in the form of binge

drinking.² Binge drinking for a male is defined as five or more drinks in two hours. For a female, four or more. Drinking this much this fast can raise blood alcohol concentration to a dangerous level. Underage drinking is associated with accidents, injuries, homicides, suicides, assaults, arrests, unsafe sex, academic problems, and a host of other concerns.

Marijuana/Cannabis



No drug has changed more throughout time than cannabis. The cannabis of today barely resembles the plant some were smoking decades ago. Today's plant has been engineered to be stronger than ever with more methods of consumption. The mind-altering effects of cannabis are the result of the chemical THC found in the plant. Today's plants are being engineered to have very high levels of THC. In addition to being smoked, marijuana can also be turned into very potent concentrates that are vaped and also baked into food and drink products.

Cannabis Concerns

Addiction: 1 in 6 teens who use marijuana regularly will develop a dependence on it.³

Learning and Memory problems: THC interferes with the brain's Hippocampus, the area where memories are stored. THC also interferes with problem solving.

Impaired Driving: Cannabis impairs judgment, alertness, concentration, coordination, and reaction time- skills needed for safe driving.

Mental Health: High potency marijuana is linked with psychosis and worsening of mental health conditions.

Lung Health: Smoke of any kind is an irritant to the lungs, and marijuana smoke contains levels of volatile chemicals and tar that are similar to tobacco smoke. Vaping of black market THC oil products was found to be the main culprit behind the EVALI outbreaks of 2019.

Vaping Nicotine



Over the past few years, youth nicotine vaping has reached epidemic levels and has become a top public health concern. Originally designed as a harm-reduction product for adult cigarette smokers, it quickly morphed into an introduction into the world of nicotine by teens attracted to the fun flavors, ease of use, cool technology, nicotine buzz, and vaping culture. Many health concerns related to vaping exist, including nicotine addiction, and inhalation of ultra-fine particles and potential carcinogens into the lungs.

Other Tobacco Products



Teen cigarette smoking is at an all-time low. Public health approaches of increasing pricing, reducing advertisements in youth-focused platforms, and strong prevention education initiatives have succeeded in largely removing the cool factor that existed for so long.

Cigars are used more often than cigarettes by youth. The majority of those smoking cigars are using them as “blunts” to smoke marijuana.

The dangers of tobacco use are well-established with damage to every system of the body, particularly the lungs and heart.

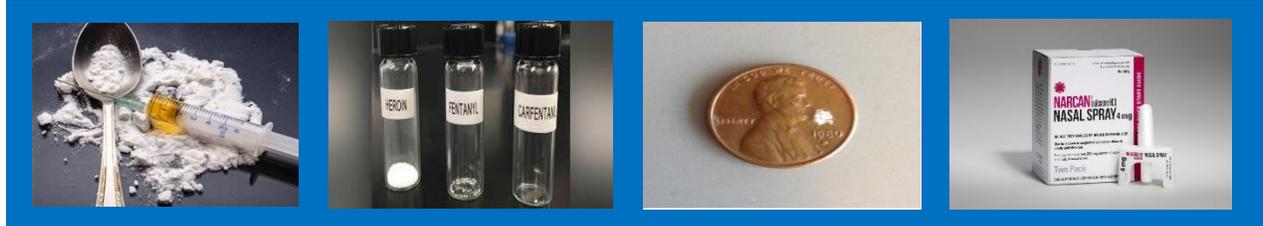
Opioid Medications



Misuse of opioids by teens has trended down in recent years. Most young people have gotten the message that narcotic pain medications are to be taken seriously and that abusing them is incredibly risky. However, young people need to know that even prescribed use of opioid medications for injuries, wisdom teeth removal, or other surgeries can lead to dependence if they are taken for an extended period. They should only be taken briefly for intense pain under a doctor’s care. Opioids are among the most addictive drugs that exist. Overprescribing of these medications is a huge factor in why we have the opiate epidemic in this country today. While misuse of these medications is not widespread among middle and high school students, the

rates increase in young adulthood and beyond. Those who may be abusing other substances in middle and high school would be at increased risk of progressing to opiates.

Heroin and other Opiates



Fact

About 80 percent of people who use heroin first misused prescription opioids.¹

Once someone has become physically and psychologically dependent on opioids, they often get desperate enough to move to heroin which is cheaper and easier to obtain than prescription medications. The heroin being sold on the streets today is often mixed with even more powerful synthetic opiates such as Fentanyl or Carfentanil. Just a trace amount of these drugs could lead to overdose.

Many lives are being saved when family members, community members and first responders are trained and equipped to use the opiate reversal drug Naloxone/Narcan.

Other Drugs



There are a variety of other drugs that young people could choose to experiment with. Prescription drugs, over the counter drugs, synthetic drugs, hallucinogens and even caffeine products are just a handful.

For more information about current drug trends, their appearance, and effects, please visit:

- National Institute on Drug Abuse: www.drugabuse.gov/drug-topics
- The Partnership to End Addiction: <https://drugfree.org/drugs/>
- Caron's Vaping and Marijuana Trends Among Youth: <https://www.caron.org/our-programs/education-alliance/courses/trends>

Building Resilience

Resilient children and teens are less likely to engage in substance use.

What is resilience? Resilience is the ability to bounce back from stress, adversity, failure, challenges, or even trauma. All children face hardships, some much more than others. Even if a young person has experienced significant adversity, they can grow up to be successful, well-adjusted adults. Resilience is not something you are either born with or not. It is a set of traits and capacities that can be taught and strengthened over time. Whether you realize it or not, every time you listen to your mentee talk about their feelings and their interests, every time you provide encouragement and authentic praise, every time you show up for them, you are helping to boost their resilience.

So, what are these resilient traits? Research shows that a combination of internal and environmental traits exist in many children who grow up to be successful adults. Here are a few words often associated with resilient people.



Mentors can play an important role in promoting resilience among at-risk children and adolescents.⁴ Nonparental adults who serve as mentors can provide reliable support, communicate values, teach information and skills, inspire, motivate, enhance interpersonal skills, and boost self-esteem. The stronger the investment of time and energy in the mentor-mentee relationship, the greater the impact.

Several studies have shown that at-risk children who have mentors exhibit: ⁴

- fewer problem behaviors
- more positive attitudes towards school
- greater belief in their abilities
- less marijuana use
- less delinquency, and
- lower levels of anxiety and depression

Communicate that
“what is right with you
is more powerful than
anything that is wrong
with you.”
-Nan Henderson

Researcher Nan Henderson⁵ has identified ways that we can create a resilient environment for young people. Here are some of the ways you can assist:

Opportunities for Meaningful Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage in volunteer work with your mentee• Allow them to make suggestions for activities• Ask for their opinion and let them know their voice matters
High Expectations for Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Let them know you believe they can succeed• Point out their strengths to them• Encourage positive self-talk when they are being critical of themselves• Hold them to appropriately high expectations for behavior
Caring and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen without judgment• Encourage self-care including eating right and getting enough sleep and exercise• Model healthy coping skills and an optimistic attitude
Clear and Consistent Boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Show up consistently. Don't make promises you can't keep• Maintain firm boundaries in your relationship with your mentee so they know what to expect• Help them learn to stand up for themselves so they can resist peer pressure and say no when appropriate• Teach them how to ask for and seek out help
Life Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teach them a skill that you might have• Encourage goal setting and celebrate successes and accomplishments• Expose them to new areas of interest so they can learn and grow as a person
Positive Bonds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage involvement in groups, sports, clubs and activities that allow for positive social interactions• Model for them healthy relationship, communication and conflict management skills

Conversation Tips

As a mentor, you have life experiences that your mentee does not yet have. You have the wonderful advantage of being someone in their life who can impart wisdom without having to be responsible for the monitoring and punishment that exists in some of their other relationships with adults. Therefore, you are in a unique position to influence their choices regarding substance use during adolescence.

Talking about a topic as serious as drug use can be intimidating for some. You might be wondering:

- “What is okay to say?”
- “What if they don’t want to talk with me about this?”
- “What if they ask me about my own teenage use?”
- “What if they confess to me that they are using?”

All these fears can prevent mentors and other adults from having the conversations we know they need to have early and often. Here is some advice to help you prepare:⁶



Keep it relaxed

General conversations about drugs and alcohol do not need to be formal, scheduled sit downs. These conversations are sometimes best when you and your mentee are driving together, going on a walk, or even playing basketball. Take advantage of opportunities when these conversations may come up naturally. For instance, when...

- you are driving in the car and a song comes on the radio that glorifies drug use
- your mentee is telling you about a show or movie they just saw that you know portrays underage drinking or drug use
- there is a big media story of the moment about something substance-related
- you are walking together and see someone vaping

Don’t lecture

As soon as they perceive they are being “talked at” a young person will shut down and tune out. Remember that conversations are two-way. Asking open-ended questions is the best way to ensure that you are hearing about their perspectives and opinions.

Beware of oversharing

“Did you drink or smoke when you were my age?” is a question you may very well be asked. Sometimes this question is asked out of genuine curiosity, sometimes as an attempt to get the focus off themselves. There is debate among experts about how to

handle this, but most agree that telling the truth without going into too much detail is the way to go. If you didn't use, proudly say this and explain your reasons why. If you did, focus on any negative aspects rather than glorifying it in any way. You can point out that the times are different today and the drugs are different today and you want them to make better choices than you did. If you have an example of someone, either yourself or someone else in your life, that you can use as a cautionary tale, then share it as appropriate.

Use Active Listening

Active listening means fully concentrating on what is being said to you. Many people think they are good listeners, but ensuring you truly understand what is being said to you is a skill that requires practice. Here are a few active listening techniques:

Use attentive body language

Take the time to make eye contact, give an affirming nod, an encouraging smile, or an understanding look of concern.

Ask thoughtful questions

Search to fully understand what a young person is going through by asking open-ended questions that don't require a correct response.

Paraphrase to check for understanding

Every once in awhile summarize what you think is being told to you so you can check to make sure you are hearing your mentee correctly. For example, "So, you are saying that you are feeling pressured to drink because your best friend wants to start going to parties and you don't want to lose her, is that right?"

Use empathy

Don't dismiss your mentee's feelings as wrong or childish, instead, think back to your own struggles and confusion as an adolescent and do your best to really feel what he or she is feeling.

Keep it positive

Scare tactics, shaming, and guilt trips don't work to keep teens away from drugs. Approach conversations with an open mind, curiosity, respect, and understanding. Remember how hard it was to be their age and empathize with their struggles.

Ask for permission

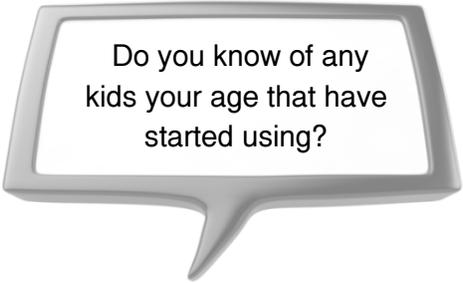
Resist the urge to tell your mentee what to do. Sometimes they don't want advice or solutions...they just want to be heard and to hear someone say, "That must be really hard." If you feel like you have some advice you would really like to give, it will likely be better received if you ask for permission. "It sounds like you have some tough choices you are trying to make. Do you want some advice?"

Conversation Starters

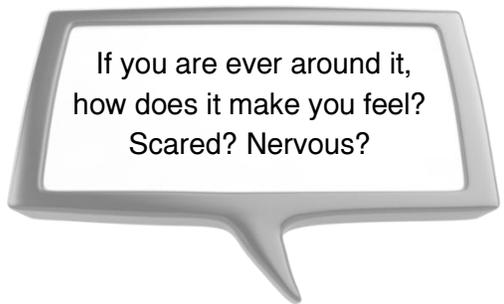
Again, asking open-ended questions is the best way to get conversations going and to ensure they are meaningful. Open-ended questions require more than a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Here are just a few to consider:



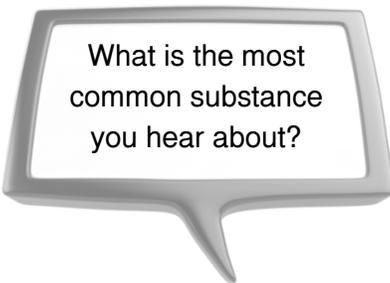
Why do you think some people use?



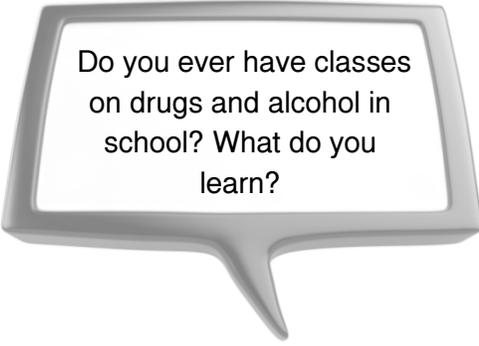
Do you know of any kids your age that have started using?



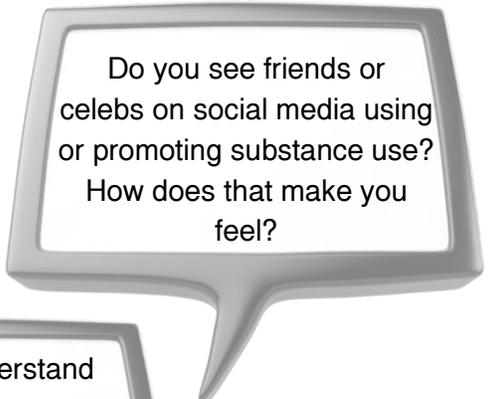
If you are ever around it, how does it make you feel?
Scared? Nervous?



What is the most common substance you hear about?



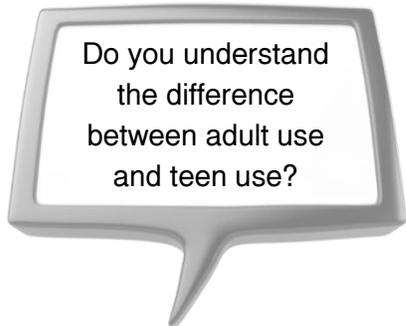
Do you ever have classes on drugs and alcohol in school? What do you learn?



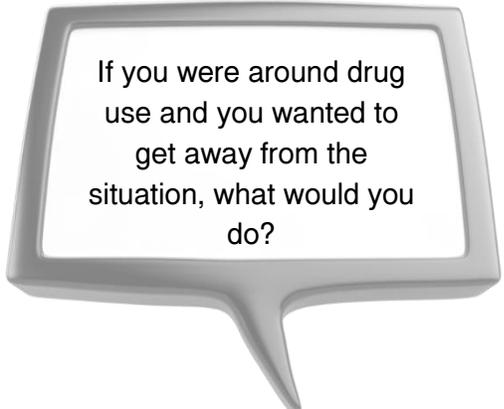
Do you see friends or celebs on social media using or promoting substance use? How does that make you feel?



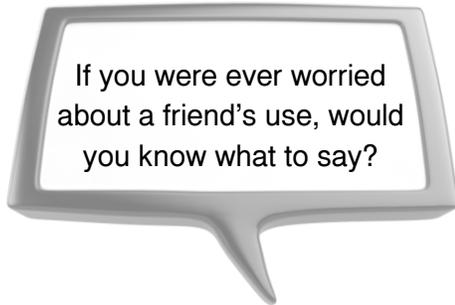
Do your parents ever talk to you about this topic?



Do you understand the difference between adult use and teen use?



If you were around drug use and you wanted to get away from the situation, what would you do?



If you were ever worried about a friend's use, would you know what to say?

Ages and Stages:

Conversations about substances need to be age appropriate. Here are some guidelines about what to focus on at each stage of development.⁷

Elementary School Age



This age group really looks up to adults as teachers and role models for what to do and what not to do. They have been taught to follow rules in order to stay safe. They trust that adults have their best interest in mind. Children of this age are generally very anti-drug. They tend to feel good about themselves and struggle to understand why someone would ever use drugs that are dangerous. Poison prevention and medication safety rules are important with this age group. If your mentee is in this age range, you can focus on the following:

- Emphasize the importance of good health by talking about things people do to stay healthy, such as brushing teeth after each meal, washing hands, eating good foods, getting plenty of rest and sleep. You can use this discussion to contrast the harmful things that people do, such as taking drugs, smoking, or drinking to excess.
- Discuss how TV advertisers try to persuade children to buy their products, including high sugar/additives-loaded cereals, candy bars, and toys named after characters in cartoon shows that children find appealing.
- Discuss illnesses with which the child is familiar and for which prescription drugs are often necessary. Many children have had strep throat, ear infections, flu, and colds. Discussing such illnesses can help the child understand the difference between medicine and illicit drugs.
- Practice ways to say no with them. Describe situations that may make them feel uncomfortable: being invited to ride a bike where they are not allowed to go, for example, or being offered medicine or other unfamiliar substances. Give them some responses to use in these situations.
- Drug prevention is about so much more than educating about the dangers of drugs. It is about boosting the life skills you need to not do drugs. Work on things like self-esteem, standing up for yourself, and healthy stress management.

Middle School Age

At this age, fitting in with peers begins to become a controlling influence. Kids go from feeling good about themselves to questioning if they are okay and if they are normal. If someone is not secure in who they are, they may feel pressured to follow the crowd and engage in unhealthy behaviors. It is an emotionally challenging time in development and strong adult role models are vital. Here are some things you can focus on with this age group:



- Teach tweens/teens to recognize problem situations, such as being at a house where no adults are present and young people are smoking or drinking. Practice ways to say no if they are feeling pressured to drink, vape, smoke marijuana or do anything else they are uncomfortable with. Make up situations in which they may be asked to try alcohol and other drugs and let them brainstorm what they could do.
- Continue to spend time with your mentee to discuss what they feel is important to them. Help to boost their self-esteem by pointing out all the wonderful things about them.
- Talk with them about friendship. Make the point that true friends do not ask each other to do things they know are wrong and risk harm to themselves or others.
- Discuss with them how substance use could impact all the people and things they care about- school, friends, family, appearance, money, sports, health, and their goals.

High School Age

Every year of high school, teens continue to change dramatically. They are learning about themselves and attempting to answer the question, “Who am I?” High School students have a much more realistic understanding of adults and the world around them. Pushing back against adults and their rules are normal as they begin to assert themselves and become more independent, but this doesn’t mean they no longer need you- they need you now more than ever. Here are some things you can focus on with high school-aged teens:

- Encourage positive activities that can keep them busy and supervised after school. Researchers have found that the hours of 3:00 - 6:00 p.m. after school are periods teenagers are likely to experiment with alcohol and other drugs. Talk with them about joining a sports club, drama club, arts and crafts center, dance studio or about volunteering to work for a church group or community organization. The busier they are, the less likely they are to be bored and to seek an outlet in alcohol or other drugs. Volunteer with them if you have time.
- Continue to talk with the teenagers in your life about alcohol and other drug use. Chances are they have friends who use alcohol and other drugs or know people who do. Talk about how alcohol and other drug use threatens lives and may limit opportunities for the future.

- Make sure teens have access to up-to-date information on alcohol and other drugs and their effects. Make an effort to be informed about any new drugs that are popular and know their effects.
- Talk with them about their future and their goals. Help them research options that might work for them for educational and career opportunities and talk about how career paths can be affected by legal consequences of substance use.

Tips for an Informal Intervention

In 2018, approximately 20.3 million people aged 12 or older had a substance use disorder related to their use of alcohol or illicit drugs.⁸ The earlier a problem is identified, and help is obtained, the better the outcome. It can sometimes be challenging to determine if the changes you see in a mentee during adolescence are normal aspects of growing up or are something more serious. The better you know a young person and the more consistently you see them, it may start to become obvious when a problem is brewing. The following are some warning signs that might indicate your mentee is using:

				
Physical Changes	Personality Changes	Productivity Changes	Communication Changes	Friends, Clothing & Interest Changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weight gain or loss • Increase or decrease in appetite • Increase or decrease in sleep • Heightened sensitivity of senses • Bloodshot eyes • Smells of alcohol, marijuana, or cigarettes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More irritable • Less affectionate • Secretive • Paranoid • Unpredictable • Moody • Hostile • Depressed • Uncooperative • Apathetic • Withdrawn • Easily provoked • Overly sensitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tardy or absent from school • Late for classes • Not completing homework • Refuses to do any work • Insists teachers are unfair • Sleeps in class • Daydreaming frequently • Drop in grades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becomes defensive when discussing potential drug use • Refuses to talk about any interests of friends • Strongly depends on peer group • Negative view of parents • Uses bad language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New group of friends • Style of clothing changes • Wears drug-related clothing or accessories • Begins dressing like new friends • Less interested in school • Quits academic activities or sports • Does not want to talk about new peer group

So, what can you do if you are seeing some of the signs above? It starts with a conversation:

- **Pick the right time.** Do not have conversations with your mentee if they appear to be under the influence. Their reactions might not be rational, and the conversation is likely to go poorly. Don't approach the topic if they are overwhelmed or if you don't have the time and privacy to hold a productive conversation. Instead choose a time and place when they are in a good head space.
- **Stick with observations, not accusations.** It's harder to disagree with someone if they are simply stating what they observed.
 - Your eyes appear really red right now, what's that about?
 - I'm smelling what I think is marijuana on your clothes. Am I wrong?
 - It sounds like you are hanging out with a totally new group these days. What happened to your old friends?
 - You've been missing a lot of school lately, your grades are suffering, you've stopped running track, and you've been quieter than usual. I'm concerned about you. What is going on?
- **Express care and concern.** The last thing you want is for your mentee to get defensive and shut down. If your tone of voice and carefully chosen words convey that you are coming from a place of caring, it can increase the chances that they will listen with an open mind.
- **Offer support.** If your mentee says, "everything is fine" let them know you are there for them when they are ready to talk. If they do express that they are using and need help, offer to go with them to talk to their parents, or encourage them to reach out to a counselor at school.
- **Don't enable.** Enabling is shielding someone from the negative consequences of their actions. It also involves doing something for someone that they could and should be doing for themselves. Enabling is often done out of a desire to help, but also, without consequences, a person is unlikely to change. If your Little ever asks you to lie for them, cover for them, do their work for them or otherwise asks you to overstep your boundaries, refuse and explain why. They might be mad, but that's okay.
- **Realize that you are not alone.** You are not expected to act as an interventionist or therapist. You are a caring adult who is in the position to make observations, express concern, and offer support. When the situation requires intervention, let your Big Brothers Big Sisters Match Support Specialist know.

Resources

The following are suggested resources for further education and advice.

- The Partnership to End Addiction: www.drugfree.org
- National Institute on Drug Abuse: www.drugabuse.gov
- Get Smart About Drugs: www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov
- SAMHSA: Talk. They Hear You: www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking

About Caron's Education Alliance

The Caron Education Alliance mission is to provide comprehensive substance use education and supportive services along the full continuum of care, from prevention to recovery, for students, families and professionals using evidence-informed and innovative strategies.

Caron's Digital Learning Program

Our Digital Learning Program is a comprehensive library of FREE courses centered on substance use disorder prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery.

- For Teens- CONNECT 5: Find the NicoTEEN - Free You!
- For Parents - PREP: Prevention Resources and Education for Parents/ Caregivers
- For Professionals –
 - Vaping and Marijuana Trends Among Youth
 - The Impact of Substance Use Disorders on the Family
 - Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment

For more information visit www.caron.org/digital-learning



Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. If you find you have questions or need treatment resources, please give us a call at Caron Treatment Centers and we will be happy to assist.

610-743-6117/caronsap.org



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