

Things You Should Know About Substance Abuse

Reasons Why Children Abuse Drugs and Alcohol

Students abuse drugs and alcohol for a variety of reasons including: to feel grown up, to fit in and belong, to relax and feel good, to take risks and rebel, and to satisfy curiosity.

Some are seeking psychological or physical pleasure. Others face pressure to get better grades or to fit in with friends and may not be aware of other, positive alternatives to help them deal with stress.

They also may not understand the risks of taking drugs that were not prescribed specifically for them, and often fail to realize the danger of mixing prescription drugs with alcohol, other prescription drugs, and illegal drugs.

Warning Signs that a Student Is Doing Drugs

Teachers should be aware of the fact that it is easier to get prescription drugs than illegal drugs and should pay attention to possible signs of abuse of all types of drugs. Specific drugs have specific consequences, but some general symptoms to look out for include:

- a sudden drop in grades
- truancy
- loss of interest in learning
- sleeping in class
- poor work performance
- defiance of authority
- poor attitude toward extracurricular activities
- reduced memory and attention span
- not informing parents of teacher meetings

Emotionally, students may exhibit the following behaviors:

- unexplainable mood swings and behavior
- negative, argumentative, paranoid or confused, destructive, anxious
- overreaction to criticism
- rebellion
- overly tired or hyperactive

Physically, there might be:

- drastic weight loss or gain
- sloppiness in appearance
- fatigue
- red or glazed eyes
- repeated health complaints

How You Can Help

Just as certain drugs have tell-tale symptoms, they also have particular and varied consequences.

- If you suspect your student has a drug problem, do not hesitate to contact the 9-NO-DRUG LINE (1-877-966-3784) for tips on how to approach and treat the problem.
- Speak to your students about prescription drug abuse and alcohol. Do not presume that illegal drugs are the only threat.
- Alert parents if you are concerned about their child and let them know what they can do.
- Provide a safe and open environment for your students to talk about abuse issues.
- Empathize with the stresses of growing up and identify positive outlets that can help relieve teens' stress, such as sports teams and youth groups.
- Hold interactive discussions with your students to dispel myths and give them the facts.
- Encourage students to speak with you or another faculty member if they suspect a friend may have a problem.
- Be observant about discussions students may have in the hallways about prescription drug abuse. If you hear misconceptions, join in to correct them and show your support.

Source: Texas Department of State Health Services – <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/sa/default.shtm>

Additional Resources:

- If you need materials on how to prevent drug use in Texas, contact your local prevention resource center by calling the toll-free number PRC Toll free 1-877-966-3784 or by visiting the website <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/layouts/contentpage.aspx?pageid=35981&id=51150&terms=prevention+resource+center>.
- [Partnership For A Drug Free Texas](#): The Texas Partnership is an arm of the [Partnership for a Drug Free America](#), a private, non-profit coalition of professionals from the communications industry.
- Texas-specific news, reports and data on substance abuse issues from the Department of State Health Services. <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/sa/default.shtm>
- The National Institute of Drug Abuse has published a report on how to prevent and treat substance abuse amongst K-12 students. <http://www.drugabuse.gov/Prevention/risk.html>