

The One Choice 5: What Parents and Caring Adults Need to Know About Substance Use Prevention

“TIP” JAR

TAKE-AWAYS - INFORMATION - PROMPTS

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THE ONE CHOICE 5

Youth Substance Use Prevention Basics

- 1 **KNOW THAT YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE IS NOT INEVITABLE**
- 2 **BE BRAIN DEVELOPMENT SAVVY**
- 3 **BE SUBSTANCE SAVVY**
- 4 **TALK EARLY AND OFTEN**
- 5 **ACT QUICKLY IF YOU SUSPECT SUBSTANCE USE**

Times of Transition are Opportunities for Prevention

- Revisit family expectations, including those around substance use and mental health.
- The end of the school year can be a time of stress and anxiety for youth. Help the young people in your life find healthy, drug-free ways to cope with these normal developmental stressors.
- At year-end celebrations (e.g., prom, graduation) youth often have increased access to alcohol and other substances. Make a plan to keep kids healthy and safe and make a commitment NOT to provide substances in your home
- Set clear expectations of no substance use for youth.

Based on the science of the developing brain, the prevention standard for youth is **One Choice: no use of any alcohol, nicotine, cannabis/THC, or other drugs before age 21 for reasons of health. This is analogous to other health standards like using seat belts, wearing bicycle helmets, exercising, and eating healthy foods.**

Know that Youth Substance Use Is NOT Inevitable

- A growing percentage of youth are not using ANY substances.
- Support youth in making One Choice for their health.

Be Brain Development Savvy

- Substance use disorder is a pediatric-onset disease: 9 in 10 adults with addiction started using substances before age 18.
- The brain is rapidly changing and growing during adolescence, making it particularly vulnerable to substance use.
- Adolescents are increasingly influenced by their peers – and social media is a “super peer.”
- Substance use and mental health challenges often go hand in hand.

Be Substance Savvy

- Commercial industries (alcohol, tobacco/vaping, cannabis/marijuana) target youth for their products, even though underage substance use is illegal.
- Although fewer teens are using substances, the ways in which they use substances have changed with high potency products and riskier behaviors.
- For youth, all substance use is connected: using any one substance (alcohol, THC, nicotine) increases the risk of using other substances.

Talk Early and Often

- You have influence! Children whose parents talk to them about the risks of drugs and alcohol are 50% less likely to use substances.
- Prevention isn't one 60-minute conversation; its 60 one-minute conversations. Find opportunities to talk with your kids about substance use and mental health.
- Help your teen be ready to exit a risky situation and know when to call 911 or 988 if someone is in distress.

Act Quickly If You Suspect Use

- If you co-parent, make a plan together about what to say and when.
- Evaluate and limit access to substances in your home.
- Identify sources of support in your community – prevention coalitions, primary care providers, school personnel, etc.

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