

IS A YOUNG PERSON TRYING TO TELL YOU SOMETHING?



Many factors contribute to young people developing substance use and mental health problems.

Genes inherited from biological parents and the environments in which they live, work, and learn can make them more or less likely to develop substance use and mental health disorders. When a person, even a young person, develops both a mental illness and a substance abuse problem, it is referred to as Co-Occurring Psychiatric and Substance Abuse Disorder (COPSD).



Mental illness and substance abuse can affect even young children. Research on adult substance abusers found that it is not uncommon for substance use to begin at age 10 or earlier. Studies also reveal that some mental disorders like depression, anxiety, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), eating disorders and conduct disorder are identified in young children.

Children and adolescents with mental illnesses many times experience symptoms of a mental disorder that may make them feel jumpy, sad, angry, anxious, scared, isolated or alone. To alleviate these feelings, some of them turn to substances like alcohol or drugs. Substance users can quickly move from experimental use to regular use to abuse, to dependence, to addiction to continue buffering their feelings.

Some Substances Commonly Used and Abused by Youth

Many teens start abusing substances found in the home, garage or medicine cabinet (prescriptions and over-the-counter drugs)

- * Tobacco
- * Alcohol
- * Street drugs and party drugs like marijuana (pot, weed), cocaine, heroin, GHB (Gamma hydroxybutyrate), Ecstasy, methamphetamine, and LSD
- * Prescription drugs such as Ritalin, Ketamine hydrochloride, hydrocodone, OxyCotin, Rohypnol (Roofies), and Steroids
- * Over-the-counter drugs like cough, cold, sleep, laxatives and diet medicines
- * Inhalants like paint thinners, gasoline, acetone, Freon, glues, correction fluids, felt-tip marker fluid, butane lighters and propane tanks, whipped cream aerosols or dispensers, spray paints, hair or deodorant sprays, canned air and fabric protector sprays

Brief Facts on Young People with Co-Occurring Psychiatric and Substance Abuse Disorders

- * About half of all adolescents receiving mental health services also have a substance use disorder.
- * As many as 75-80% of adolescents receiving

inpatient substance abuse treatment also have a mental disorder.

- * Adolescents with emotional and behavioral problems are nearly four times more likely to use alcohol or drugs than other adolescents.
- * 90 percent of people who kill themselves have depression or another diagnosable mental or substance abuse disorder.
- * Conduct disorder and depression are the two most often reported adolescent disorders associated with substance abuse.
- * Two-thirds of children and adolescents with ADHD have a least one other disorder at the same time.

* Anxiety disorders frequently co-occur with depressive disorders, eating disorders, or substance abuse.

* Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can occur at any age and to anyone who experiences a severe trauma. People who experience traumatic events sometimes turn to drugs or alcohol to help them cope.

When A Young Person May Need Help

As children of all ages grow, they experience a variety of moods, behaviors and personality changes, and this is normal. However, sometimes young people begin to experience mental health issues that become difficult for them to manage resulting in several symptoms lasting for more than a few weeks. Only a licensed medical doctor or mental health professional can provide an assessment and evaluation to determine whether or not your child has a mental health or substance abuse problem.

Behavior Changes That May Indicate That a Young Person Needs Help

- * Sudden drop in grades
- * Smoking or drinking
- * Changes in friends especially with drug users
- * Big changes in personality
- * Has constant thoughts and fears about their personal safety or safety of family members
- * Does not want to go to school
- * Complains often of headaches, stomachaches and other sicknesses
- * Has trouble sleeping or nightmares
- * Has prolonged feelings of sadness and loneliness
- * Doesn't care about favorite activities or is "too tired to play"

- * Feels angry and hostile toward people and surroundings
- * Fights or argues with others
- * Has trouble sitting still or concentrating most days
- * Runs away from home
- * Shows significant weight loss or weight gain
- * Worries or fears "bad things will happen"
- * Talks about death/suicide
- * Giving away prized personal belongings

Effective Treatments and Treatment Approaches

More than half of the people who seek help with mental health or substance disorders actually have problems with both. Seeking treatment for substance use or mental health problems can reduce a young person's risk for further problems including suicide. Effective treatments for substance use and mental health problems include individual and group therapy, support groups, and medication. It is also helpful to work with a treatment team of people that talk to each other.

The keys to successful treatment of co-occurring mental health and substance use problems is to treat both problems simultaneously and to develop an individualized treatment plan for the youth using the following treatment approaches:

Integrated Treatment Design treats the mental health and substance use problems at the same time. Service providers work together to develop an individual's treatment plan and to coordinate all services including counseling, case management, medications, social skills training, and family intervention.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy looks at how a person's behavior affects how they feel. This is done by teaching these individuals new skills and techniques that give them more control over their feelings and reactions.

Multisystemic Therapy is an intensive, family-based treatment that uses family strengths to encourage positive social behavior and change substance abuse behaviors of a child at home, in school and in public.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

School Counselors, Doctors, Nurses, Mental Health Professionals, Religious Leaders

Mental Health America of Texas
www.mhatexas.org

Texas Suicide Prevention Council
www.TexasSuicidePrevention.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Texas Youth Commission
512-424-6336
www.tyc.state.tx.us

Texas Youth Hotline
1-800-210-2278

Texas Underage Drinking Hotline
1-888-843-8222

Help Lines
Pick up phone and dial 211
Or 1-800-833-5948

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Texas (NAMI Texas)
1-800-633-3760
www.namitx.nami.org

Texas Department of State Health Services
Community Centers
www.dshs.state.tx.us/mentalhealth.shtm

National Institute of Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov

Mental Health America
www.MentalHealthAmerica.net

National Youth Crisis Hotline
1-800-HIT-HOME

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