



Substance Use Disorders: An Overview

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Why is this important?

- Studies show that foster youth exhibit higher rates of illegal drug use than youth who have never been in foster care (33.6% vs. 21.7%)
- Studies indicate high rates of lifetime substance use and substance use disorders for youth in the foster care system

Trauma and Substance Use

- Teens who experienced physical or sexual abuse/assault were 3 times more likely to report past or current substance use than those without trauma history
- In surveys of adolescents in substance use treatment, more than 70% reported a history of trauma
- Studies indicate that up to 59% of young people with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder develop substance use problems

Trauma as Risk for Substance Use

- Self-medicating to numb effects of trauma exposure and traumatic stress symptoms
- Manage flood of emotions brought on by trauma reminders
- Numb themselves from any intense emotions, positive or negative
- Traumatic stress may make it harder to stop using, as reminders trigger cravings

Substance Use and Trauma

- Substance use may lead to trauma exposure
- Alcohol use and associated risky behaviors increase the chances of harm to self or others
- 20% of underage drinkers report driving while under the influence
- Youth who use substances may be less able to cope with a traumatic event

Risk and Protective Factors



Risk Factors

- Chaotic home environment
- Parental substance use disorder
- Parent suffering from mental illnesses
- Poor parenting
- Lack of parent-child attachments and nurturing
- Inappropriately shy or aggressive in the classroom
- Failure in school
- Poor social coping
- Engaging with other youth who display high risk behaviors
- Belief that drug use is okay

Risk Factors in Foster Care

- History of substance use
- Inconsistent living and school environments
- Trauma/Emotional distress
- Aging out of foster care without adoption or permanency
- Lack of positive adult role models
- Lack of grounding in their community (i.e. struggle with their purpose)
 - Foster children are less likely to talk about the dangers of drug use with foster parents
 - What are ways you have found to talk about substance use?

Protective Factors

- Strong, positive family bonds
- Parental monitoring of children's activities and peers
- Clear rules of conduct, consistently enforced within the family
- Involvement of parents in the lives of children
- Success in school performance
- Belief that substance use is not okay
- Positive extracurricular activities
- Caring, supportive role models
- A feeling of purpose

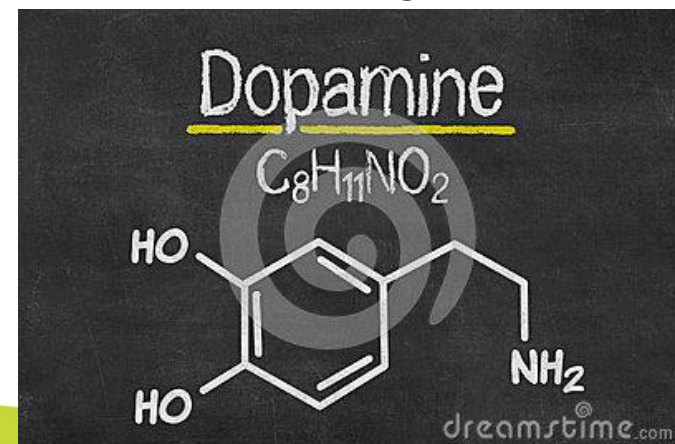
Drugs and the Brain

Drugs impact the brain by:

- Tapping into the brain's communication system
- Interfering with the way neurons normally send, receive, and process information
- Activate neurons because their chemical structure mimics that of a natural neurotransmitter
- Or cause the neurons to release abnormally large amounts of natural neurotransmitters or prevent the normal recycling of these brain chemicals

Drugs and the Brain

- Most drugs directly or indirectly target the brain's reward system by flooding the circuit with dopamine
- When dopamine is activated at normal levels, it rewards natural behaviors
- Drug use overstimulates the system creating a euphoric effect
- When the reward circuit is activated, the brain notes something important is happening that needs to be remembered, and teaches us to do it again and again without thinking about it
- The behavior of drug use is being reinforced



Drug Use and The Brain

Drug Addiction – Your Brain is a Pinball Machine

Use vs. Addiction

- Increased tolerance
- Withdrawal symptoms and using drugs to relieve withdrawal symptoms
- Continued use despite negative consequences
- Neglecting responsibilities
- Legal issues relating to drug use
- Relationship issues relating to drug use
- Drug use in dangerous/risky conditions

Alcohol Use

- Enters the bloodstream almost immediately after consumption
- Immediate effects can occur within 10 minutes
- The higher the blood alcohol content (BAC), the more impaired you will be

Tobacco

- Forms of use:
 - smoked, chewed or sniffed
- When inhaled, nicotine is absorbed into the bloodstream in 8 seconds
- There is a “kick” caused by the drug’s stimulation of adrenal glands resulting discharge of epinephrine (adrenaline)

Marijuana

- Most commonly used illicit drug in the United States
- Street Names: weed, pot, refer, dope, ganga, herb, mary jane, chronic, grass, etc.
- Forms of Use: bong, joint, blunt, vaporizer, edibles, drinks
- Quickly passes from the lungs into the bloodstream
- Blood carries marijuana to brain and other organs
- Acts on specific brain cell receptors

Methamphetamine

- Street Names: meth, crystal, chalk, ice, crank, tweek, speed, etc.
- Forms of use: inhaling, snorting, swallowing, injecting
- Stimulant drug usually used as a white, bitter-tasting powder or a pill

Cocaine

- Street Names: blow, crack, rock, snow, coke, etc.
- Forms of Use: smoke, snort, inject
- Powerfully addictive stimulant drug made from the leaves of the coca plant native to South America

Opiates

- Street Names: hillbilly heroin, OC, oxy, happy pills, vikes, etc.
- Commonly prescribed to relieve pain: oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine, fentanyl, heroin, methadone, etc.
- Forms of use: snort, ingest, inject
- Attach to specific proteins called opioid receptors, which are found in the brain, spinal cord, gastrointestinal tract, and other organs



Opioid Epidemic

- 91 Americans die everyday due to an opioid overdose (this includes prescription opioids and heroin)
- Deaths from prescription opioids have quadrupled since 1999
- In 2015, more than 2.5 million Americans were dependent on opioids
- From 2007 to 2012, around 21,000 pregnant women were admitted to treatment centers and hospitals for abusing opioids
- The second most common cause for entry into foster care system nationwide is parental substance use disorder
- The increase in opioid use is straining the foster care system and healthcare system

Ecstasy (MDMA)

- Street Names: X, E, candy, skittles, thizz, molly, etc.
- Forms of use: ingest, snort
- Synthetic drug that alters mood and perception (awareness of surrounding objects and conditions)
- Increases the activity of 3 main brain chemicals: dopamine, norepinephrine, serotonin

Hallucinogens

- Diverse group of drugs that alter perception
- LSD, DMT, mescaline, psilocybin, ketamine, PCP, salvia
- Forms of Use: ingest, smoke, snort, inject
- Disrupts communication between brain chemical systems throughout the brain and spinal cord



Inhalants

- Typically taken only through inhalation
- Includes solvents (liquids that become gas at room temperature), aerosol sprays, gases, nitrites (prescription medicines for chest pain)
- Most inhalants affect the central nervous system and slow down brain activity

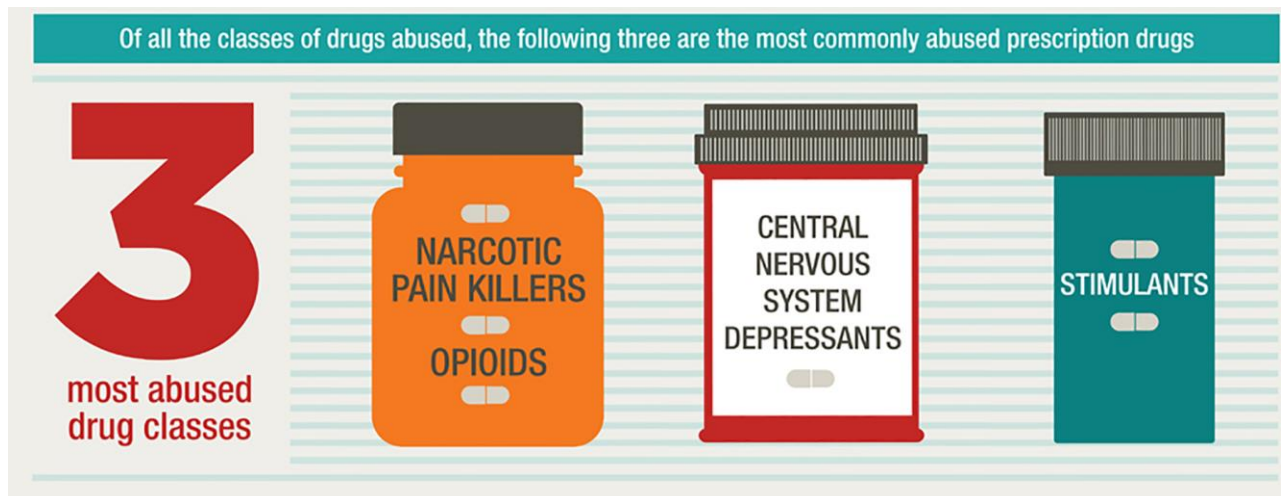
Prescription Drugs and Over the Counter Medication (OTC's)

- Abuse occurs when:
 - Medication is taken for reasons or in ways or amounts not intended by a doctor
 - Medication is taken by someone other than the person for whom they are prescribed
- Affects the brain similar to illicit drugs
- When abused, prescription drugs/OTCs directly or indirectly cause a pleasurable increase in the amount of dopamine in the brain's reward pathway



Prescription Drugs and OTCs

- Most commonly abused prescription drugs:
 - Opioid pain relievers (oxycodone, morphine, fentanyl)
 - Stimulants used to treat ADHD (Adderall, Ritalin, Concerta)
 - CNS depressants for relieving anxiety (Valium, Xanax, ProSom)
- Most commonly abused OTCs:
 - Cough and cold remedies containing dextromethorphan



Substance Use Warning Signs

- **Physical:** Fatigue, health complaints, red and glazed eyes, lasting cough
- **Emotional:** Personality change, mood changes, irritability, irresponsible behavior, low self-esteem, poor judgment, depression, general lack of interest
- **Family:** Starting arguments, breaking rules, withdrawal
- **School:** Decrease interest, negative attitude, drop in grades, absences, truancy, discipline problems
- **Social:** Change in peer group, and school activities, problem with the law, changes in dress and grooming

Treatment Options

- Outpatient
- Intensive Outpatient (IOP)
- Residential Treatment
- Medical Detox
- Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)

Tips for Caregivers

- Talk regularly and often
- Have TWO-way conversations about drug and alcohol use
- Use teachable moments
- Provide education
- Be involved
- Set expectations, limits, and consequences
- Motivational interviewing skills

Stages of Change

1. Precontemplation
2. Contemplation
3. Preparation
4. Action
5. Maintenance
6. Relapse

Helpful Resources

- The Parents Resource Center provides advice and stories from parents and professionals about drug prevention, intervention and raising healthy teens <http://www.drugfree.org/Parent/Home/>
- Teen Drug Abuse <http://www.teendrugabuse.net/>
- Resources for parents who may be dealing with teen drug use and abuse
http://parentingteens.about.com/od/teendruguse/Teen_Drug_Use_and_Abuse.htm
- Office of National Drug Control Policy-Parents The Antidrug <http://www.theantidrug.com/>
- <http://www.drugabuse.gov/trends-statistics/monitoring-future/monitoring-future-study-trends-in-prevalence-various-drugs>
- The DSM 5 of the American Psychiatric Association 2013 edition

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THANK YOU!

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- Training available free to charge to staff, providers and caretakers.