
Teenage Drug And Alcohol Abuse: Types And Effects

Did you know about 17% of American high schoolers are drinking, abusing prescription medication, smoking or using drugs? That means that 55 million underage teens are using alcohol, drugs or smoking. Teens in the United States use various types of drugs like marijuana, prescription medication and alcohol. These drugs can cause poor mental health, physical health or even death. There are ways to prevent teens from using drugs including setting a good example at home, keeping track of prescription medications, and establishing rules and expectations. Many teens abuse drugs, which can cause a huge impact on their life but with help and support, teens can prevent or overcome their addiction.

Drug and alcohol abuse amongst teenagers are one of the largest problems in today's society. This problem continues to grow every year. Alcohol use is becoming more of a problem for teenagers. Teenagers are using and abusing alcohol at alarming rates. "People who begin drinking [alcohol] during adolescence, especially those that drink a lot, are more likely to develop an alcohol dependence than those that don't" (Jurgens). Data from a 2017 study shows that close 20 percent of 10th graders and about 30 percent of 12th graders said that they have consumed alcohol in the last 30 days. Also, 10 percent of sophomores and 17 percent of 12th graders said that they have binged, which means they have had five or more drinks in a row for 2 straight weeks. (Keller). A study at the University of Utah said that "teens who drink by the age of 13 have a 43 percent chance of becoming an alcoholic. Those who begin drinking at 21 have a 10 percent chance" (Keller). This means if a teenager starts drinking earlier in life, they have a better chance of abusing alcohol when they are older. Marijuana is an illicit drug that is commonly used by teenagers. "In terms of regular marijuana use in high school, 36 percent of high school seniors use marijuana, like past years, and 6 percent report daily use" ("10 Facts"). S.C. Sterling wrote about his own teenage drug abuse. Sterling said that he smoked marijuana almost daily since he was in 11th grade. Sterling drank alcohol as well, but marijuana was easier to get. He wrote "marijuana was only one or two phone calls away" (Sterling 4). Sterling also talked about not remembering much about high school because he was always high. At his graduation, Sterling said he was worried about tripping when he walked across the stage to get his diploma because he had "smoked weed nonstop" before the ceremony (Sterling 12). Marijuana is easily available to most high schoolers. Once they start using it, they find it very hard to stop. They quickly become addicted. Prescription medications are abused by teenagers for different reasons including self-medication, performance enhancement, or simply just to get high. "In fact, 9.5 percent of male college students and 10 percent of female college students use Adderall outside of medical supervision. Additionally, about 6 percent of high school students use Adderall" ("10 Facts"). Adderall, which is used to treat ADHD, "is the No. 1 prescription drug abused by 12th graders in this country" (Keller). The main uses for Adderall abuse are being able to stay awake longer to study, being able party all night, keeping weight off and staying focused in class even when you haven't had much sleep ("10 Facts"). Drugs like Adderall, when used properly, can have positive outcomes for teens that really need them. Once these type drugs start being abused, teens struggle to stop using them. Teenagers struggle daily with the pressure to keep up with friends, in classes, and in sports. This peer pressure often leads them to start using illegal drugs and to start drinking. This abuse will continue until teenagers can better handle pressure.

The effects of drugs and alcohol on teenagers can be life-changing or even devastating. Drug and alcohol use can cause teens to make poor choices, increase their chance of accidents and even cause them to commit suicide. A teenager's physical health can be greatly affected by drug and alcohol use. Drug abuse can hurt the brain's ability to work correctly in the short-term as well as affect physical growth and development as the teen gets older. (Juergens) Studies have shown that if teens drink too much, it can result in "delayed-puberty, lower bone mineral density, high levels of liver enzymes that indicate liver damage, shorter limbs and reduced growth potential" (Juergens). Sterling wrote about the damage that drugs and alcohol did to his body. Sterling said, "I'm sure I did irreversible damage to my body, health and mind but I am still breathing" (Sterling 252). Drugs take a toll on the user's body. The damage that is done, to areas like the liver and the heart, cannot be reversed so it can cause lifelong problems. Drug and alcohol abuse can cause teenagers to make poor decisions because their mental state is not clear. "Substance use can cause or mask other emotional problems, like anxiety, depression, mood swings, or hallucinations (for example, hearing or seeing things)" (Dryden-Edwards). Smoking marijuana has been shown to cause mental illness. Teens that use marijuana heavily have a 6 times better chance of developing schizophrenia. If a teen starts to use marijuana early in life, it can affect their emotional development and increases their chance of developing depression, anxiety and other mental health problems. (Keller) Mental health professionals have seen a connection between depression and drug and alcohol abuse. They feel that "mental health and drug and substance abuse are related" ("10 Facts"). Drugs can cause the user to act differently making the user aggressive, paranoid and even violent. Actions like this can lead to even bigger problems. The death rate for teens that are dying from drug and alcohol abuse continues to rise every year. It increased 16% per year from 2014-2017. "Depending on how the body takes in and processes each kind of drug, substances can affect virtually every one of the body's systems. Examples of this include permanent brain damage associated with inhalants, heart attack or stroke from stimulants and halted breathing from sedatives. Any of these problems can result in death" (Dryden-Edwards). In a report done by Trust for America's Health, "the drug overdose rate has more than doubled during the past decade among people aged 12 to 25" ("10 Facts"). Sterling wrote about what he thought would happen if he kept using. He would either end up dead or in prison. Sterling thought he would overdose, get killed, kill someone else or commit suicide (Sterling 252). The physical and mental changes that occur from substance abuse cannot be reversed. Teenagers need to know the serious harm that they are doing to their bodies and their minds. Drugs and alcohol are not worth dying over.

Teenagers are less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol if they are supported, and if their friends and families help with prevention. Adults, especially parents, can set a good example for teenagers by not abusing drugs and alcohol. Parents need to set a good example for their teenager. A parent's behavior has a big influence on the choices their kids will make. If they drink a lot and use painkillers, their kids will probably do it too (Keller). "And when children actually witness their parents drinking or using drugs the chances the child will do the same increase significantly, according to the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America" ("The Role"). The way a parent views alcohol and drug use and abuse play a big role in how their children will develop ideas about using them ("The Role"). Parents need to realize that their teenager is learning from them. If they make bad choices, their teen feels like it is okay to make bad choices as well. Parents need to keep track of prescription drugs that are kept in the house. This will hold the teenager more accountable if the drugs do go missing. "Limiting the amount of alcohol, cleaning solutions (inhalants), prescription and over-the-counter-medications that are kept in the home to amounts that can be closely monitored and accounted for has also been

found to decrease substance abuse by teens” (Dryden-Edwards). Parents need to know what drugs and alcohol are kept in the house. Even if you don’t think your teen is using drugs, it’s important to stay involved in their lives and start conversations about dangers of drinking and taking drugs (Keller). Some parents even allow children to use drugs at home or to share drugs that the parents have in the home. The parent feels like this is safer because they know where their teenager is when they are using. This is not a good choice and only causes more problems for the teenager (“The Role”). If adults keep a close eye on what is in the house, they will have a better idea of what is leaving the house or being used in the house. If parents set clear rules and expectations for their teenager, they will help their teen make smarter choices about drug and alcohol use. The teen might feel less likely to use because they know how much trouble they can get in at home and with the police. If parents clearly explain the effects of drug use to their teenager as well as their expectations if they are caught using, drug use has been shown to decrease (Dryden-Edwards). “Setting limits is also important so teens realize what’s expected of them. Follow through with discipline if your teenager breaks the rules” (Keller). Sterling wrote about how he once tried to break up a fight between his brother, who was drunk, and his father. His father accidentally hit him in the nose. After that night, his father never said a word to him or his brother about their addiction. His father did not set a good example by not stopping him from using (Sterling 16). Parents need to make sure that there are tough consequences if their teen gets caught drinking or using drugs.

As shown by this research, many teens abuse drugs and alcohol. There are numerous types of drugs that can be abused. These include alcohol, prescription drugs and marijuana. They are usually easy for teens to get so they can be easily abused. A teenager’s mental and physical health are affected by drug and alcohol abuse. A teen’s body and mind will not be healthy if they use drugs and alcohol. Abuse can also lead to death. Parents can help stop their teenager from abusing drugs and alcohol. They need to set a good example and have rules and consequences if their teen gets caught. Drugs and alcohol need to be kept out of the house if the parents cannot keep track of it. The effects of drug and alcohol abuse are long lasting. Everyone around the abuser suffers. Imagine how you would feel if one of your friends died from abuse? Or how would your parents feel if their child abused drugs and alcohol? It is not worth the risk. Do not be the person to take that risk.