



5 Stages of Substance Use in Teens

Curiosity

A healthy stage and can prevent substance experimentation.

Provide education and information on the effects of drug use.

Talk about peer pressure and how to say no.

Experimentation

Use to satisfy curiosity.

Substance can be obtained from friends or strangers (online)

Infrequent use.

May stop using on their own.

Recreational Use

Using drugs or alcohol, in a predictable pattern either in time (weekends) or in circumstances (lonely, bored or stressed).

May start to cause bad grades or behaviors.

Coping Risky Use

Has escalated to chronic (long term) use.

Failure to meet major responsibilities.

More of the substance is needed as the body builds up tolerance.

Withdrawal symptoms.

Dependence Addiction

Use is compulsive, chronic and out of control.

Psychological and physical changes from long term use.

May start to engage in risky, unsafe or illegal behaviors.

Substance is the priority.