



From Conversation to Transformation:

Empowering change through honest dialogue around substance use: This informational packet will cover reasoning and factors to consider when approaching conversations around substances. Creating an open dialogue and encouragement to utilize the parents as resources for navigating substance use, rather than seeing them as an obstacle.

Substance use disorder affects **millions** of people **worldwide**, regardless of age, gender, or socioeconomic status. It is a widespread public health concern that **requires intervention and support**.

Empathetic/Supportive Approaches to Discussing Hard Topics:

EMPATHY Normalize substance use discussions to promote truthful responses from your child. Approaching difficult conversations often and with empathy creates a dynamic where students can see their parents as resources instead of obstacles when navigating substances.

CONVERSATION DYNAMICS Open conversations inclusively, avoiding parent vs. child dynamics. Frame conversations as opportunities for mutual learning rather than lectures. Use that time to educate students on safety, rather than strict abstinence. The best approach for promoting self-agency is to allow the students to learn WHY substances can pose harm to their goals and future endeavors for themselves.

BARRIERS Discuss barriers for safer activities; make sure to listen to concerns especially around transportation and accessibility.

STIGMA Highlight that self-medication and peer pressure are common, and that seeking help is equally as common, and crucial step in managing safety. As a parent, it's your role to challenge stereotypes and ensure you're well-informed about substance use.

SELF-MANAGEMENT Parents can advocate for students, even when not present; by providing drug safety facts and pose critical thinking questions to help students draw their own conclusions. Establish yourself as a supportive resource and encourage students to advocate for themselves and their goals.

UNDERSTANDING HARM-REDUCTION Encourage reflection on student's personal experiences to inform future decisions around substance use. The best support we can give students is the tools to understand the problem and risks on an individual level.

Signs of Substance use Disorder (SUD):

CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR Keep an eye out for sudden mood swings, irritability, or unexpected aggression, as these may indicate substance use.

SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL Notice changes in social circles or withdrawal from usual activities and friends, as those struggling with SUD use may isolate themselves.

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS Physical signs of SUD can include changes in appearance, such as weight loss or gain, poor hygiene, and bloodshot eyes. Additionally, we may experience frequent headaches, nausea, or tremors.

FINANCIAL STRAIN SUD can lead to financial difficulties, as we may spend a significant amount of money on obtaining substances.

DECLINE IN PERFORMANCE With SUD, we may experience a decline in performance at school or work, miss deadlines, skip classes, or have difficulty concentrating, leading to academic or occupational problems.

WE, NOT THEY Everyone can develop substance use disorders (SUD). It is important to not separate ourselves from others because of fear, community support plays a large role in treating and preventing SUD.



Questions about Substance use Disorder (SUD):

IS SUD TREATABLE? Yes, substance use disorder is a treatable condition. With the right support and treatment, we can overcome and lead fulfilling lives in recovery.

HOW DO YOU TREAT SUD? Treatment options for SUD may include counseling, medication-assisted treatment, support groups, and residential rehabilitation programs. The choice of treatment depends on the specific needs and circumstances.

HOW CAN I HELP SOMEONE WITH SUD? Support involves providing compassion and understanding. Our role is to provide emotional support, encouragement to seek professional help, and avoid enabling behaviors that promote substance use.

WHERE CAN I FIND RESOURCES FOR PREVENTION AND TREATMENT? Visit online Rural Resources Community Action at ruralresources.org

RESOURCES:

“Substance Use Disorder (SUD).” Substance Use Disorder (SUD) | Washington State Health Care Authority, www.hca.wa.gov/billers-providers-partners/program-information-providers/substance-use-disorder-sud

“Substance Use Disorder Prevention and Mental Health Promotion.” Substance Use Disorder Prevention and Mental Health Promotion | Washington State Health Care Authority, www.hca.wa.gov/billers-providers-partners/program-information-providers/substance-use-disorder-prevention-and-mental-health-promotion

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, October 5). Substance use disorders (SUDS). <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/featured-topics/substance-use-disorders/index.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, November 20). Recovery is possible for everyone: Understanding treatment of substance use disorders. <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/featured-topics/recovery-SUD.html>