



# SpeakUp!

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## Drugs & Alcohol

Michael Blanche, licensed social worker who focuses on the treatment of addiction and mental health, led a discussion on substance abuse. Mike shared current trends and discussed strategies for helping our youth become conscientious consumers. Below are tips and takeaways from Mike and the parenting adults who joined the conversation.

### Current Trends

Over the last 2.5 years substance abuse issues have increased. Isolation during the pandemic created a sense of disconnect that impacted self esteem and left people more at risk. Below are a few of the recent trends.

- With the closure of bars and restaurants, drinking occurred at home, often without other people to intervene if necessary
- Alcohol sales went up by 15% during the pandemic
- Death stemming from the opioid epidemic increased to 115,000
- Substance abuse is normalized on television and social media
- Teens report drinking while playing video games with friends

### Misinformation Around Cannabis

There are currently no independent research studies to show the impact of cannabis, which is leading to what Mike calls a "misinformation highway." Cannabis is more easily accessible, and content value and delivery devices are dramatically different from the 1980s.

- More people are getting medical cards for purchasing marijuana, however there is no dosing or monitoring involved
- There are medications that have been researched and FDA approved for anxiety, depression, etc. These prescriptions have doses and are monitored by a doctor and recalibrated based on a patient's need.
- THC content in marijuana has increased from around 4-5% in 1980 to around 30-40% in 2012
- The THC content in vape, dab pens and oils is around 95%
- Vaporizing allows marijuana to get into your system quickly and creates a faster high
- Devices are small, easy to carry, and have become normalized

## **Dual Diagnosis**

Research supports the correlation between substance abuse issues and mental health issues. Below are a few things to consider about dual diagnosis.

- Independent studies from NIDA and NAMI show that 6 of 10 adults with substance abuse issues have mental health issues
- Two studies done by Tom Collins from the University of Pennsylvania showed 87% and 93% of young adults under 30 have a secondary mental health diagnosis with substance abuse
- Anxiety and ADHD can leave someone more at risk for substance abuse
- Cannabis may mask symptoms of ADHD or anxiety, cannabis does not treat or help with managing either condition

## **Supporting Your Child in Becoming a Conscientious Consumer**

With the increase in substance abuse over the last 2.5 years it is important to support your child in their understanding of drugs and alcohol. Below are some tips and takeaways.

- Have a talk with your child about drugs and alcohol and share any family history or other factors that may put them at risk
- Teens are exposed at an early age, so don't wait until before they leave for college to have a conversation
- Provide accurate information
- Be aware that your child has other influences including peers and social media
- Help your child navigate social media-- there is a lot of image management to show the fun side of drugs and alcohol without the consequences
- Approach conversations with curiosity, not judgment
- Have your child tell a story and help them to realize if it involves any substance abuse
- Narrate your thinking out loud, "I'm worried you may be drinking too much"
- Ask questions such as, "are you worried about your drinking?" and "would you tell me if you were?"
- Remember that prevention is a part of treatment

## **Support for Yourself**

It's important to prioritize care for yourself and your other children, when supporting a child with substance abuse. Below are a few reminders.

- When looking for resources for your child, don't forget to find resources for yourself
- Consider joining a parental support group
- Talk to a third party about your concerns; avoid the secrecy and stigma around substance abuse
- Prioritize your own self care
- Live by example

As mentioned in our discussion, we recognize that we are all at a different place in our journey. Below are some resources we can use to continue our journey in this process:

- [Click Here](#) for The National Institute on Drug Abuse
- [Click Here](#) for ETHOS Treatment LLC
- [Click Here](#) for the Partnership to End Addiction
- [Click Here](#) for Understand the Science
- [Click Here](#) for Be a Part of the Conversation's Parent Portal

If anyone has any additional questions or needs help connecting to resources, please email Erica Talley at [etalley@speakup.org](mailto:etalley@speakup.org)

Be well,  
Martie Bernicker & The SpeakUp! Team  
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