

# Youth and Substance Abuse



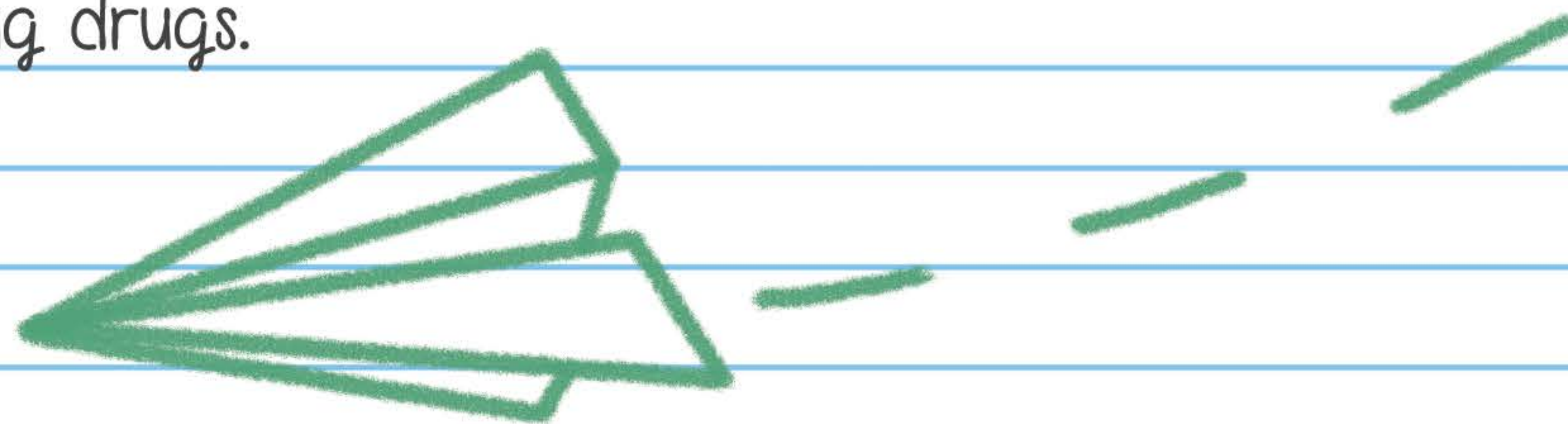
## MARIJUANA AND ALCOHOL ARE THE MOST COMMONLY ABUSED DRUGS AMONG TEENAGERS.

Perceptions have changed as drug use has become more normalized and accepted among teenagers across the country. In fact, almost 50% of high school seniors have abused a drug of some kind. Alarming, 68.1% of high school seniors don't view smoking marijuana as harmful, and nearly 44% of high school students know a classmate who sells drugs. If you are worried that your child or a young person you know may be abusing drugs or facing addiction, it is important to understand how you can approach this issue.



**As a parent**  
it may be difficult to recognize the warning signs of drug abuse in teenagers, and it's even harder to admit to yourself that your child may be struggling

Start the conversation and keep the lines of communication open. Explain the negative effects drugs and alcohol can have on the developing brain and how drug use could impact future goals. Remember peer pressure can be a very powerful motivator. Help your youth find different ways of saying "no" to the people who are trying to persuade them into drinking or using drugs.



**JUST AS WE WOULD NOT IGNORE ANY OTHER HEALTH ISSUE, SUBSTANCE ABUSE SHOULD NOT BE IGNORED AS IT ENDANGERS A CHILD'S HEALTH.**



Prepare for it to be challenging when confronting your child about their potential drug use. They may not be happy about you finding out, but as a parent, it is so important to stand your ground. Keep in mind that when things get tough, you may need to seek help from a trained and educated professional. The American Society of Addiction Medicine's website has a "Find a Physician" feature on its homepage, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has a "Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator".



## WARNING SIGNS TO LOOK FOR:

1. **Possession** - Finding Rx drugs not prescribed to your child, over-the-counter medications when they are not sick or illicit substances in their belonging, room or on their person.
2. **Odd Smells** - Drugs such as marijuana give off a potent smell that makes it easy to identify.
3. **Paraphernalia** - Possessing smoking pipes, cigarettes, tin boxes, syringes and burnt teaspoons. Also be aware of clothing depicting drugs, images associated with drug use, or small containers with hidden compartments.
4. **Changing Grades** - If they were originally a straight A student, but they start making F's or D's, this drastic change could signal something has changed in their behaviors.
5. **Change in Physical Appearance** - Poor hygiene, sudden weight loss, glazed over appearance, and bloodshot or widely dilated pupils.
6. **Hanging Out with the Wrong Crowd** - Children with unhealthy habits or behaviors such as drug use, tend to hang around together because they have the same mind-set and are able to work together to obtain drugs or engage in drug use together.
7. **Abandoning Social Activities** - Withdrawal from family and friends, isolation, lack of communication, or disinterest in activities they previously enjoyed.
8. **Unusual Behavior Changes** - Drugs tend to have noticeable long-term and short-term side effects on the brain, which can lead to mental health issues such as paranoia, depression, irritability, anxiety, aggression, and hallucinations.
9. **Memory Problems** - Drug abuse disrupts normal cognitive brain functions such as the formation, processing and storage of memories. Some of these effects may only last as long as a user is intoxicated, while others may persist longer and increase with regular abuse.
10. **Items Missing** - Missing money or items from home could be funding a child's drug habit.
11. **Ignoring Curfew** - Drug use tends to decrease one's conscientiousness or ability to follow rules and maintain healthy habits.

