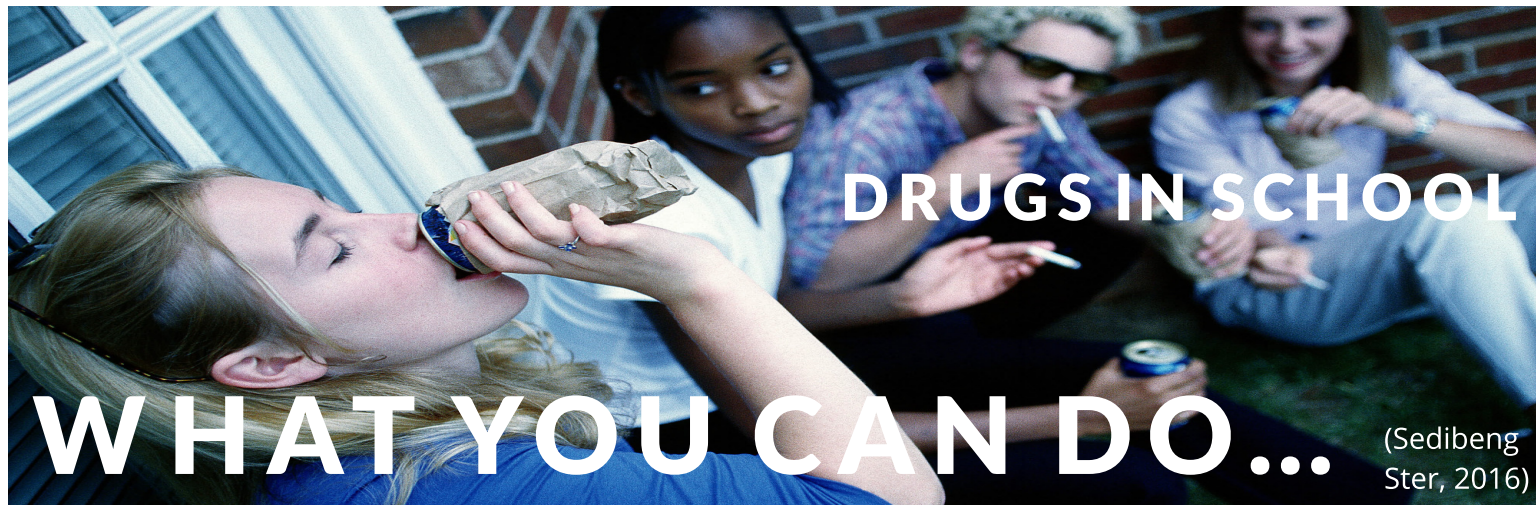




Newsletter for parents. Issue 1. Date: 08/01/2019

## IS IT HAPPENING?

You'll be happy to hear that most young people at school do not engage in problematic substance use, however there is a significant number who do. (Brown et al., 2008) This newsletter will try to help with some ideas and resources to help keep your kids safe! Whether it be in school or in their spare time, young people will be exposed to drugs, alcohol or other illicit substances.

Usage rates are dropping, but without action from parents, teachers and the students themselves, lives may be put at risk.

It's important that young people are able to be honest and open about their usage in order for interventions to be implemented.

There are various ways we can help our young people to deal with their usage to help make sure it doesn't become problematic. (Holt, 2016)



(Corbis, 2014)

## WHO IS AT RISK?

### According to this year's data:

Boys (31%) are more likely to have ever tried smoking than girls (27%), with 2% of all people surveyed smoking daily.

Girls are more likely to drink alcohol (63%) than boys (58%), with 30% of young people surveyed having drunk in the last 30 days.

Cannabis use is equal for both sexes at 36%. (CDC, 2018)

**The trends show** that substance use is constantly going down and has dramatically reduced over the last 10 years.

23% of young people used illicit drugs in 2007, compared to only 14% in 2017. (CDC, 2017)

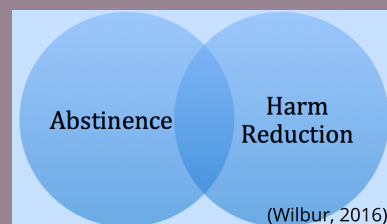
## HARM REDUCTION?

Abstinence may not resonate with many young people in terms of their substance use.

Harm reduction is an approach which aims to reduce the damage done by using substances.

This is done by helping young people to understand the risks of their substance of choice and find ways to be safe.

Results show that young people's experiences with substances vary widely depending on where they live and who they are with. (Jenkins, 2017)



## WHAT ARE THEY USING?

### # 1: Alcohol

55% of students used alcohol during the past year. (this increased to almost 80% by the time they reached year 12)

### # 2: High-caffeine energy drinks

Almost 50% of students used these drinks, including more than a third of year 7 students. 21% added alcohol.

### # 3: Cannabis

22% have used cannabis. (this increases to a third by year 12). Approx. 10% of users reported a dependence on the drug.

### # 4: Cigarettes

Smoking is in decline and only 8% of students report to have smoked during the last year. (CAMH 2017)

## IT'S NOT THAT BAD

Humans are innately drawn to altering our consciousness in some way. This is why children spin around until they're dizzy, or hold their breath until their head spins. It has even been classed as our "fourth drive", alongside the desire to eat, drink and have sex and is said to be biologically inevitable. (Siegel, 1990) Young people who try drugs mostly do so for this reason. This becomes problematic under different circumstances which you can read about to the right.

Responsible drug use is the norm, it's extremely widespread and mostly positive. In fact, only approximately 10% of drug use is problematic. So 90% of people who use drugs do so without any problems. (UNODC, 2019)

One may have a coffee to wake you up in the morning, or a drink with friends, or something to help you sleep. Whether we get these substances from the chemist, the shops or the street, we use drugs to change the way we feel.

It's true that some drug use causes terrible harm, but most people who use drugs because they get a benefit from it. Maybe a fun night out, meeting a deadline at work, or a good night's sleep. It's a positive experience which makes their lives better. They do not need to be stopped from harming themselves because they are not harming themselves.

Outlawing drugs to solve drug problems is like outlawing sex to solve the AIDS crisis. People will still have sex, as they'll still take drugs. But there are ways to make both things safer. (Hari, 2015)



(Stylianou, 2015)

## WORRIED ABOUT ADDICTION ?



(Wilbur, 2016)

Humans and animals use substances to feel differently. This becomes an addiction when other issues or traumas are involved.

There are 2 types of childhood trauma which may be involved in problematic substance use. This could be by "direct trauma", which is when bad things happen, such as the death or loss of a parent, abuse, neglect, or constant fighting amongst parents. The other, more subtle and overlooked type is called "developmental trauma". This is not about bad things happening, but about good things not happening, such as emotional support, love, or being listened to and understood. Many parents who love their kids dearly, can't give them the emotional presence required, because they are too stressed themselves. The severity of your child being affected by developmental trauma may be dictated by genetics. The more trauma there is, the more severe the addiction. (Mate, 2016)

In Vietnam, Water Buffalo regularly shun the local opium plants, as they don't like them. However, during American bombing missions in the Vietnam War, the Buffalo left their usual grazing grounds and broke into the opium fields to eat the poppies until they were unsteady and dulled.

**Cause of usage: Direct trauma.** (Siegel, 1990)

Many studies have shown that if you put a rat in a cage and give it 2 water bottles, one with plain water and the other laced with a drug such as heroin or cocaine, the rat will almost always choose the drugged bottle and will usually die from the prolonged use. This seems to point to a drug's addictiveness. However, a professor repeated the study, but with some differences. He built "Rat Park", where they had friends and mates, toys and wheels. In Rat Park the rats didn't like the drugged water. Overdose rate went from almost 100% to 0% when they had happy and connected lives.

**Cause of usage: Social dislocation.** (Luntz, 2006)

Children have a primary need to attach to a parent. When this doesn't happen properly, they search for other connections. This is usually their peers. This means that they will get their mentoring, values and emotional support from other children instead of the adults who care about them.

**Cause of usage: Lack of attachment.** (Mate, 2010)

## IS THERE HELP OUT THERE?

### Choices (now Barod)...

Are a drug and alcohol service for young people and their families. They can provide face-to-face support, information and have a lot of harm reduction advice online. You can also fill in an online referral form.  
<http://www.choices.cymru>

### Wedi Nos...

Is a harm reduction project in which users can anonymously send a sample of their substance to be tested in a lab to see if it's actually what they think it is.  
<http://wedinos.org>

### Talk To Frank...

Honest information about drugs, their effects and the law.  
<https://www.talktofrank.com>

# WHAT'S THE ANSWER?



(Bartholemew, 2016)

## References.

Brown, S.A., McGue, M., Maggs, J., Schulenburg, J., Hingson, R., Swartzwelder, S., Murphy, S. (2008). A developmental perspective on alcohol and youths 16 to 20 years of age. *Pediatrics*, 121, S290-S310. doi: 10.1542/peds.2007-2243D

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. (2017) *Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey 2017*. Available at: <http://www.camhx.ca/Publications/OSDUHS/2017/index.html> (Accessed: 10 January 2019)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017) *Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report 2007-2017* Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/pdf/trendsreport.pdf> (Accessed: 10 January 2019)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018) *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance 2017*. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/pdf/2017/ss6708.pdf> (Accessed: 10 January 2019)

Hari, J. (2015). *Chasing The Scream: The First and Last Days of the War on Drugs*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing

Holt, M., & Grills, A. (2016). *Critical issues in school-based mental health : Evidence-based research, practice, and interventions*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Jenkins, E.K., Slemon, A., Haines-Saah, R.J. (2017) 'Developing harm reduction in the context of youth substance use: insights from a multi-site qualitative analysis of young people's harm minimization strategies', *Harm Reduction Journal*. 14:53 DOI 10.1186/s12954-017-0180-

Luntz, S. (2006). What causes addiction? *Issues*, 74, 6-7. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/220289588?accountid=130472>

Maté, G. (2010). 'Holding on to our Kids in a Peer Culture.' *Education Canada*, 50(1), 61-64.

Maté, G. (2016). '116: Dr. Gabor Mate'. Interviewed by Zimmer, E. for *The One You Feed*. 8 March. Available at: <https://www.oneyoufeed.net/gabor-mate/> (Accessed on 16 January 2019)

Siegel, R. K. (1990, 09). Intoxication: The "fourth drive". *The Humanist*, 50, 27. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/235271265?accountid=130472>

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2019) *World Drug Report 2018*. Available at: <http://www.unodc.org/wdr2018/> (Accessed on 11 January 2019)

## Photos.

Bartholemew, B. (2016) *The 30-Day "I Love You" Challenge*. Available at: <https://www.lds.org/youth/article/the-30-day-i-love-you-challenge?lang=eng>

Corbis. (2014) 'Does smoking potent marijuana make you more likely to be addicted? Yes - but you might inhale less harmful smoke', *The Daily Mail*, 19th March Available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2584263/The-potent-pot-myth-debunked-People-smoke-high-strength-marijuana-dont-fewer-chemicals.html>

Wilbur, J. (2016) *Conditions cannabis can help with*. Available at: <http://brightoutreach.ca/page29/page19> (Accessed 10 January 2019)

Sedibeng Ster. (2016) *New drug trend finds is way to SA*. Available at: <https://sedibengster.com/6717/new-drug-trend-finds-is-way-to-sa> (Accessed 10 January 2019)

Stylianou, M. (2015) *5 reasons to try organic wine*. Available at: <https://www.healthista.com/5-reasons-to-try-organic-wine> (Accessed 16 January 2019)