

Mindful Minute

A Mental Health Resource for Parents

VOLUME 08

Beyond Habits: Supporting Children Facing Addiction

From the rise of social media platforms, popular culture, and peer influences, substance use among children and adolescents has increased in recent years. Vaping, nicotine, and cannabis use are the most common, though alcohol and other drugs are also concerns. Substance use can carry serious risks that impact not only the teen but the whole family.

Parents and caregivers play a vital role in prevention. Being aware of warning signs and knowing how to respond can make a difference.

Some common warning signs of substance use include:

- Sudden changes in mood, behavior, or grades
- Withdrawing from family or long-time friends
- Loss of interest in hobbies or activities they once enjoyed
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Unexplained need for money or missing valuables
- Bloodshot eyes, frequent cough, or unusual smells on clothing



If you notice these changes, approach your child with care and openness rather than judgment. Start the conversation by asking questions and listening to their perspective. Reinforce that you care about their safety and well-being.

Ways parents can help include:

- **Build connection:** Spend regular quality time together to strengthen trust.
- **Set clear expectations:** Communicate family rules about substance use and the reasons behind them.
- **Model healthy choices:** Teens notice how adults manage stress and social situations.
- **Encourage positive activities:** Sports, hobbies, and volunteer work can reduce risk and build confidence.
- **Seek support:** If needed, reach out to school counselors, pediatricians, or local resources for guidance.

By staying engaged, observant, and supportive, parents and caregivers can help protect their children and guide them toward healthy, positive choices.



Communication Strategies

Open and consistent communication is one of the most powerful tools parents have in building strong, trusting relationships with their children and helping them with challenges in life such as substance use temptations. When kids feel heard and understood, they are more likely to share their experiences, struggles, and successes. This connection not only strengthens the parent-child bond but also helps children feel safe and supported as they navigate the challenges of adolescence.

1. Avoid lectures and ask about their views.
2. Discuss reasons not to engage in unsafe behaviors. Avoid scare tactics. Emphasize how these behaviors can affect the things that are important to your child.
3. Provide support and encouragement. Offer praise when they succeed and support when they're struggling. A strong family bond can help reduce unsafe behaviors.

Family Bonding Activity

Mindful Check-In:

Challenge your family to have as many dinners around the kitchen table as possible throughout the week. At meal time, have everyone put their phones in the middle of the table for the entirety of the meal. Start a conversation about the here and now by asking your child to share one thing they are feeling physically, one thing they are thinking about, and one thing they are feeling emotionally. If your child has difficulties putting them into words, help by providing options. Be open to sharing your own feelings and emotions to set an example.



Helpful Resources

Please scan the QR code to explore a variety of mental health articles and videos.

Self-Care Strategies

- Spend a few moments each day this week in self-reflection, taking a few minutes to appreciate what is going well in your life and spending a few minutes reflecting on some areas that may need attention to overcome daily stress. Finish the exercise by taking four deep breaths.
- Start a weekly healthy habit challenge. Pick one thing you will do each week to be healthier (exercise, eating healthy, meditation, reducing alcohol consumption, etc.). Focus on just doing that one thing throughout the week and then evaluate how you feel at the end of the week.
- Each week, find a contact on your phone that you have not talked to in over four months. Send a text to that person, checking on them. This activity allows you to feel connection with others and to re-establish relationships from the past.
- Don't be hesitant to seek help. Knowing when you need help and asking for it are signs of emotional strength and wisdom.