

# Addiction-Proofing Our Youth in an Addictive World

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# The Good News!!

Kids are MUCH less likely  
engage in risky and addictive  
develop problems

from

**PARENTS** have two-way ongoing  
conversations with them about risks

**Clearly communicated expectations to not  
engage in risky behaviors & commitment to  
step in**

**SCHOOLS** provide comprehensive education &  
restorative discipline

**Kids have a sense of *school connectedness***



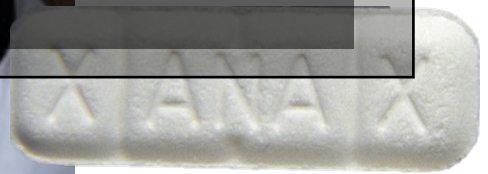
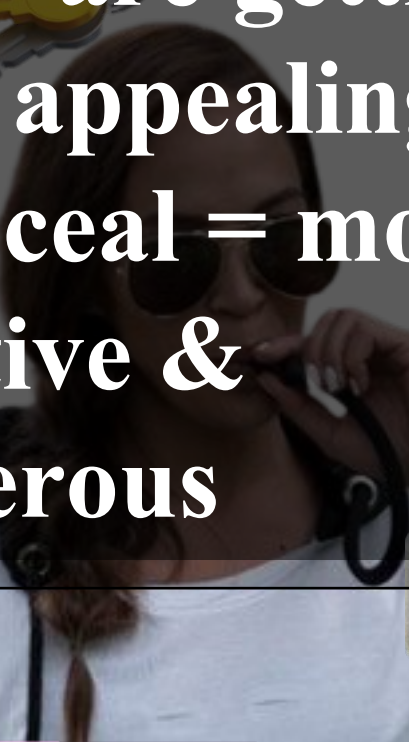
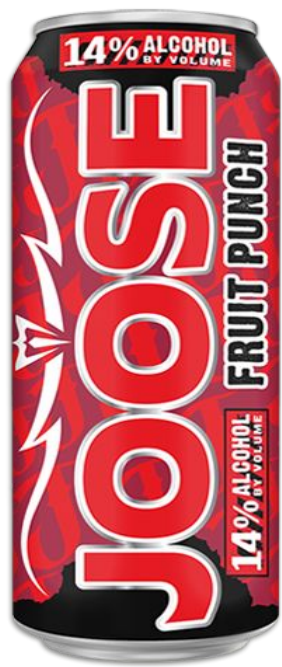
# Our Addictive World...



**Addictive options are  
expanding & getting  
more  
dangerous**







“Substances” are getting stronger, more appealing and easier to conceal = more addictive & dangerous



# ***Media Pressures***

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**Kids are bombarded & brainwashed  
with  
pro-substance use and  
self-destructive messages  
in media...  
targeting THEM**



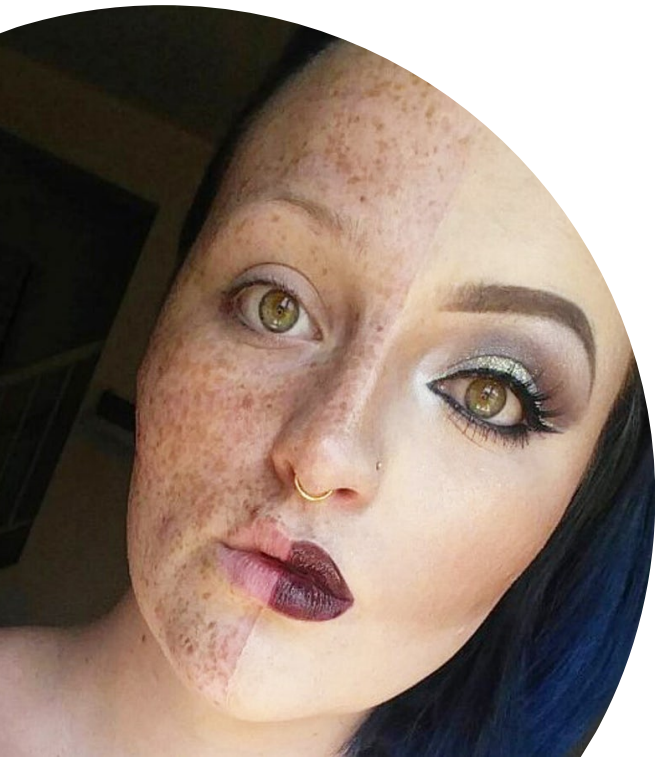


Increased ads = increased use

Increased social media = increased use







**Happiness & worth =  
surface attractiveness, stuff  
& “likes/followers”**

**MORE is better!!**

# THE IMPACT...

- ❖ **Screens = decreasing imagination, creativity, problem-solving, patience, delayed gratification, distress tolerance, self-entertainment = RECIPE FOR ADDICTION**
- ❖ **More screens = more drug use, disordered eating, self-harm and suicidality & mood disorders**
- ❖ **Youth culture disconnected from adults**
- ❖ **"Use" is starting earlier. Earlier use = higher likelihood of problem & worse impairments**
- ❖ **Youth *addiction* and *drug OD's* escalated**
- ❖ **Youth mental health crisis - anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation increasing (hyper-connected, overstimulated & hopeless)**

**Who's  
at  
risk?**

***ALL OF THEM!***

**"Jacked up, stimulus-seeking  
adolescent brains not yet capable of  
making mature decisions"**





**Prefrontal cortex  
(executive center)  
under construction**

**Hyper-rational  
“Russian Roulette”  
thinking**

**Also wired for  
developing  
good life-long  
habits!!**

**Adolescents are  
wired for  
addiction/habit  
forming**

**Dopamine low...then  
explodes bigger**

**Extra-reactive “animal brains” +  
stress hormones + reproductive  
hormones**

**What fires wires  
long-term  
learning**

A photograph of a person with dark hair, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and light blue jeans, sitting on a dark, reflective surface. They are hunched over with their head buried in their arms, suggesting a state of distress or sadness. A blue bag is on the ground next to them. The background is a brick wall.

# **Our higher risk kids...**

- **Trauma or chronic stress (4+ ACES= 4-12x SUD)**
- **Addiction/Problem Use in the family**
- **Higher screen/social media use**
- **Social challenges**
- **Mental health issues**
- **Impulsivity & Compulsivity\***
- **Learning challenges/neurodiversity & “gifted”**
- **Failing grades**
- **LGBTQ+, Native-American/Alaskan, multiracial**
- **Early puberty/orienting towards mature material**
- **Permissive & authoritarian parenting styles**

**Relationship**

**Science-based  
Information**  
Re: Risks

**Healthy  
Alternatives  
to Use**

**Relationship**

**Clarity on  
Values & Goals**

**Addiction-Resis  
tant Youth**

**Resistance Skills**  
For pressures to use

**Relationship**

**Collaborative  
Wrap-Around  
Support**

**Relationship**



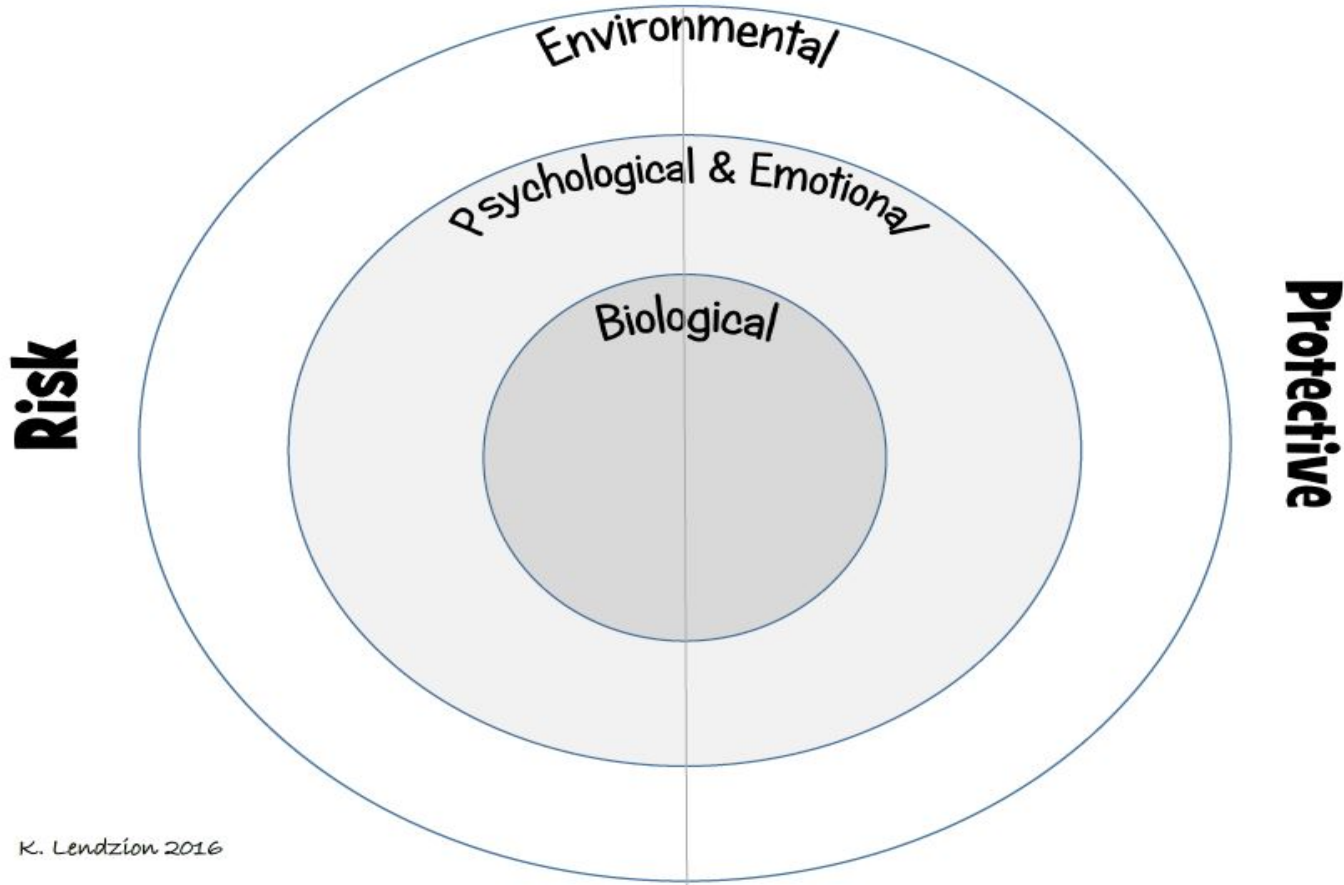
## Addiction-Resistant Kids

Science-based  
Information  
On risks



- ❖ **SHORT & long-term risks**
- ❖ **Respect their intelligence**
- ❖ **Educate accurately & honestly**
- ❖ **Teach adolescent brain science & science of addiction**
- ❖ **Impact of family history**
- ❖ **Use examples like them, BUT go beyond scare tactics & “drama”**
- ❖ **Harm-reduction approach**
- ❖ **Encourage trusted sources & critical analysis of info**
- ❖ **Acknowledge and explore hypocrisies and complexities**
- ❖ **Advantages to NOT using, delaying & minimizing**

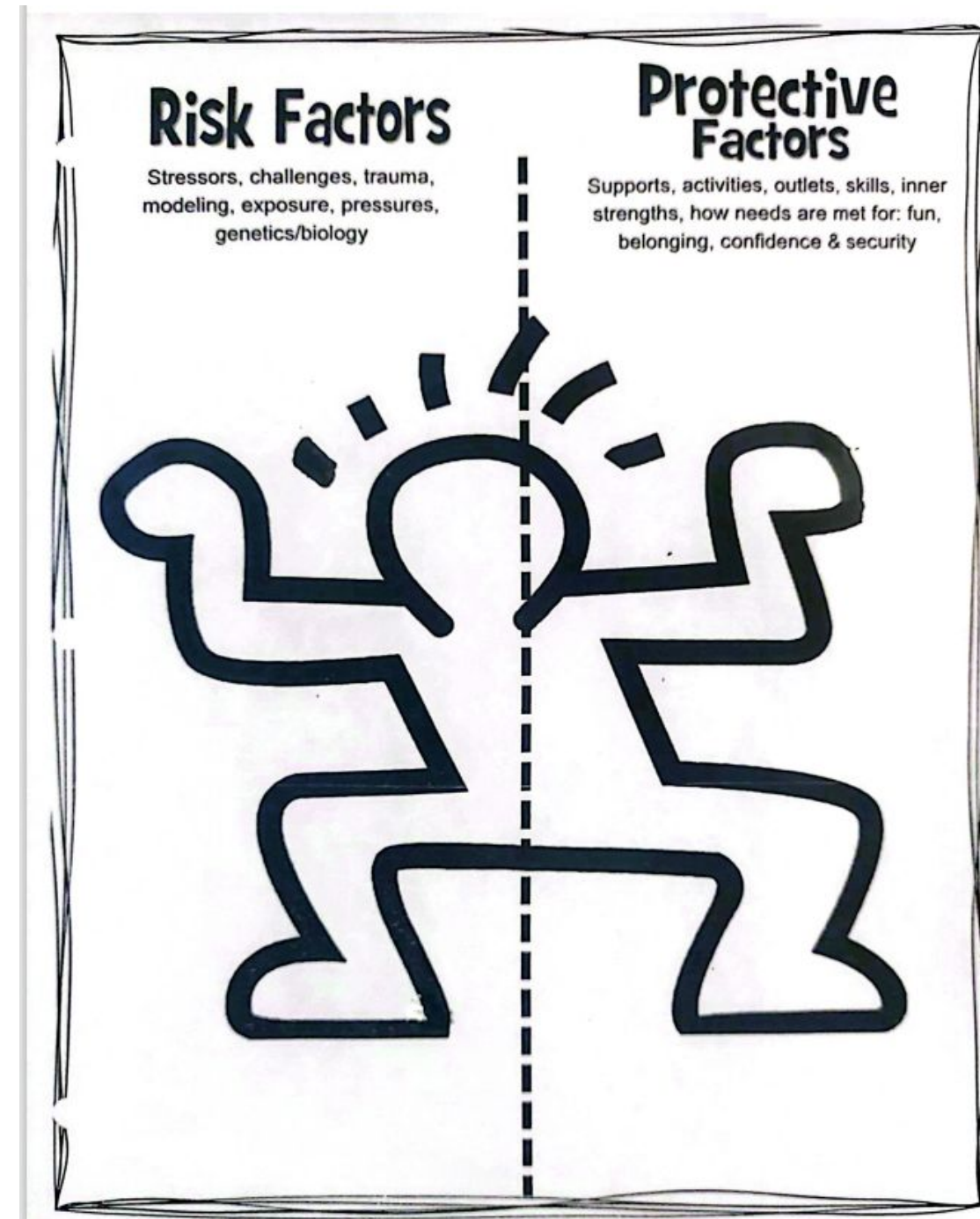
## My risk & protective factors



K. Lendzion 2016

**40 Developmental Assets**  
(Search Institute)

**Risk & Protective Factors Checklist**





# Peer Education/Peer Led Programming



**Eating  
Disorder  
Support &  
Awareness**



**The Body Project**



## **Addiction-Resistant Kids**

**Clarity on personal  
values & goals**

# Values Rating Scale

Rate each VALUE in terms of it's importance to you.  
1 = not important at all. 5 = one of the most important

| VALUE                      | DESCRIPTION   |  |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Ability to Help Others     | Having the ability to help the lives of others  |  |
| Artistic Talent and Skill  | Having artistic talent and skill  |  |
| Athletic Prowess           | Having athletic prowess   |  |
| Belonging and Fitting In   | Having a sense of belonging and fitting in  |  |
| Career Satisfaction        | Having a sense of career satisfaction   |  |
| Creativity and Innovation  | Having a sense of creativity and innovation   |  |
| Deep Friendships           | Having deep friendships   |  |
| Education and Intelligence | Having a sense of education and intelligence  |  |
| Equity & Justice           | Having a sense of equity and justice  |  |
| Emotional & Mental Health  | The ability to control one's moods and emotions   |  |
| Empathy                    | The ability to 'put yourself in others' shoes' and experience their feelings and experiences            |  |
| Environmental Health       | Having a healthy, thriving Earth free from damage or concern  |  |
| Excitement and Adventure   | Having a life full of exciting, new, and interesting experiences, and never feeling bored               |  |
| Fame                       | Being recognized and looked up to by many and receive a lot of attention from others                    |  |
| Humor                      | The ability to laugh at oneself and the world, and help others do the same                              |  |
| Honesty                    | Being open and honest with yourself and others, and trusting that you're receiving the same from others |  |

**“How could substance use conflict with who you believe in being, and what you want for yourself?”**

# EXPLORING VALUES



**“What are your guidelines for yourself re: \_\_\_\_\_ use?”**

For 2th es

*Decision Making*



## **Addiction-Resistant Students**

**Healthy Alternatives  
To Use**

# The 6 Essential Adolescent Psycho-Social Needs

## Fun & Excitement

Thrilling, exciting, new experiences, overcoming scary challenges

## Identity & Purpose

Knowing who you are & feeling a sense of worth

## Belonging

Feeling accepted & part of something/a group

## Confidence & Competence

Feeling good at something

## Independence & Control

Feeling “grown up,” having freedom to make own choices, having some control over your life

## Security/Coping

Ability to cope with stress & discomfort

*Kids will choose what's convenient and works!*

*Help them*

**ADDRESS EMOTIONAL  
PSYCHOLOGICAL,  
SOCIAL, BEHAVIORAL  
& ACADEMIC ISSUES**

- **Trauma & Stress**
- **Transitions**
- **Social challenges**
- **Depression, Anxiety, Anger**
- **Impulsivity & Compulsivity\***
- **Learning challenges**





# *Anti-Addiction for ALL kids:*

## **Mindfulness**

- **Body awareness**
- **Noticing & enjoyment in everyday sensory experiences**

## **Self-Regulation**

- **Impulse control**
- **Delaying gratification**
- **Persistence despite challenge**

## **Growth Mindset**



# How I can meet my needs for...

**FUN & EXCITEMENT**

(Natural highs)

**BELONGING**

(Feeling acceptance and "part of")

**IDENTITY/PURPOSE**

(Knowing myself & my value)

**INDEPENDENCE/CONTROL**

(Feeling "grown up" and in control)

**CONFIDENCE/MASTERY**

(Feeling good about self & abilities)

**COPING & SECURITY**

(Managing stress & discomfort)

**“What reasons  
do you see kids  
reaching for  
\_\_\_\_\_?”**

**“How have  
you seen use  
backfire for  
people?”**

**“What ways do you  
have of...? Where  
could you use  
more...? How can I  
help?”**

## Addiction-Resistant Youth

# Resistance Skills

*For pressures to use*



# Disempowering Media & Marketing Influence

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- ❖ Analyze & disassemble w/critical lens
- ❖ Use *their* anti-control & anti-hypocrisy values

Agendas  
Strategies  
Portrayals

VS


REALITY

What's the agenda of these companies?

What do you know about online algorithms?

What do you notice about how the \_\_\_\_\_ industry advertises?

What do they tell us \_\_\_\_ Is going to do for us? How TRUE is that?

The image features three smartphones arranged horizontally against a bright cyan background. The leftmost phone shows a person in jeans with a TikTok watermark for @sofiachap. The middle phone shows a person wearing a black cap with a gold buckle and a TikTok watermark for @itsyourboylou. The rightmost phone shows a smiling woman with glasses and a TikTok watermark. Three speech bubbles are overlaid on the phones: a light blue one on the left, a light blue one on the right, and a light green one in the center. A large, stylized TikTok logo is positioned in the bottom right corner, partially overlapping the rightmost phone and a red horizontal bar at the bottom.

**What messages do you  
get about \_\_\_\_ from  
your world around  
you? Online, on tv, in  
your neighborhood?**

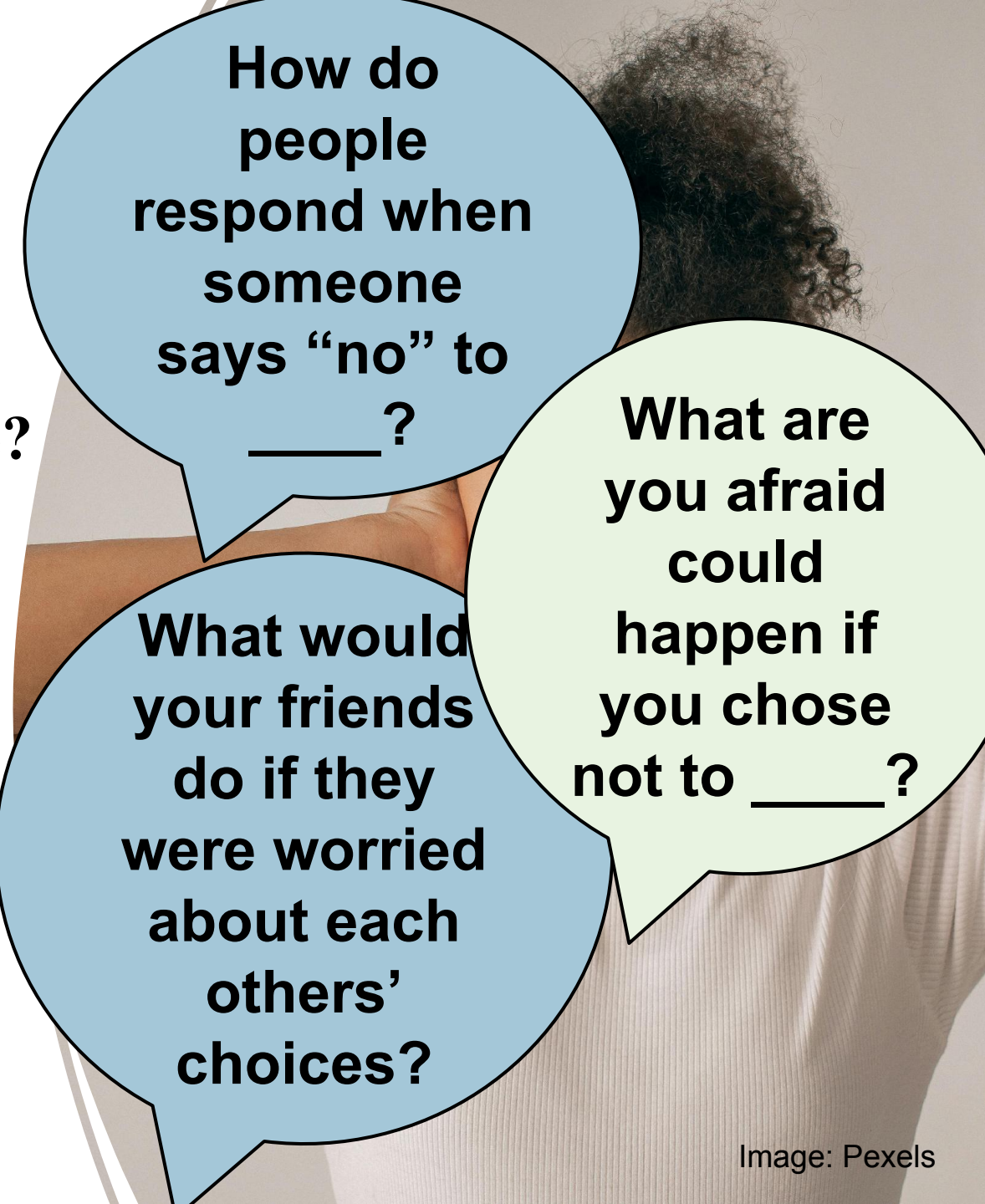
**What do you NOT know  
about how [that  
celebrity/influencer]’s  
use affects their life?**

**How do you  
think that has  
influenced you?**

# Peer Pressure

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- At every age
- First ASK what it looks/sounds/feels like?
- THEN help strategize
- Challenge self-talk
- Assertiveness & self-advocacy
- Explore concepts of “good friends”
- How to influence/help friends
- Recruit role models



How do people respond when someone says “no” to \_\_\_\_?

What would your friends do if they were worried about each others' choices?

What are you afraid could happen if you chose not to \_\_\_\_?





# Disempowering Negative Family Influence

What messages do you get about \_\_\_\_\_ from your family?

What is different about using as an adult vs using at your age?

What impact do you see their \_\_\_\_ use having on their lives?

What would you like to do similarly to your family members, and what would you like to do differently?

It sounds like you're wanting a different relationship with \_\_\_\_\_ for yourself. How will you stick to that decision?

# Addiction-Resistant Youth

Collaborative  
Wrap-Around  
Support

# EXPECTATIONS & AUTHORITATIVE

## PARENTING Firmness

**Warmth**

**Support**

**Rooted &  
saturated in  
LOVE  
(and science)**

Expectations to be  
healthy, safe and  
responsible w/your  
choices  
Consistent  
follow-through &  
unwavering dedication

Provide scaffolding,  
supervision &  
guidance, “coaching”

## CONSEQUENCES

*Related, Educational & Supportive*



- ❖ **COMMUNICATION=TRUST=FREEDOM**
- ❖ **Ask open-ended questions (Curiosity)**
- ❖ **Listen, listen, listen – Talk WITH not AT**
- ❖ **Check our reactivity (Calm & Care)**
- ❖ **Empathize & Validate vs Judge**
- ❖ **Don't go “all FBI” on them**



***TALKING  
TIPS***



# ***TALKING TIPS***

- ❖ **Honor their intelligence & autonomy, and ASK before teaching & problem-solving**
- ❖ **Seize everyday teachable moments vs “the talk.” The “Drive-By Rule”**
- ❖ **Explore discrepancy with THEIR values & goals**
- ❖ **Teach conscientiously through your own experience**  
Keep your focus in mind...
- ❖ **Reinforce all their positive choices to NOT go there!**

# Starting Young...

**If they're seeing it, we need to talk about it**

**What we put in and how we treat our bodies & brains:** Food, Medicines, Vitamins Household chemical safety

**Recognizing “uh oh” gut feelings**

**Explain addiction** – Something becomes more important than all else. A “spell” – takes over brain & changes how people make choices & treat people

**Avoid referring to as a “grown up” activity**

*Just our mentioning gives kiddos permission to think & ask about it!*



# Having Impactful Conversations *With Our Kids* About Drugs & Alcohol

w/Kriya Lendzion, LCMHC, LCAS, CPS

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@KriyaCounselor

- ❖ Substances trending among teens are getting stronger, more appealing, more dangerous, more addictive, and easier to conceal. Today's versions of caffeine, alcohol, nicotine and cannabis and "harder" drugs are *not* what we grew up with.
- ❖ Teen use of these substances can disrupt brain growth, cause deficits in executive functioning, contribute to mood disorders, and place one at higher risk for addiction if used regularly and/or in strong amounts.
- ❖ The increasing strength of cannabis/THC products are leading to a sharp increase in "overdoses" of kids getting sick and experiencing psychosis, and an explosion in fentanyl lacerations in the past few years has made just experimenting with drugs potentially deadly. There has been a 114% increase in fatal teen overdoses in the past two years.
- ❖ *The good news* is that research shows us that open conversations in our family about the risks and realities of substances sharply decreases the likelihood and amount of our kids using, as well as the likelihood of their experiencing overdose or problematic use. The more your child feels comfortable talking with you, the greater chance you have of knowing what's going on with them and being influential in guiding them towards healthy choices.

## *Talking Tips*

### ◆ Talking Substances = A Family Norm

Talking about drugs and alcohol often and openly is approached simply as a family norm, as early as possible. This is just what we do as a family – we talk about all the complicated, scary, confusing things in the world.

### ◆ Communication=Trust=Freedom

Establish communication as an expectation for your child to get what they want...freedom. In order for you to trust them out of your sight, on-line, or with friends, you need to know what the decisions are that they are likely to be faced with, and how they are likely to handle those situations. This means that you need to know what their genuine thoughts, feelings, values, strategies and plans are re: substances and choices surrounding them.

### ◆ Ask open-ended questions.

Questions beginning with "How," "What" and "When" encourage more discussion than those your child can shut down with simple "yes" or "no" answers. "How was the party" vs "Did you have fun at the party?"

# *Creating a* Family Mutual Trust Agreement *About Drugs & Alcohol*

You all have the SAME GOAL: for the teen to have increasing freedom and independence to explore and thrive in the world. Accomplishing this requires developing and maintaining TWO-WAY TRUST. For parents to let go of worry and protectiveness, they need to trust the teen to make healthy and responsible decisions in any situation. And the teens needs to trust parents to be approachable and supportive.

## Some Questions to Get Clarity on Expectations:

### *For Parents -*

- What are your ideal wishes for your child (big picture)?
- What are your hopes for them re: their substance use that align with these bigger wishes?
- What's the "battle" that feels most important to you to focus on given those bigger picture wishes? (i.e. Delaying all use at this age, Using "responsibly" and non-problematically, Safety, Avoiding certain substances etc
- What are your *specific* expectations of their use given last question: when and where, household, car, specific substances, specific behaviors?

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# Handouts For Parents

## Grown-Ups Guide to the Adolescent Brain



### *It's still under construction*

The Prefrontal Cortex that manages big-picture thinking, judgment, impulse-control, self-reflection, emotional self-control, empathy, organization, planning, and prioritizing, isn't fully developed until one's mid 20's. Our teenagers' brains are basically like shiny Ferrari's built for speed and full of gas, without the brake system fully installed yet! Our kids with neurological differences, i.e. ADHD or Autism, typically have even slower growing neural connections in the PFC. Trauma and stress, and adolescent substance use can also stunt the growth of these crucial connections.

**What it looks like in our kids:** A tendency towards impulsivity, and an inability to see all the potential risks of their actions, and how those choices could turn out for them or impact others. They're also more challenged than adults with attention, self-discipline, task completion, organization and emotional management.

### *What fires, wires & They use it or lose it*

Adolescents are at their ripest time of learning since babyhood and undergoing a massive remodeling process. Their brains are jam-packed with neurons waiting to be wired together. The very ripest periods are around age 11 for biologically female brains and 14 for male ones. The brain cells that are fired up and used, hardwire together as long-term connections, especially if used repeatedly. The smarty-pants word for this is "neuroplasticity." "Mirror neurons" have been shown to develop these neural connections simply by our kids' observing actions of others repeatedly.

What doesn't get used during these formative years is then "pruned" away, to create a more efficient "mental machine." This sorting, sifting, and solidifying of brain cells and learning happens most during deep REM sleep.

**What it looks like:** Since what our tweens and teens engage in, think about, listen to and watch absorbs deeply, they can learn a language, skill, or pick up a habit much easier than we can as adults. Habits and learning acquired during this time are thus likely to stick and be resistant to unlearning later...which can be a good or bad thing. This makes adolescents at high risk for addictive relationships with behaviors or substances they use with regularity. Lost or destructive connections can be rewired in adulthood but take more work.

## 10 Skills for Becoming a Teen Communication Jedi

by Kriya Lenzion, LCMHC, LCAS, CPS



Somewhere around 7th grade, our sweet kiddos who've always initiated excited conversations about life's every event, and seen us as the authority on the universe's wonders, often start to communicate in dismissive grunts, monosyllabic words and act like they're tolerating a discussion with us as if it's a teeth cleaning. Maintaining connection and two-way dialogue through teen years is crucial as their lives get more complicated, and choices become more serious and risky. We need to understand their worlds to help guide them healthily through all the tough and scary stuff "out there." But they're not likely to make this easy on us. It's going to require some serious Communication Jedi skills.

Know that despite the dismissiveness and venom we sometimes get from our teenagers, they want more than anything to be connected to us, and for us to know who they really are. But as one teen said to me "Parents just go about it so wrong so often." So, I bring you some basic communication essentials I've learned from the thousands of middle and high school students I've been honored to work with (and the three I've raised) over the past two decades.

### FIRST...A FOUNDATIONAL PIECE OF INTEL

At the foundation of all of our interactions with our teens needs to be an understanding of what's going on in their noggins. The survival defense system in our brains (amygdala) is extra reactive during adolescence, so it's important to constantly keep in mind that anything registering as a "threat" can cause a natural and quick flip into *fight, flight or freeze* mode.

#### **What this looks like in our Adolescents:**

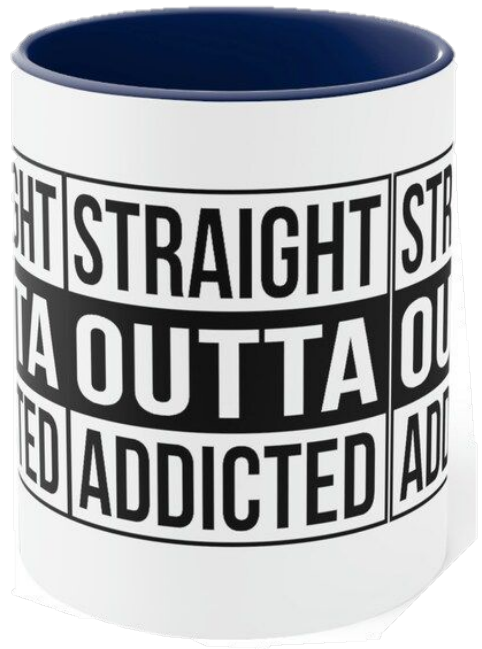
**Fight:** Arguing, defensiveness, exploding

**Flight:** Hiding, avoiding, withdrawing

**Freeze:** Shutting down, faking compliance

All of the above reactions will get in the way of our having a productive dialogue with our kids, so maneuvering around them is going to be central to our **10 Teen Communication Jedi\* Skills**. Here are the first **5 Basics**.





# Modeling

**Adult conscientiousness re:  
our own behaviors & how we  
talk about them**

**Highlight our healthy outlets  
& strategies for coping, fun &  
connection**

**Parents: transparency re:  
observed problem use &  
efforts to change**





# Collaborating With and Within Schools





A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a person's mouth and hand. The person is holding a black vape pen, and a thick plume of white smoke is rising from their mouth. The person's hair is blonde and out of focus. The background is a warm, golden-brown color.

# Early Intervention

# How I can meet my needs for...

## FUN & EXCITEMENT

(Natural highs)

## BELONGING

(Feeling acceptance and "part of")

## IDENTITY/PURPOSE

(Knowing myself & my value)

## INDEPENDENCE/CONTROL

(Feeling "grown up" and in control)

## CONFIDENCE/MASTERY

(Feeling good about self & abilities)

## COPING & SECURITY

(Managing stress & discomfort)

## Help them find & strengthen alternatives

- "What was that experience like?"
- "What are you getting from using?"
- "Sounds like it's really helping you \_\_\_\_"
- "If people don't have some other alternatives in their toolbox to deal with life, they can get dependent on \_\_\_\_\_ as their only option. Are you willing to brainstorm some other ways of ....?"
- "You said you started \_\_\_\_\_ to fit in at your new school, but now it sounds like you're feeling badly about the reputation it's giving you..."



[illegible][illegible]

# The “4 C’s” of Addiction

**1**

**Continued use despite negative  
consequences & risks**

**2**

**Loss of Control**

**3**

**Becomes Center of Life**

**4**

**Needing to Cope**

**+**

**Tolerance &  
Withdrawal**

## ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Have you engaged in the behavior more often or for longer than you meant to?   |  |
| Have you wanted to and tried to cut down or stop the behavior but haven't managed to?  |  |
| Do you spend a lot of time on the behavior, thinking about, talking about, doing, recovering from, covering up, repairing?   |  |
| Do you have cravings and urges to engage in the behavior?  |  |
| Does your behavior interfere with your work, school, or social relationships?  |  |
| Do you continue your behavior even though it causes problems with friends, family or teachers?   |  |
| Do you continue engaging in the behavior even though you are in danger?  |  |
| Do you choose your behavior over other recreational activities?  |  |
| Do you continue engaging in your behavior, even though you have a physical or psychological problem that has been caused by or is made worse by the behavior?                    |  |
| Have you had to increase how much or the intensity of the behavior in order to get the same "rush"/affect from it?   |  |
| Do you get physically, emotionally or psychologically uncomfortable or anxious when you don't have access to your behavior/object which is relieved when you engage in it again? |  |
| TOTAL BOXES CHECKED  |  |

1-2 = Mild Disorder  
 4-5 = Moderate Dx  
 6+ = Severe Dx







# CHANGE RULERS

On a scale of  
1-10 how much  
do you  
genuinely want  
to cut back on  
use?

...how much  
do you think  
\_\_\_\_\_ is  
negatively  
affecting your  
life?

# TWO ROADS

Keep using  
just as you  
are

Change  
your use



## **COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS WORKSHEET**



**SMART** Recovery®

Life beyond addiction

| Using _____ or Doing _____<br>Label each item short-term (ST) or long-term (LT)     |                                   |       |                                 |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------|
| ST/LT   | Benefits (rewards and advantages) | ST/LT | Costs (risks and disadvantages) |
|   |                                   |       |                                 |
| NOT Using _____ or Doing _____<br>Label each item short-term (ST) or long-term (LT) |                                   |       |                                 |
| ST/LT   | Benefits (rewards and advantages) | ST/LT | Costs (risks and disadvantages) |
|   |                                   |       |                                 |





# COACH PARENTS to respond with...

- ❖ **Care**
- ❖ **Calm**
- ❖ **Curiosity**
- ❖ **Collaboration**
- ❖ **Constructive consequences**
- ❖ **Commitment**



Photo: Pexels

## How to respond if you find your child using drugs or alcohol

The difference in whether your child's experimentation turns into repeated or addictive use hinges largely in your response to it. Here are 10 tips that can help you use these challenging moments as opportunities to strengthen your teen's wisdom and protective armor against *all* the forces of self-destructive temptation out there, and bring you all closer in the process.

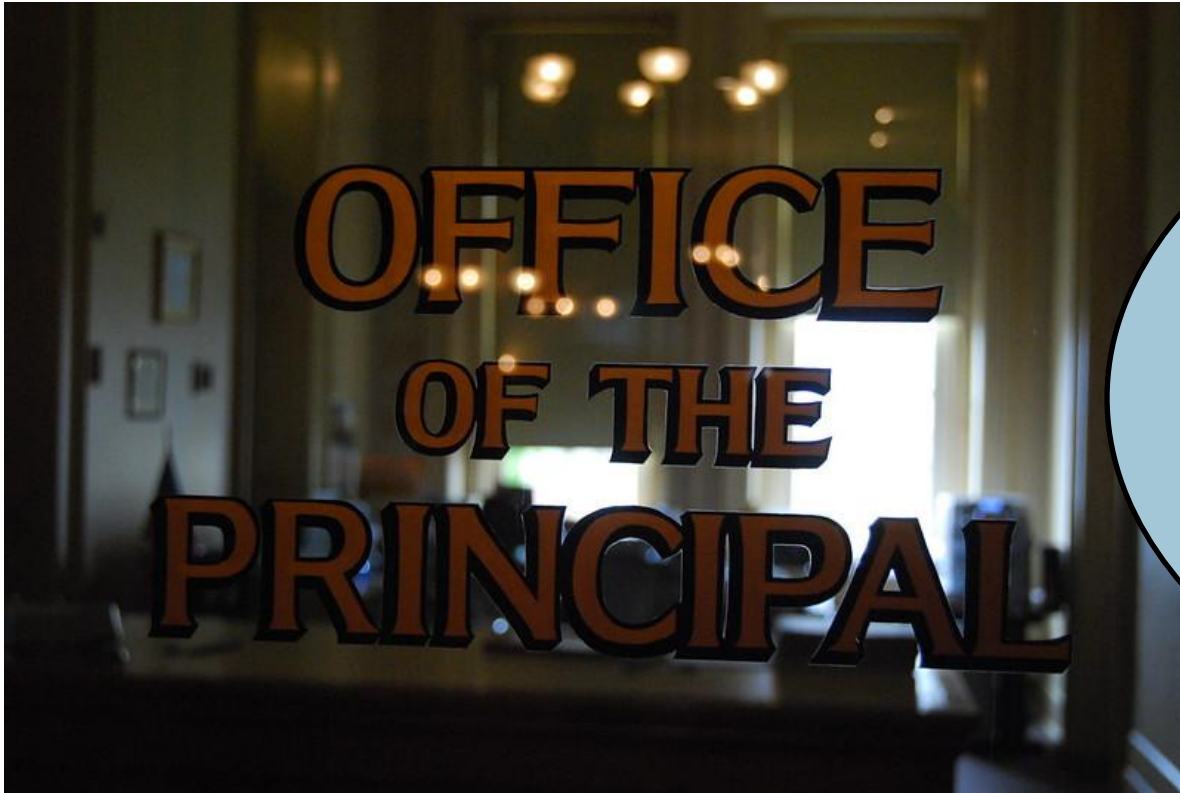
**1. Timing is key.** Have the discussion when your child is not under the influence or extremely escalated, and you can stay calm and rational. Be flexible *when* you talk (within reason), but not *whether* you talk. It's okay to say "I'm really upset about this right now and want to make sure I respond in a helpful way, so I need to take a day before I'm ready to do that." Don't forget "I love you very much..." at every point in the conversation.

**2. Get clear on your motives.** We're likely to have a swirling combination of intense feelings - shock, disappointment, self-doubt, betrayal, guilt, embarrassment, shame and most strongly FEAR...all of which often surface as anger. Resist the urge to launch into knee-jerk punishment, lectures and other attempts to be controlling and right...all of which push our teens away and into defensiveness, hostility or dismissiveness, and prevent our input from mattering. Others of us will want to avoid the conflict of the conversation to "keep the peace." Before talking get clear on your motives by asking yourself "*Why is this so important to me?*" and "*What do I really want here?*" We intensely love our kids, and would do anything to protect them and help them to live healthy, fulfilled, thriving lives. It's okay to share this transparently and authentically with your child. Stay rooted in CARE.

**3. Take a "time out" if needed.** Stay rooted in CALM. If volume or hostility are inflating for either of you, take five or save it for later before the conversation heads to a destructive point of no return. Take a deep breath and return to those 2 questions above. It's also okay to not have all the answers or feel at a loss for words at the moment and to say "Let me think about that and come back to you on it later" or "This is hard for me because I'm feeling a lot of things at once, and want to respond in a helpful way...so I need to take a few minutes and then I want to come back to this."

**4. Ask questions...then listen.** Approach this as a conversation, not a confrontation, and stay rooted in CURIOSITY. If you launch into a one-sided lecture, you not only cause your teen to shut down and tune you (and your almighty wisdom) out, but lose the ripe opportunity to get the crucial information you need to guide them in healthy directions. In order to help your child steer around substances for the time being, and ideally avoid ever developing a problematic relationship with them, you need to understand why she went there and what she gained from it. Was it to feel belonging or be liked by certain people? To have fun or relieve boredom? To soothe anxiety or melt away self-consciousness? Did it work? What was the experience like for her and how does she feel about it now? Ask...and then listen, listen, listen. Even if she doesn't offer up anything yet, you've shown her that you care about and can be trusted with what she thinks, feels and experiences...which *will* pay off.

# Helping Redefine School Discipline



**Educational,  
restorative &  
supportive  
(learning, repair &  
change)**





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