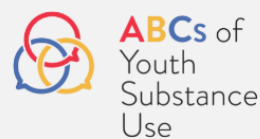


MAY 2022

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# Preparing Parents and Caregivers for Substance Use Connections



**EVIDENCE-BASED  
APPROACHES AND  
RESOURCES**

**INTENDED FOR:**  
Parents & Caregivers





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The **ABCs of Youth Substance Use** is an initiative to support approaches that have been shown to be effective in preventing, delaying and reducing substance-related harms for youth.

**Autonomy, Belonging and Competencies** are important protective factors that promote youth wellbeing and prevent, delay and reduce substance-related harms.

The **ABCs of Youth Substance Use** is funded by the BC Ministry of Health with support and input from the BC Ministry of Education and the BC Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction.

# About this Resource

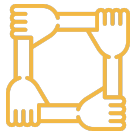
This resource provides parents and caregivers with information about how to talk about substance use with their child.

It also outlines where parents can access additional information to build their own understanding, and where they can access help if their child is struggling with a substance use issue.

Resources may be added to this list. Have something to suggest? We'd love to hear from you at [\*\*hello@theabcs.ca\*\*](mailto:hello@theabcs.ca).

# Talking About Substance Use

Parents and caregivers often wonder about the best way to approach talking about substance use. There is no single “right” way to have these conversations. What you say and do is valuable and makes a difference. Here are some tips and resources you might find useful as you help your child(ren) navigate this aspect of life successfully.



**Stay connected** – Strong relationships with caring adults help promote health and can be helpful in protecting against harmful substance use.



**Have fun** – Observe and identify the interests and passions of your child and purposefully make time to recognize, value and celebrate those things.



**Listen first** – Be positive, caring and allow time for reflection.



**Be aware and available** – Pay attention to what is going on in your child’s life. Note sudden changes in mood or schoolwork. Respect their need for independence but let them know you are ready to help. Make time for conversations, letting your child know their opinions matter and sets the stage for bigger conversations during more challenging times.



**Be mindful of adolescent development** – As youth move from childhood to adulthood, their brains and bodies go through a lot of change. These changes often affect their emotions and behaviours. They often focus on the ways they relate to youth peers. Respect that youth may need some time and space to think and feel their way through a new situation.



**Share clear, consistent expectations** – Be clear with your child(ren) about setting boundaries, guidelines and rules related to substance use. The more you discuss these openly with your child, the more likely they will understand your intentions, the reasons for them, and the more likely they will adopt them.



**Learn from mistakes** – Life presents many chances to learn, including those times that involve substance use. Use mistakes as an opportunity to learn together.



**Expect to be challenged** – Be respectful and prepared to negotiate but clearly communicate your position and your own values.



**Build their skills** – Help your child to solve their own issue instead of solving it for them. This helps build their confidence and resilience.



**Be a positive role model** – How do you have fun, spend time with friends, or deal with stress? From an early age, your child will watch and learn behaviours from you. They see how you monitor, limit or turn down chances to use substances. Lead by example.



**Be informed**– Youth may use substances for many reasons, including wanting to feel good, cope with pain or stress, or for fun. Understanding what is going on in your youth's life and that substance use, if present, might be meeting some needs, can help you support them.



**Put their safety first** – Prepare youth to be safe in case they choose to use a substance. Teach your child how to reduce substance-related harms by discussing steps they can take to be safe – *not too much, not too often, never alone and never when dangerous (eg. when driving).*

# Additional Information

<a href="#"><u>HEALTHLINK BC</u></a>	A variety of resources provide advice on how you can begin and continue having conversations about substance use with your child.
<a href="#"><u>KELTY MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE CENTRE</u></a>	Includes information on types of substances, how to talk with your child about substance use, and what to do if you are concerned about problematic substance use. You will also find information about concurrent disorders, which is when mental illness and substance use disorders happen at the same time.
<a href="#"><u>SUBSTANCE USE AND YOUNG PEOPLE: A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES AND THEIR CARING COMMUNITIES</u></a>	This guide offers support to help parents and other caring adults talk with young people about substances.
<a href="#"><u>FOUNDRY</u></a>	Offers young people ages 12-24 (and their parents/caregivers) health and wellness resources, services and supports – online and through integrated service centres in communities across BC
<a href="#"><u>TALKING WITH YOUR TEEN ABOUT VAPING</u></a>	A tip sheet for parents from Health Canada
<a href="#"><u>QUIT NOW BC</u></a>	A go-to place for those looking to quit smoking or vaping.
<a href="#"><u>CANNABIS - WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW</u></a>	Includes practical tips and strategies for talking with your child about cannabis, signs of use, considerations if the adults in the home use cannabis and additional helpful resources.
<a href="#"><u>TALKING POT WITH YOUTH</u></a>	This is a resource for parents produced with input from youth. It is a comprehensive guide that can help one better understand youth's perspective and provides answers to frequently asked questions about cannabis to support your conversation with a youth.
<a href="#"><u>TALKING TO YOUTH ABOUT OVERDOSE</u></a>	Shares information, tips and related resources and videos specific to talking about overdose.
<a href="#"><u>RECOGNIZING RESILIENCE: A WORKBOOK FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS OF TEENS INVOLVED WITH SUBSTANCES</u></a>	This is a workbook for parents and caregivers who love and worry about a teenager who may be experimenting with or regularly engaged in a relationship with substances.



# Need Immediate Help?

If your youth is showing signs of becoming dependent or is using substances to cope with problems, anxiety or depression, talk to someone:

## **Alcohol & Drug Info Line**

1-800-663-1441  
[www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca)

## **Mental Health Support Line**

310-6789 (no area code needed)  
[www.CrisisLines.bc.ca](http://www.CrisisLines.bc.ca)

## **Online Chat for Adults**

[www.CrisisCentreChat.ca](http://www.CrisisCentreChat.ca)

