

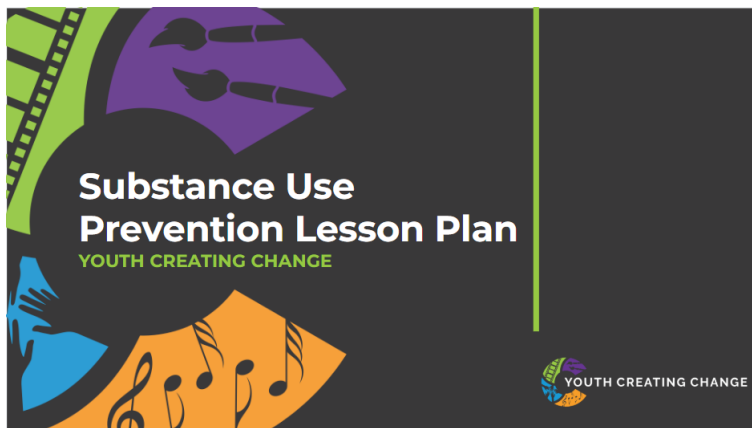
Youth Creating Change Substance Use Curriculum Facilitation Guide

Suitable for grades 5-12, young people ages 12-24

Outline:

- Information about this lesson (for advisors)
- Information about Youth Creating Change and the Directing Change Film Contest Substance Use Category (for advisors and youth)
- Lesson Plan #1: Substance Use, Addiction & Healthy Coping (for advisors and youth)
- Lesson Plan #2: Spotting and Responding to an Opioid Overdose (for advisors and youth)
- Crisis, Substance Use and Mental Health Resources (for advisors and youth)
- Additional Educational Resources (for advisors)

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INFORMATION ABOUT THIS LESSON (FOR ADVISORS)

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Dear Advisors,

As you work through the lesson, be aware that some students may already have seen or known someone who experienced an overdose or, more broadly, someone who has a substance use disorder and may find it difficult to learn about the content of this lesson. It is appropriate to preface the lesson with a compassionate message about the content and a brief description of how students may seek support if they need it.

Talking points, as well as additional resources and lesson plans can be found throughout the presentation and in the "notes" section of slides.

We recommend pairing this with additional lesson plans on substance use, healthy coping, mental health and suicide prevention.

Find educational resources at
youthcreatingchange.org/learning-lab/.

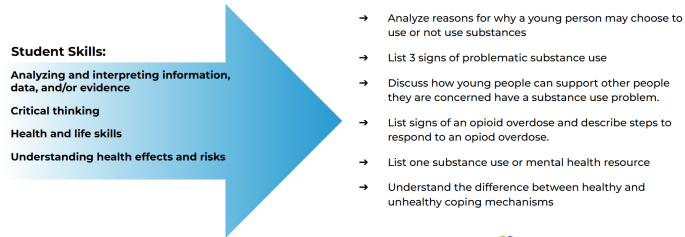
Link: <https://youthcreatingchange.org/learning-lab/>

Before we start this lesson, I want to give you a heads-up that we will be discussing opioids, a class of drugs, and overdoses. Some of you may have had past experience personally or within your family or friends around drugs or drug overdoses, and the information and scenarios in this lesson may be hard, emotionally. This is important information to learn; however, if you find that you need to take a break from the lesson, you may [describe the procedure that is appropriate for your school/classroom for students who need to take a break or seek emotional support].

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LESSON PLAN OBJECTIVES

Demonstrate age- and developmentally appropriate health and safety practices that prevent or reduce the risk of disease and injury and improve quality of life by knowing the signs of an overdose and how to respond to help save a life.



YOUTH CREATING CHANGE

2024 National Health Education Standards

- **Concepts/Facts**
 - NHES 1.12.5 — Analyze how individual responsibility enhances personal, family, peer, school, and community health.
- **Health Skills**
 - NHES 7.12.1 — Demonstrate age and developmentally appropriate health and safety practices that prevent or reduce the risk of disease and injury and improve quality of life.

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INFORMATION ABOUT YOUTH
CREATING CHANGE
(FOR ADVISORS)

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YOUTH CREATING CHANGE

Youth Creating Change is a non-profit organization (501(c3)) dedicated to placing young people's voices and creativity at the center of suicide prevention and mental health programming.

Core Initiatives:

- **Mental Health, Suicide and Substance Use Prevention Curriculum delivered through film and art contests**
- Mental Health Thrival Kits
- Awareness & Education
- Youth Development
- District and School Trainings
- Support After Youth Suicide Death
- Parent Engagement



LEARN → APPLY → SHARE



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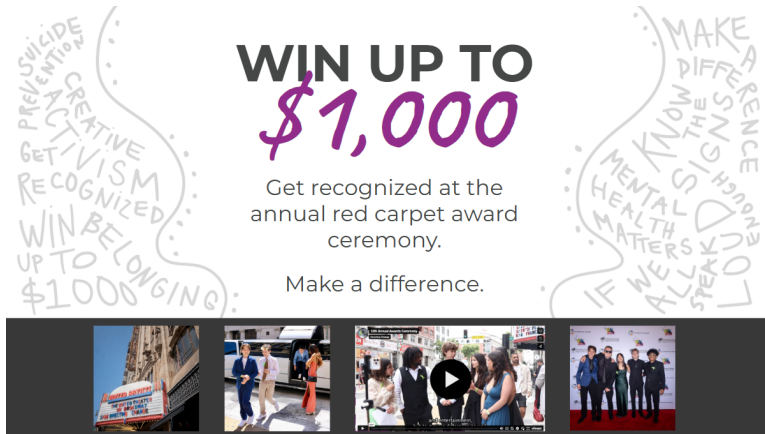


Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPcAWa5eLmw>

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ABOUT THE DIRECTING
CHANGE CONTEST
(FOR YOUTH)

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WIN UP TO \$1,000

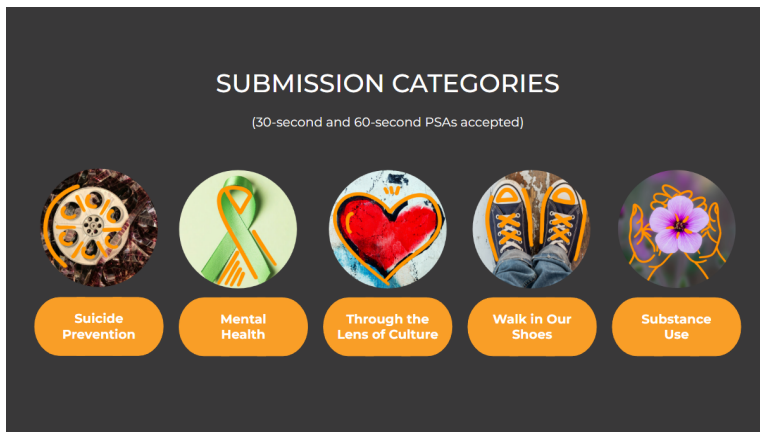
Get recognized at the annual red carpet award ceremony.

Make a difference.

The graphic features a central text area with a large '\$1,000' in purple. Surrounding this text are two circular cloud-like shapes containing various phrases related to mental health and suicide prevention, such as 'SUICIDE PREVENTION', 'GET INVOLVED', 'RECOGNIZED', 'WIN UP TO \$1,000', 'BELONGING', 'MAKE A DIFFERENCE', 'KNOW THE SIGNS', 'MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS', 'IF WE ALL SPEAK UP', 'DON'T LOSE HOPE', and 'HELP'. Below the text is a horizontal strip of four small video thumbnails showing people at a red carpet event, with a play button icon in the center.

Link to 2023 Event Recap: <https://vimeo.com/1008117910>

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SUBMISSION CATEGORIES

(30-second and 60-second PSAs accepted)

The graphic displays five submission categories, each with a circular icon and a corresponding orange button below it:

- Suicide Prevention**: Icon of a film reel.
- Mental Health**: Icon of a green ribbon.
- Through the Lens of Culture**: Icon of a heart with a crown.
- Walk in Our Shoes**: Icon of a pair of sneakers.
- Substance Use**: Icon of a purple flower.

Link: <https://directingchangeca.org/>

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LEARN - APPLY - SHARE

Entering a film in this category provides you with an opportunity to explore the reasons behind why young people may choose to use substances, talk about how to spot and respond to an overdose, and share healthy ways to cope with tough times and stress.

THE POWER OF INFLUENCE:
Many young people start using substances because friends or siblings introduce them to it. But what if friends and siblings used their power to influence those who look up to them towards the decision not to use substances? Create a PSA with a message to a friend, sibling, or even your younger self with the things you want them to think about before they make the choice to drink alcohol, vape, or use other substances.

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND:
Your PSA can encourage friends to watch out for signs that someone is struggling and offer tips for how to offer support.

GET THE FACTS, SAVE A LIFE:
You may have heard of fentanyl, but do you know enough to stay safe and protect your friends? Whether it's pills, powder, or something shared at a party, fentanyl could be in it. Your film can share information about the dangers of fentanyl, how to spot and respond to an opioid overdose, and encourage young people to look out for their friends.

THE TRUTH UNFILTERED:
Interview young people in your school or community about their thoughts on substance use, such as alcohol, vaping, opioids, cannabis, and other drugs. What do they believe? What do they wish they knew? Use real voices to uncover the "why" and "why not" young people choose to use substances such as alcohol, vapes, cannabis or others.

COPING MY WAY:
Create a film that creatively tells a story about stress or adversity young people experience and how they cope. What barriers might be preventing a young person from using a healthy coping strategy instead of an unhealthy one such as substance use? Creatively explore what "coping my way" can look like.

Substance Use

CATEGORY QUICK FACTS

- Live-action films need to be 60 seconds long. Animated films can be 30 seconds long.
- Statewide Judging: Films in this category compete during one round of judging on a statewide level.
- First Place \$1000 (Second Place \$500, Third Place \$350, Honorable Mention \$100)
- Films cannot contain alcohol or other drug use, show an overdose, and will lose points for showing items, especially close-ups, of alcohol, pills, vape pens and more.

Link: <https://directingchangeca.org/submission-categories/substance-use/>

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TIPS FOR A WINNING SUBMISSION

Do

- **Think of telling a story** (small nuggets of a story) — on your experiences, feelings, choices, or messages of hope.
- **Share messages** that are credible and relevant for other young people. Instead of projects that simply say, "It's bad for you, don't do it," we want you to dig deeper, to unfilter the truth. Without judgment and shame.
- **Be sure that all information is accurate**, cite your sources!
- **Model the behaviors you want to see:** Reaching out to a friend, navigating peer pressure, etc)
- **Focus on peer support, resilience, or alternatives** — rather than re-creating scenes of use.
- **Review your film** through the lens of someone who has lost a loved one to an overdose.

Don't

- **Do not show an overdose.** Instead, make your story about how a friend might spot the warning signs of an overdose and take action to prevent the overdose instead of focusing on the overdose as the overcome.
- **Your film cannot show drug use.** We are challenging you to tell a story about substance use, but without showing young people engaging in alcohol or drug use.
- **Do not glorify or promote substance use**
- **Limit or don't use photos or videos of pills, alcohol, aaape pens, and other drugs as "props"** Instead, try using metaphors, illustrations, or symbolism (animations, graphics, blurred props) rather than literal depictions of substances
- **Don't use AI**
- **Don't use brand names or copyrighted images and music**
- **Avoid exaggeration and shaming**

TIPS!

All films should be educational, hopeful, and include information about what someone can do to help themselves or help a friend.



YOUTH CREATING CHANGE

Advisors, if you have a youth interested in submitting a film about responding to an overdose, consider showing the two example PSA (with our analysis) that are listed in the “Disqualifying Content” section on this page: <https://directingchange.ca.org/submission-categories/substance-use/>

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GET STARTED

To get started, youth need to select an adult advisor, create a profile, and upload their release form.



Link: <https://directingchange.ca.org/get-started>

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HOPE & JUSTICE FILM & ART CONTEST

The Hope & Justice Art and Film Contest centers topics youth are grappling with in their day to day lives – mental health, racism, economic uncertainty, climate change, health disparities – with prompts that ask them to process their feelings and build healthy coping skills through creative expression.

- Open to young people 12-25 in California
- Offered throughout the school year
- All art forms accepted (including visual art, poetry, narrative works, short films/PSAs, original music, dance, TikToks, and more!)
- All 60-second films entered into Directing Change Film Contest!
- Win up to \$300 in Amazon gift cards

www.HopeandJustice.art

Link: <https://hopeandjustice.art/>

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Directing Change Program & Film Contest

DirectingChangeCA.org

Hope & Justice

HopeandJustice.art

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SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION LESSON PLANS

1. Substance Use, Addiction and Healthy Coping
2. Spotting and Responding to an Opioid Overdose

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LESSON PLAN #1: SUBSTANCE USE, ADDICTION & HEALTHY COPING

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DISCUSSION QUESTION

What are some reasons a young person might drink alcohol, vape, or use substances like cannabis or prescription drugs? What are some reasons why not?

Possible answers for “why”: To experiment, reduce stress and anxiety, numb pain, peer relationships, genetics and family history, coping with underlying mental health conditions. In addition, many youth may not understand the risks (for example: that fentanyl may be present in pills bought offline and online,, or that mixing alcohol and other drugs can increase overdose risk).

Possible Answers for “why not”: To avoid negative consequences such as: Getting in trouble, academic difficulties, health-related problems, mental health problems, long term consequences for using poor judgment (e.g. something captured on video or social media), impacted relationships with friends and family, DUI's, involvement with the juvenile justice system, athletic performing or being cut from team.

Share: Most teens and young adults do not use drugs. According to the National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics. Please check for data updates, last accessed 8.28.2025:

<https://drugabusestatistics.org/teen-drug-use/>

- “Over 90% of 12 - 17 year olds (about 93 out of 100) didn’t use drugs or alcohol in the past month—most teens are alcohol or drug-free.”
- “Only around 7% of 12- to 17-year-olds report using drugs or alcohol in the last month. That

means most teens choose to stay substance-free.

Show & Discuss: Following the discussion, show “Pain Never Lasts”. Ask: What are the stressors identified by the young people shown in the PSA? Does it feel relatable?

Pain Never Lasts (<http://vimeo.com/92756717>)

UC Riverside, Riverside County

Slide Art: Strings Attached

John F. Kennedy Middle College High School, Riverside County

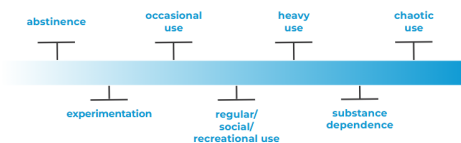
“My artwork regards the strings that come with being in an environment with drug abuse. Often, high schoolers face peer pressure. They face manipulation and gaslighting that leads them to drug use. My artwork symbolizes the manipulation that is often behind the abuse of drugs and the effects that come with it.”

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SUBSTANCE USE

Substance used can be viewed on a **spectrum**.

- There are many different degrees of use.
- The effects of use vary from person to person.



Addiction = compulsive drug-seeking and use despite negative consequences (among other signs and symptoms)



YOUTH CREATING CHANGE

There are many degrees of substance use and the effects of use vary from person to person.

Addiction – sometimes described on a spectrum as “Substance Dependence” – is a medical condition that affects the brain and behavior. It’s marked by strong cravings and continued use even when someone wants to stop or is experiencing harm. What may feel like “chaotic use” often reflects the brain changes that make it harder to control substance use, not a lack of willpower.

Recognizing this helps us respond with care, compassion, and the right kind of support so recovery and healing are possible.

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SIGNS OF ADDICTION

Addiction or substance use disorders exert a long and powerful influence on the brain that manifests in 3 distinct ways:



Craving for the Substance



Loss of Control Over its Use



Continuing Use Despite Negative Consequences



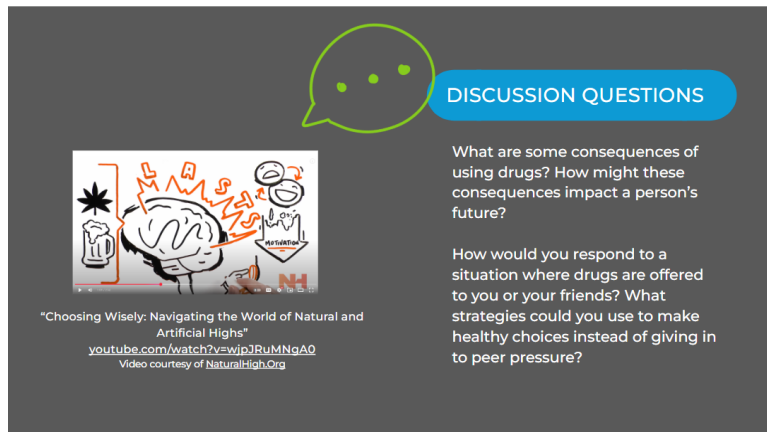
YOUTH CREATING CHANGE

Addiction or substance use disorders have a long and powerful influence on the brain that shows in three distinct ways: craving for the substance, loss of control over its use, and continuing use despite negative consequences.

Here are some warning signs that someone could be using substances. These signs might not be related to substance use, but are indicators that someone is struggling and might need additional support. Trust your instincts, and if you feel something is off, reach out.

- *Hostility or irritability*
- *Breaks household rules and curfews*
- *School attendance becomes irregular, or grades slip*
- *Relationships with family and friends deteriorate*
- *A new circle of friends*
- *Money disappears from the house*
- *Interest in hobbies or sports stops*
- *They are withdrawing or isolating themselves*
- *Sleeping patterns change*

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are some consequences of using drugs? How might these consequences impact a person's future?

How would you respond to a situation where drugs are offered to you or your friends? What strategies could you use to make healthy choices instead of giving in to peer pressure?

"Choosing Wisely: Navigating the World of Natural and Artificial Highs"
[youtube.com/watch?v=wpj3BuMNgA0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wpj3BuMNgA0)
Video courtesy of NaturalHigh.Org

Play 2-minute video "[Choosing Wisely: Navigating the World of Natural and Artificial Highs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wpj3BuMNgA0)"
(Video courtesy of NaturalHigh.Org)

Find tips for strategies to manage peer pressure at
<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/blog/tips-for-coping-with-peer-pressure/> and
<https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/peer-pressure-and-fitting-in/>.

From their websites:

Stay true to your values - Remembering what is important to you can be a great starting place when managing peer pressure. Own what's important to you (e.g. doing well in sports). Staying confident in yourself and your choices can help you stay connected to what truly matters to you – instead of changing just to be liked or “fit in.” Prioritize being someone you like and respect instead of doing what others around you are doing.

Find your group - Everyone changes overtime. Think about it; if you're honest with yourself, are you still the same person you were 5 or even 10 years ago? And, as individuals change, so do peer groups. You don't have to stay friends with the same people over time if they no longer make you feel comfortable or align with your values. No matter where you are on your journey, no matter what your likes and hobbies are, there are people out there for you (you just have to find them).

Have an escape plan - Sometimes, the simplest way to navigate an uncomfortable situation is to walk away. For this reason, it can be helpful to have a pre-planned excuse for making your exit, even on short notice. It's also OK if this excuse is made up.

- As time permits, optional discussion or activity: What are some ways you could prepare? (Possible examples: Share that parents randomly perform drug tests, make a “safe” list of people you can always reach, then choose a code word or emoji to communicate when you are in an uncomfortable situation and the next steps.

Build healthy coping skills - It's always a good idea to have some go-to strategies for decreasing anxiety and processing peer pressure. For instance, you can try journaling about what you are feeling, make a list of reasons not to give into peer pressure, practice grounding and deep breathing exercises to name just a few.

NOTE: SLIDE ON HEALTHY COPING ARE INCLUDED LATER IN THIS LESSON PLAN

Information courtesy of
<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/blog/tips-for-coping-with-peer-pressure/>

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ALLY ROBERTSON – SINGER/SONGWRITER
@allyrobertson



ROB MACCHIARO – PRO SURFER
@robmacchiaro



CASCADEE POPE – SINGER/SONGWRITER
@cassadeepope



JORDAN ROMERO – WORLD'S YOUNGEST MOUNTAIN CLIMBER
@jordanromero



LAUREN CONRAD – FASHION DESIGNER & AUTHOR
@laurenconrad



TIM LINCUM – PRO BASEBALL PLAYER
@timlincecum

Find stories at: www.naturalhigh.org/storyteller/

ACTIVITY

Drugs can push the natural things that make you happy way down your list. What are some things you'd never want to lose?

1. Make a list of some of the things you'd never want to lose.
2. Pick one of the stories from this website. What mattered to them?

Discuss: In the video on the previous slide, it's mentioned that drugs can push the natural things that make you happy way down your list. What are some things you love doing now that you'd never want to lose?

Activity: Pick one of the stories from the website and answer: What mattered to them?

Stories: www.naturalhigh.org/storyteller/

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HOW TO HELP A FRIEND

1 Learn the Warning Signs

- Hostility or irritability
- Breaking rules, missing curfews, and/or skipping school
- Slipping grades
- Changes in relationships with family and friends
- A new circle of friends
- Indications that money is tight
- Interest in hobbies or sports has changed
- Withdrawal or isolation
- Sleeping too much or too little

2 Start the Conversation

- Use "I" statements such as "I'm worried about you because I care about your safety."
- Listen more than you talk; sometimes just feeling heard makes a big difference.
- Avoid pressuring them to stop.

3 Practical Support

- Don't promise to keep secrets if their safety is at risk.
- Share resources and encourage reaching out for help.
- Stay connected. Check in regularly, even with a simple text or message.



YOUTH CREATING CHANGE

Discuss: Here are some ideas for how you can support a friend, sibling, or someone you care about. Are there any additional ideas or tips you have?

Remind youth that substance use disorder is a health condition, and as dependence develops, control isn't always a choice. Instead of trying to persuade someone to stop, it can be more helpful to show support by checking in, spending time together, and reminding them they're not alone.

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WORDS MATTER

Instead of...	Use...	Because...
• Addict • User • Substance abuser • Drug abuser • Alcoholic • Drunk • Former addict	• Person with substance use disorder • Person with opioid use disorder • Person with alcohol use disorder • Person who misuses alcohol • Person who engages in unhealthy alcohol use • Person in recovery/long-term recovery • Person who previously used drugs	• Person-first language • These changes convey that a person "has" a problem (rather than that they "are" the problem) • These terms avoid eliciting negative associations, punitive attitudes, and individual blame



YOUTH CREATING CHANGE

The language that we use to talk about substance use is important. Many common phrases used to talk about people who use drugs imply judgment, and shame. This is called "stigmatizing" language. Whether used intentionally or unintentionally, it can create a space that may be unwelcoming.

This is easy to understand in overtly negative terms such as "junkie," "crackhead," etc., but language matters in much more subtle ways and can reveal assumptions about a person or their substance use that may be unfair, inaccurate, and harmful. For example, instead of using the term junkie, addict, or drunk, refer to that individual as a person who misuses drugs or alcohol. Avoiding stigmatizing language can help people feel more comfortable discussing substance use and seeking help.

Additional resources on this topic:

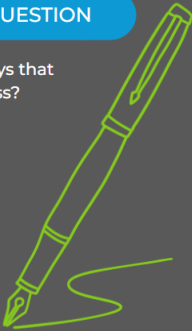
- Guidance for Using Non Stigmatizing Images for Substance Use: https://54817af5-b764-42ff-a7e2-97d6e4449c1a.usrfiles.com/ugd/54817a_bb3fb7b654f949fa92abad756e7b6d7b.pdf
- Words Matter: The Language of Addiction - <https://drugfree.org/article/shouldnt-use-word-addict/>
- Words Matter- Terms to Use and Avoid When Talking About Addiction - <https://www.drugabuse.gov/nidamed-medical-health-professionals/health-professions-education/words-matter-terms-to-use-avoid-when-talking-about-addiction>

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An illustration showing a pair of hands writing in a notebook. The notebook is open, and the hands are holding a pen. There are various art supplies around, like a palette, brushes, and a cup of paint.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

What are some ways that you cope with stress?

A stylized illustration of a pen, with a green outline and a blue body. The pen is shown in a vertical position, with a small squiggle at the bottom.

*The art piece in this slide was submitted to the Hope & Justice contest offered by Youth Creating Change. **Journal of Hope**; Artist: Xin Lu, Claremont High School, Tri-City*

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HEALTHY COPING SKILLS



- Practicing mindfulness and deep breathing
- Eating well
- Moving your body
- Getting enough sleep
- Finding supportive relationships
- Spending time outside
- Caring for your mental health

Graphic from <https://osg.ca.gov/dearstress toolkit/>

Coping strategies are actions we take to deal with stress, problems, or uncomfortable emotions and situations. Unhealthy coping strategies tend to feel good in the moment, but can have long-term negative consequences. Many of the examples you just shared fall into one of these healthy coping strategies—Being mindful, eating well, moving our body, getting rest, finding supportive relationships, spending time in nature and caring for our mental health.

Ask: Can you think of examples of unhealthy coping skills?

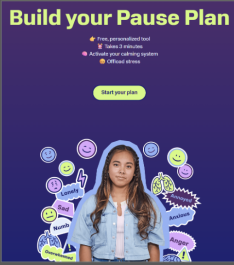
Answers could include: drug or alcohol use, overeating, procrastination, sleeping too much, isolating oneself, self-harm, and aggression.

Discuss: For specific examples provided, ask: What consequences might result from this coping strategy? What barriers might be preventing the person from using a healthy coping strategy instead?

Optional Activity 1: In groups, think of scenarios that are stressful or uncomfortable, list ways in which a young person might cope in unhealthy ways and then brainstorm healthy ways. Scenarios could include a break-up, friend drama, being cut from a sports team, family pressure and expectations, a bad grade, family problems such as divorce or fighting at home, moving away from home. Song for Charlie offers a variety of healthy coping skills:

<https://www.songforcharlie.org/page/for-teens-young-adults>

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ACTIVITY

Drugs can push the natural things that make you happy way down your list. What are some things you'd never want to lose?

1. Visit the Take Space to Pause website and complete the 3-minute "build Your Pause" activity.

Get started at: www.takespacetopause.org

Activity: The Take Space to Pause Campaign offers a 3-minute "Build Your Pause" activity that can be completed online. Visit www.takespacetopause.org, learn about coping strategies, and build a pause plan.

Optional Activity:

Show one of more of the youth-created PSAs linked below

Activity: Individually or in pairs, have youth and young people create a list:

- Ways to cope that work for me OR
- When I am feeling _____, I will try to do this.

The list could be done on a piece of paper or on their mobile device. If on a piece of paper, ask them to take a picture to keep it on their phone.

Youth-Created PSAs:

Bloom (<http://vimeo.com/919733913>)

San Diego Met High School, San Diego County

Language: English with English captions

"Bloom" addresses the intersectionality of struggling with mental health as an immigrant or child of immigrants. The film analyzes the guilt of talking about mental health struggles when trying to be grateful for the better life your family fought for and explores a variety of coping mechanisms.

Prioritize You (<http://vimeo.com/1059059206>)

El Dorado High School, Orange County

This film reminds youth that everyone needs to take care of their mental health and that there are healthy coping mechanisms we can all work into our routines.

Good Medicine (<https://vimeo.com/258036872>)

Fresno American Indian Health Project, Fresno County

This film centers on the Native community, addressing alcohol use, stigma, and the power of cultural healing practices. **NOTE FOR ADVISORS:** If you show this video mention that for our contest, this film would lose points for acting out a person in a "passed-out" state.

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LESSON PLAN #2: SPOTTING AND RESPONDING TO AN OPIOID OVERDOSE

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WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

Prescription Opioids

Prescription opioids are prescribed by doctors to treat severe pain such as a sports injury, dental work, or cancer. When taken as prescribed, opioids are relatively safe and can reduce someone's pain for the short term.

Heroin

An illegal drug made from poppy plants that is very addictive. It is sold as white or brownish powder or as 'black tar.'

Fentanyl

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid, meaning it is made in a lab. It is 50 to 100 times stronger than other opioids and is now one of the most common drugs involved in drug overdose deaths in the United States.



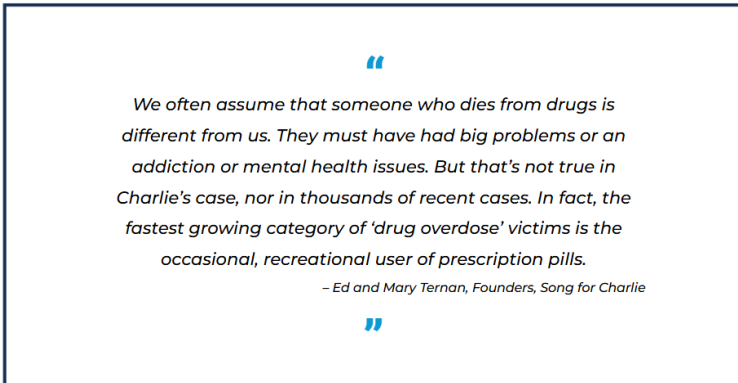
YOUTH CREATING CHANGE

Opioids are a class of drugs that have been used for hundreds of years to treat pain, as well as treat symptoms such as coughing. People can receive legal prescriptions for drugs from a doctor or in a hospital. Opioids are naturally found in the opium poppy plant, which some opioid medications are made from. However, other opioids are made by scientists in labs. You can largely bucket opioids into three categories: prescription opioids, heroin and fentanyl.

- **Prescription opioids** are prescribed by doctors to treat severe pain such as a sports injury, dental work, or cancer. When taken as prescribed by a doctor, opioids are relatively safe and can reduce someone's pain for the short term. But even though they are prescribed by a doctor, they do have serious risks and side effects, especially when misused.
 - Common types include oxycodone (OxyContin), hydrocodone (Vicodin), morphine, Percocet, and codeine.
- Perhaps the most well-known opioid is **Heroin**, which is an illegal opioid that is typically injected, snorted, or smoked. It is typically sold as a white or brownish powder, or as 'black tar' heroin, which is sticky like roofing tar or hard like coal.

- **Fentanyl** is a synthetic opioid, meaning it is made in a lab either legally or illegally. It is 50 times stronger than other opioids and 100 times stronger than morphine and now the most common drug involved in drug overdose deaths.
 - Drug traffickers are mixing fentanyl into other drugs and filler powder, often in the form of a pill, because fentanyl is cheap to make and is very strong. Many individuals do not know that it is present in the drugs they are taking.

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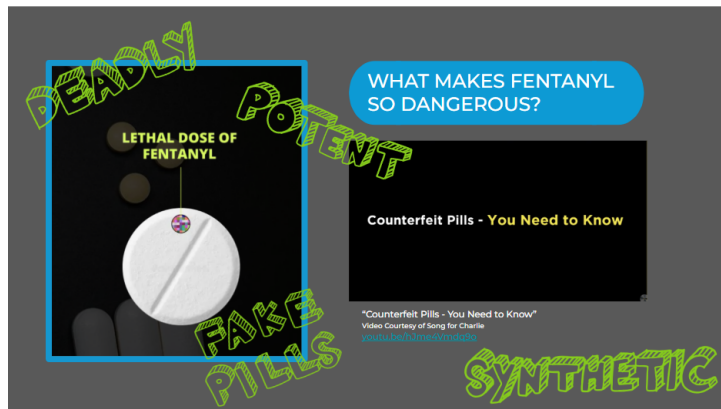


Read quote.

After the sudden loss of their son Charlie, Ed and Mary Ternan created Song for Charlie to bring awareness to fake prescription pills being sold online targeting young people.

Ask: *What are your thoughts on this statement? Does it surprise you that so many drug overdose victims are occasional users of prescription pills? What makes Fentanyl so dangerous? Do you think your friends know that many pills contain potentially lethal doses of fentanyl?*

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Play video on screen: youtu.be/hJme4Vmdq9o

Unlike morphine and heroin, fentanyl is not derived from the opium poppy. Rather, it is a synthetic product, meaning it is “formed through a chemical process by human agency”; i.e., it is not derived from plants. This means that it can be produced quickly – it is not dependent on agricultural and harvest conditions. Since the supply is only limited by the availability of the chemicals and the availability of people to make it, fentanyl is exceptionally cheap and easy to make compared to plant-based opioids.

Pills bought online, through social media, or that are not prescribed by a doctor may contain fentanyl. There has been an increase in deadly overdoses due to fake pills containing drugs or chemicals that shouldn't be in them. These pills are made to look just like prescription medications, but they are not.

Fentanyl is very potent. It is 50 times stronger than Heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. That has many implications, for instance: Just a tiny amount can be lethal, especially if you don't have a tolerance to opioids.

Fentanyl takes effect faster and wears off sooner, making it highly addictive. Standardized dosing in a pressed tablet requires precise measures of tiny quantities, something that is not guaranteed by illegal suppliers. The difference between “high” and “die” is often as small as two milligrams, or roughly a few grains of salt. **See “Lethal Dose of Fentanyl” image on slide.**

Information courtesy of [www.SongforCharlie.org](https://www.songforcharlie.org). Find additional videos and personal story testimonies here: <https://www.songforcharlie.org/articles/counterfeit-pills-you-need-to-know>

Additional information:

As of 2023, drug overdoses have become the third leading cause of death among U.S. adolescents aged 13–17, following firearm-related injuries and transportation-related incidents. This shift occurred between 2019 and 2022, with overdose death rates more than doubling during that period. Source: https://www.shadac.org/news/adolescent-drug-overdose-deaths-pandemic-third-leading-cause-death?utm_source=chatgpt.com

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HOW TO SPOT AN OPIOID OVERDOSE

What do you already know about how to recognize if someone is experiencing an opioid overdose?



"No Drama No Help"
Video Courtesy of the [Over the Dose Campaign](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xt03BjGvHo8)
[youtu.be/Xt03BjGvHo8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xt03BjGvHo8)

Warning: This PSA depicts a possible drug overdose.



Ask: What do you already know about how to recognize if someone is experiencing an opioid overdose?

Possible answers: pale and/or clammy face, bluish purple skin, grayish or ashen skin, limp body, purple or blue fingernails or lips, vomiting or gurgling noises, will not wake up, cannot speak, shallow/slow breathing, slow heartbeat, not breathing, no heartbeat.

This will allow you to determine what foundational knowledge young people already have for this skill. Make a note that signs of overdose from other substances (e.g. alcohol poisoning) can look different and we are focused on how to spot and respond to an opioid overdose.

Play Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xt03BjGvHo8&ab_channel=OverTheDoseVT

Activation Warning. Before we play this video, I want to give you a heads-up that it will allude to a possible overdose. Some of you may have had past experience personally or within your family or friends around alcohol, drugs or drug overdoses, and the information and scenarios in this lesson may be hard, emotionally. This is important information to learn; however, if you find that you need to take a break from the lesson, you may [describe the procedure that is appropriate for your school/classroom for students who need to take a break or seek emotional support].

Advisors, if you have a youth interested in submitting a film about responding to an overdose, visit the "Disqualifying Content" section on this page to learn how the PSA on this slide would lose points. <https://directingchange.org/submission-categories/substance-use/>

Ask: Would you have spotted the signs of an overdose? Emphasize that an overdose does not always look dramatic, and it's important to be vigilant.

Information courtesy of:

<https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/parents-educators/lesson-plans/understanding-an-overdose-and-how-to-respond-to-one>

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HOW TO SPOT AN OPIOID OVERDOSE

When someone experiences an overdose, you may notice the following symptoms:



"Signs of an Overdose"
Video Courtesy of Song for Charlie
youtu.be/RD5T1b6R1K4



As we just saw in the PSA on the previous slide, an overdose is usually not a dramatic event, and recognizing the signs of opioid overdose is essential to saving lives. Call 911 immediately if a person exhibits ANY of these symptoms.

Play Video and/or Discuss Graphic: [Signs of an Overdose.](#)

During an overdose, breathing can be dangerously slowed or stopped, causing brain damage or death. Fortunately, the good news is, you don't have to be a medical professional to identify the signs or to help.

When a person experiences an overdose, you may notice the following symptoms:

- They cannot be awakened or are unable to speak.
- Their breathing or heartbeat slows or stops.
- Small, constricted pinpoint pupils. Also, their eyes may not be responsive to light if light is shone on them.
- Their face is extremely pale and/or feels clammy to the touch. For lighter-skinned people, the skin tone turns bluish purple; for darker-skinned people, it turns grayish or ashen.
- Their body goes limp.
- Their fingernails or lips have a purple or blue color.
- They start vomiting or making gurgling noises.

Information courtesy of:

<https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/parents-educators/lesson-plans/understanding-an-overdose-and-how-to-respond-to-one> and

<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/patients/Preventing-an-Opioid-Overdose-Tip-Card-a.pdf>

Find additional worksheets and activities on this topic in the [lesson plan](#).

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HOW TO RESPOND

Do...	Don't...
• Call 9-1-1 right away. All you have to say is "I think someone may have overdosed" and provide your location • Give naloxone if you have it • Try to keep the person awake and breathing • Lay the person on their side • Stay with them until emergency workers arrive	• Don't hit or try to forcefully wake or move the person. (If you are unable to wake the person by shouting or lightly pinching them, they are likely unconscious). • Don't put the person in a cold bath or shower (this increases the risk of falling, drowning, or going into shock). • Don't try to make the person throw up. (This increases the risk of choking).



The video briefly covered what to do if you think someone has overdosed **from opioids**, but here we'll go a bit more in-depth. It's at times difficult to tell whether a person is high or has overdosed, but best practices if you aren't positive is to treat it like an overdose.

There are five steps that you can follow to assist in the prevention of harm following an overdose. As the video we just watched went over, the **first step** is to always immediately call 9-1-1. **Secondly**, if you have naloxone, also known as Narcan, administer it. Naloxone CAN NOT harm someone if they are not overdosing, but it CAN save their life if they are. **Thirdly**, do your best to try and keep the person awake and breathing, but in a safe way. You do not want to try to get them to stand up, but if possible, put them in a recovery position on their side, which is the **fourth** step. **Lastly**, staying with the person until emergency help arrives is always recommended.

EMPHASIZE: If you're unsure, administer Naloxone or Narcan. It's safe, it won't cause harm if the person isn't overdosing, and it can save a life if they are.

Optional Videos:

As time permits, play this Naloxone administration video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlRww4ZIHNA&t=7s>

Or, This video from Song for Charlie: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6NEAnaqmc4>

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THE GOOD SAMARITAN LAW

Many overdose deaths can be prevented, but people often fear arrest if they call 9-1-1. The Good Samaritan Fatal Overdose Law provides protection from arrest, charge, or prosecution for anyone who seeks emergency medical help at the scene of a suspected drug overdose.

- ❖ This means you won't get into trouble even if you are under the influence, or have a small amount of drugs in your possession.



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[AB 472, California's 911 Good Samaritan law](#), provides limited protection from arrest, charge, and prosecution for people who seek emergency medical assistance at the scene of a suspected drug overdose.

So, what does this mean? Many overdose deaths are preventable, yet people often fear arrest if they call 9-1-1 for help at the scene of a drug overdose. Good Samaritan Laws are designed to encourage people to seek medical care for the overdose victim by providing limited protection from arrest, charge, and/or prosecution for low-level drug violations.

The Good Samaritan Law is something that we have found many in the community to be unaware of, especially young adults. If there were more awareness around it, and less fear in calling 9-1-1, it is possible more lives could be saved.

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RESOURCES & SUPPORT

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SUPPORT AND CRISIS RESOURCES

 **Call or text 9-8-8 to reach the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline 24/7**

 **Teen Line – English Only**
Text TEEN to 839863
(6 PM–9 PM PT)

 **The Trevor Project**
Created for but not limited to 2SLGBTQ+ young people ages 13–24.
Call 1-866-488-7386
Text START to 678-678



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SUBSTANCE USE AND MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

 **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment Services**
Call 1-800-662-HELP(4357)

 **Free and confidential mental health support for 13-to-25 year-olds in California**
Visit: www.solunaapp.com

 **Narcotics Anonymous:**
Visit: na.org/meetingsearch

 **Alcoholics Anonymous:**
Call 510-430-8900



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ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

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Example PSAs and Personal Stories

Use these PSAs and stories to infuse into your lesson as appropriate.



"Numb"
vimeo.com/1061498616



"It's Up to Us"
vimeo.com/801047205



"Pain Never Lasts"
vimeo.com/92756717



"Danyelle Wolf"
naturalhigh.org/storyteller/danyelle-wolf/



Numb: <https://vimeo.com/1061498616>

Tennyson High School, Alameda County

This film unpacks some of the factors that can contribute to substance use, as well as the impact it can have on youth mental health.

It's Up to Us: <http://vimeo.com/801047205>

David A. Brown Middle School, Riverside County

This PSA informs viewers about the risks of abusing opioids, encouraging youth to look after their friends and know the facts about the crisis.

Pain Never Lasts: <http://vimeo.com/92756717>

UC Riverside, Riverside County

This spoken word/poetry film is about the struggles young men face. The narrator reminds young people that pain is temporary.

Danyelle Wolf: <http://naturalhigh.org/storyteller/danyelle-wolf/>

Additional Personal Story videos from Natural High can be found here, with discussion questions and activity tip sheets: <https://www.naturalhigh.org/storyteller/>

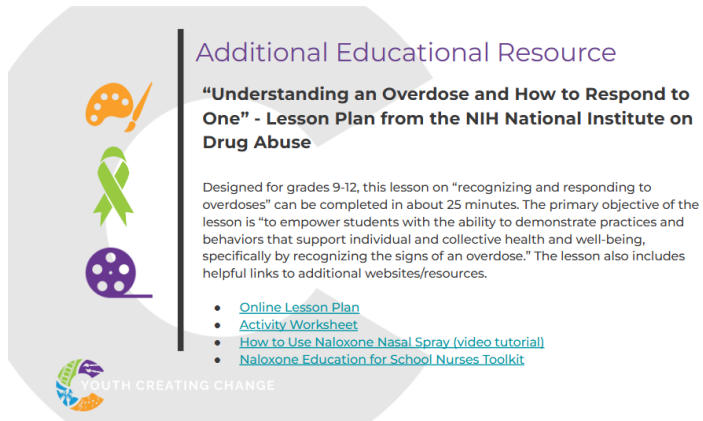
Additional PSAs (not from Youth Creating Change):

DEA/SAMHHA Red Ribbon Week PSA Contest for Colleges:

https://www.campusdrugprevention.gov/psacontest?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

- Why Not PSA: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNF8x1dzGVw>
- How to live your best life:
https://www.campusdrugprevention.gov/psacontest?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

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Additional Educational Resource

"Understanding an Overdose and How to Respond to One" - Lesson Plan from the NIH National Institute on Drug Abuse

Designed for grades 9-12, this lesson on "recognizing and responding to overdoses" can be completed in about 25 minutes. The primary objective of the lesson is "to empower students with the ability to demonstrate practices and behaviors that support individual and collective health and well-being, specifically by recognizing the signs of an overdose." The lesson also includes helpful links to additional websites/resources.

- [Online Lesson Plan](#)
- [Activity Worksheet](#)
- [How to Use Naloxone Nasal Spray \(video tutorial\)](#)
- [Naloxone Education for School Nurses Toolkit](#)

Online Lesson Plan:

<https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/parents-educators/lesson-plans/understanding-an-overdose-and-how-to-respond-to-one>

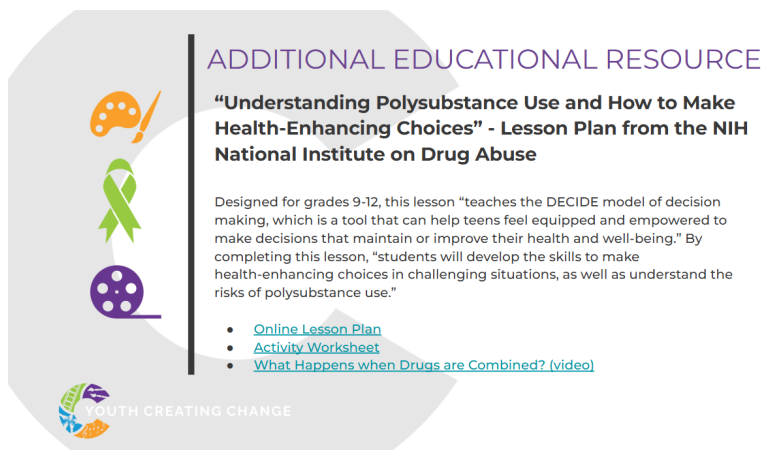
Activity Worksheet:

https://nida.nih.gov/sites/default/files/670029122-ndafw-shape-lesson-2-form_508.pdf

Naloxone Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odIFtGNjmMQ>

Naloxone Toolkit: <https://learn.nasn.org/courses/5801>

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ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

"Understanding Polysubstance Use and How to Make Health-Enhancing Choices" - Lesson Plan from the NIH National Institute on Drug Abuse

Designed for grades 9-12, this lesson "teaches the DECIDE model of decision making, which is a tool that can help teens feel equipped and empowered to make decisions that maintain or improve their health and well-being." By completing this lesson, "students will develop the skills to make health-enhancing choices in challenging situations, as well as understand the risks of polysubstance use."

- [Online Lesson Plan](#)
- [Activity Worksheet](#)
- [What Happens when Drugs are Combined? \(video\)](#)

Online Lesson Plan:

<https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/parents-educators/lesson-plans/understanding-polysubstance-use-and-how-to-make-health-enhancing-choices>

Activity Worksheet:

https://nida.nih.gov/sites/default/files/670029117-ndafw-shape-lesson-1-form_508.pdf

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ur2I4Xk5k8>

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CAMPAIGNS AND RESOURCES

A number of different campaigns and program have been developed to address various substance use topics. Here is a small selection:

- Natural High (drug prevention and life skills): www.naturalhigh.org
- Song for Charlie (fake prescription pills made with fentanyl): www.songforcharlie.org
- The Truth Initiative: www.truthinitiative.org
- Decoded (facts without filter): www.decodedca.org
- The Undo Campaign: www.undo.org
- The Real Cost Campaign: www.therealcost.betobaccofree.hhs.gov
- Behind the Haze (vaping): www.behindthehaze.com
- Live Beyond (ACEs and "stress busters"): www.livebeyondCA.org

Real Talk About Fake Pills: A Must-Watch for Teens
Fentanyl and fake pills pose a deadly risk, but awareness can save lives. The 20-minute film, Real Talk About Fake Pills, shares real stories and expert insights to help teens make safe, informed choices. It's a valuable resource for schools, community groups, and peer-led efforts, sparking meaningful conversations about safety and prevention. Watch trailer and request access here at www.songforcharlie.org/page/youth-assembly-film.

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- *Natural High:* <http://www.naturalhigh.org>
- *Song for Charlie:* <http://www.songforcharlie.org>
- *The Truth Initiative:* <https://truthinitiative.org/>
- *Decoded:* <https://decodedca.org/>
- *The Undo Campaign:* <https://www.undo.org/>
- *The Real Cost Campaign:* <https://therealcost.betobaccofree.hhs.gov/>
- *Behind the Haze:* <https://www.behindthehaze.com/>
- *Live Beyond:* <http://www.livebeyondCA.org>
- *Film Trailer:* <http://www.songforcharlie.org/page/youth-assembly-film>

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OTHER NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON HEALTH (NIH) LESSON PLANS AND ACTIVITIES

NIDA.NIH.GOV offers a wide range of other lesson plans, activities, videos, and quizzes to help teach youth about overdose, addiction, stress management, alcohol and tobacco, and more. These accessible, science-based resources for educators and community organizers can be found [here](https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/national-drug-alcohol-facts-week/get-activity-ideas).

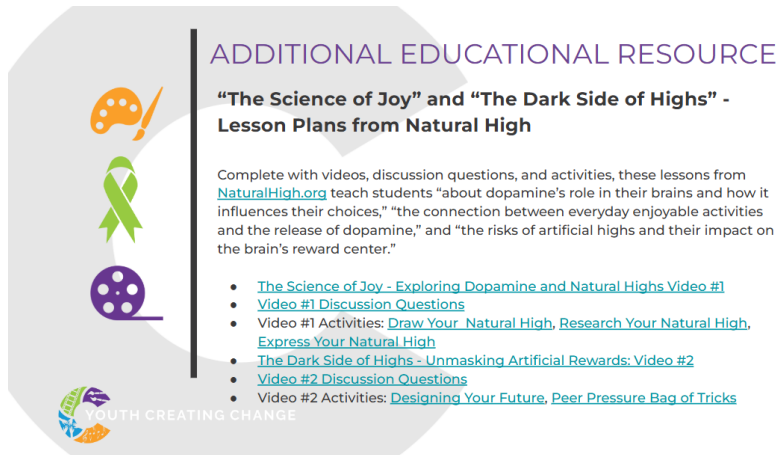
- [Understanding and Responding to an Overdose](#)
- [Teaching Youth about Addiction](#)
- [Dealing with Stress](#)
- [All About Alcohol and Nicotine](#)
- [Additional Resources for Teachers and Community Organizers](#)

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NIDA.NIH.GOV resources:

<https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/national-drug-alcohol-facts-week/get-activity-ideas>

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ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

"The Science of Joy" and "The Dark Side of Highs" - Lesson Plans from Natural High

Complete with videos, discussion questions, and activities, these lessons from [NaturalHigh.org](https://www.naturalhigh.org) teach students "about dopamine's role in their brains and how it influences their choices," "the connection between everyday enjoyable activities and the release of dopamine," and "the risks of artificial highs and their impact on the brain's reward center."

- [The Science of Joy - Exploring Dopamine and Natural Highs Video #1](#)
- [Video #1 Discussion Questions](#)
- Video #1 Activities: [Draw Your Natural High](#), [Research Your Natural High](#), [Express Your Natural High](#)
- [The Dark Side of Highs - Unmasking Artificial Rewards: Video #2](#)
- [Video #2 Discussion Questions](#)
- Video #2 Activities: [Designing Your Future](#), [Peer Pressure Bag of Tricks](#)

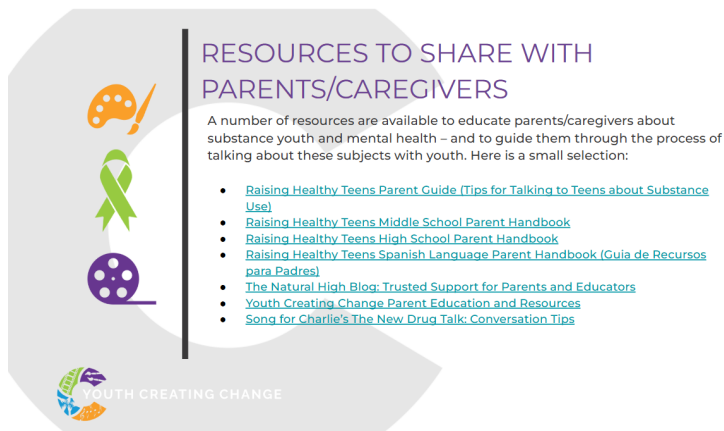
The Science of Joy (video, activity, and discussion questions):

<https://www.naturalhigh.org/storyteller/the-science-of-joy-exploring-dopamine-and-natural-highs/>

The Dark Side of Highs (video, activity, and discussion questions):

<https://www.naturalhigh.org/storyteller/the-dark-side-of-highs-unmasking-artificial-rewards/>

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RESOURCES TO SHARE WITH PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

A number of resources are available to educate parents/caregivers about substance youth and mental health – and to guide them through the process of talking about these subjects with youth. Here is a small selection:

- [Raising Healthy Teens Parent Guide \(Tips for Talking to Teens about Substance Use\)](#)
- [Raising Healthy Teens Middle School Parent Handbook](#)
- [Raising Healthy Teens High School Parent Handbook](#)
- [Raising Healthy Teens Spanish Language Parent Handbook \(Guía de Recursos para Padres\)](#)
- [The Natural High Blog: Trusted Support for Parents and Educators](#)
- [Youth Creating Change Parent Education and Resources](#)
- [Song for Charlie's The New Drug Talk: Conversation Tips](#)

Raising Health Teens Parent Guide:

<https://raisinghealthyteens.org/parenting/tips-for-talking-to-your-child/>

- *Middle School Parent Handbook:*
<https://raisinghealthyteens.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/RHT-Middle-School-Handbook.pdf>
- *High School Parent Handbook:*
<https://raisinghealthyteens.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/RHT-Parent-Resource-Guide.pdf>
- *Spanish Language Parent Handbook:*
<https://raisinghealthyteens.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/RHT-Parent-Resource-Guide-Spanish.pdf>

The Natural High: <https://www.naturalhigh.org/blog/>

Youth Creating Change: <https://youthcreatingchange.org/parent-education/>

Song for Charlie: <https://www.thenewdrugtalk.org/california/categories/conversation-tips>

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**ADDITIONAL RESOURCE:
MENTAL HEALTH THRIVAL KITS**

Download a copy of the Mental Health Thrival Kit from the [Youth Creating Change](https://youthcreatingchange.org/) website.

Kits are currently available in English and Spanish, as well as for Korean American youth and Filipino American youth.

MENTAL HEALTH THRIVAL KIT
MENTAL HEALTH THRIVAL KIT
MENTAL HEALTH THRIVAL KIT
MENTAL HEALTH THRIVAL KIT

YOUTH CREATING CHANGE

Mental Health Thrival Kits were created by Youth Creating Change. Kits are currently available in English and Spanish, as well as for Korean American youth and Filipino American youth. To download Mental Health Thrival Kits or to be added to the waitlist for printed journals, please visit www.youthcreatingchange.org/mental-health-thrival-kits/.

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Thank you!

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