

# Problematic Use Brainstorm

## Goals:

- To highlight the warning signs that substance use may be problematic and the impact of substance use on a youth's life.
- To explore stigma related to addiction.
- To link youth to appropriate resources where they can go for help.

## Have Ready:

- Flipchart paper and markers, or white board

## Instructions:

- Ask youth, **“Do all people who use substances have a drug problem?”** (No) There are varying levels of use, from someone who is not using at all to someone who is using to the point where it is a problem for them.
- **“What are some warning signs that someone's use has become a problem?”**

## Sample Flipchart:

### Warning signs substance use has become a problem?

- Spending more and more time, money, and energy doing things related to using (even just thinking about it)
- Having more conflicts in relationships
- Missing school
- Getting kicked out of school/home
- Having other people concerned about their use
- Hanging out only with people who use
- Stealing money to buy substances
- Using when they'd rather not be
- Hiding their use from other people

- Feeling embarrassed about using
- Trying to cut down unsuccessfully several times
- Giving up activities they used to value

## Debrief:

- Problematic use could be defined as continuing to use a substance even though it is having a negative impact on their life.
- It can be difficult to have a friend or family member who is using substances, but ultimately they need to decide for themselves if they have a problem or need help. If people feel judged or threatened for using substances, they may be less likely to get help. When supporting a friend try not to judge, let them know you are worried about them and want to help. People are more likely to want help if they feel supported.
- **“Who could you talk to if you were concerned about your or someone else’s substance use?”** AFM (24 hour phone line and youth programs), guidance counsellor, addiction worker, teacher, family member, Elder, Traditional Healer, essentially anyone you think will be supportive.
- FYI: When we use a substance regularly, our bodies develop a tolerance, which means it takes more of the drug to get the same affect. This increases the negative side effects to get the same or lower high. A dependency is when the body needs the substance just to feel “normal”.

## Additional Activities:

Ideally, this activity can be followed by:

- Refusal Skills
- Abstinence Activities
- Decisional Balancing
- Identifying Strengths Reflection Activity