

Problematic Use Brainstorm

Goals

- To highlight the warning signs that substance use may be problematic for someone.
- To explore stigma related to addiction.
- To link youth to appropriate resources where they can go for help.

Senior 1-4 Education Curriculum Connections

This activity contributes to the following Student Specific Learning Outcomes:

Family Studies

- *S4 4.4.1 Describe the effect of addictions on family members, e.g., gambling, alcohol, drugs.*

Guidance Education GLOs under Personal/Social Component.

Physical Education

- *K.3.5.B.4 Identify available community supports that promote safety and community health.*
- *K.5.S1.D.1 Explain the meaning of addiction and substance dependence and the possible effects on self and/or others.*
- *K.5.S1.D.2 Examine the use and abuse of substances and potential consequences on personal health and well-being.*
- *K.5.S2.D.1 Analyze issues concerning the use and abuse of legal and illegal substances.*
- *K.5.S2.D.2 Evaluate the legal aspects and consequences of substance use and abuse and addiction.*
- *11.SU.4 Use reliable information in making healthy decisions for helping self and/or others regarding substance use and abuse.*

Have Ready

- Write on a flipchart/whiteboard: “How do you know someone has a problem?”
- Post-it notes (if doing as an individual activity have youth write answers on a post-it and then add to flipchart)

Instructions

- Tell youth, “**Not everyone who uses substances has a drug problem.**” There are varying levels of use. Some people don’t use at all, some may use substances once in a while, and some may use

more often in which case it takes up more of their time and energy. Someone's use could be a problem if it is having a negative impact on their life or they are using to the point that it's causing problems in their life. For some people this may include addiction. **“What are some warning signs that someone's use has become a problem?”**

Sample Flipchart

How do you know someone has a problem?

- Conflicts in relationships
- Missing school
- Getting kicked out of school/home
- Other people are concerned about their use (could mention “denial” here)
- Only hanging out with people who use the same substances
- Stealing money to buy substances
- Using when they'd rather not be
- Hiding their use from other people
- Feeling embarrassed about using
- Spending more and more time, money, and energy doing things related to using (even just thinking about it)
- 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. 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.”
- 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.

Additional Activities

Ideally, this activity can be followed by:

- Refusal Skills Brainstorm
- Abstinence Activities Scenario Card & Brainstorm
- Decisional Balancing Reflection
- Identifying Strengths Reflection Activity