

# Problematic Use Brainstorm

**Recommended Age: 14+**

## 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.

## 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 effect. 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, and instead 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 Cards & Brainstorm
- Decisional Balancing Reflection
- Identifying Strengths Reflection Activity