

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

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Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

Introduction

The purpose of the Sara Bellum Blog teaching guide “Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction” is to provide educators with a series of relevant blog posts that complement health curricula about topics that relate to drug abuse and addiction, including peer pressure, stress, and stigma. Ten Sara Bellum Blog posts are included in this guide.

The posts are written for teens in middle and high school. Discussion questions and related resources accompany each post. You’ll also find ideas for how to use the posts with teens and additional resources.

The Sara Bellum Blog

A team of NIDA scientists and science writers created the Sara Bellum Blog in 2009 to connect teens in middle and high school with the latest scientific research and news about drug abuse and addiction. The Sara Bellum Blog discusses a wide range of topics related to drug abuse and addiction, including facts about drugs of abuse, peer pressure, and mental health.

About the National Institute on Drug Abuse

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is a part of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIDA supports most of the world’s research on how drug abuse impacts the brain and body, including how it leads to addiction. In addition to supporting and conducting research, NIDA disseminates its findings through science-based materials such as Web sites, publications, and curricula supplements.

How To Use This Teaching Guide

You can use the blog posts in this guide as discussion starters, handouts, or take-home assignments for teens. The posts focus on a common theme—drug abuse—and can be used as a group or individually.

Following are several ideas for how to incorporate Sara Bellum Blog posts into your drug abuse prevention lessons:

- **Small Group Discussions:** In small groups, have students read one or several posts and ask the groups to discuss the information in the post(s). Provide students with the discussion questions for the post(s) to help guide their conversations. Ask each group to present to the whole class what new information they learned, what they thought was most interesting, and why they think the information is important.

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Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

- **Discussion Launch:** Review one post with the whole class and then facilitate a discussion about drug abuse and addiction using the discussion questions provided for that post.
- **Reaction Discussion:** Read one post aloud to the class and ask students to share their reactions to the information. Does anything change how they view drugs or drug abuse? How might the information in the post be useful?
- **Supplemental Handouts:** Print individual posts to give as handouts that provide supplemental information about specific topics related to drug abuse.
- **Writing Prompt:** Ask students to read one post and then write about what they learned and how the information relates to their lives. Or, ask students to write an answer to one of the discussion questions.
- **Blog Writing Activity:** Ask students to read several posts from the guide and then write their own blog post.
 - **Facts Post:** Ask students to write a blog post that shares the facts they learned from the Sara Bellum Blog posts they read.
 - **Personal Experience Post:** Ask students to write a post in the style of the Sara Bellum Blog that shares a personal experience with drugs, drug abuse, or addiction in their schools or communities.
 - **Discussion Post:** Ask students to write a post that responds to one of the discussion questions provided with each post.
- **Presentation Project:** Ask students to read a post and develop a short presentation about the topic and why it is important.
- **Social Media Activities:** Ask students to read a post and then write Facebook or Twitter messages using the information they learned. If your class or school has its own social media channels, you could share the Facebook posts and tweets there. Asking students to summarize the posts in the short blurbs required for social media could be an interesting paraphrasing exercise.
- **Comment:** Ask students to read one post and then write a response to that post. They could even publish their comment on the original post by going to the URL provided for each post.
- **Homework Discussion Questions:** Assign one or several posts as homework, but do not include the discussion questions. Ask students to read the post(s) and develop a list of their own discussion questions for each.

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

- **Poster Project:** Ask students to read a post and develop a poster or cartoon that shows the key facts and points of that post.
- **Multimedia Project:** Ask students to read several posts and develop a storyboard (scene outline) and script for a podcast, public service announcement (PSA), or video that shares the information they learned. If time allows, teens could break into groups and record the podcasts, PSAs, or videos they developed.

Sara Bellum Blog Posts and Discussion Questions

The posts in this guide discuss topics related to perceptions of drug abuse and environmental factors that may influence a teen's decision to use drugs. Each post is followed by discussion questions and related resources.

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

What Are “Co-Occurring” Disorders?

By The Sara Bellum Blog Team



As many as 6 in 10 people with a substance use disorder also suffer from a mental health condition such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, or bipolar disorder, to name a few. When this happens, the person has “co-occurring disorders.”

The problem is, fewer than 10% of adults with co-occurring disorders receive treatment for both conditions—and more than half of them receive no treatment at all. Teens also can suffer from co-occurring disorders.

Which Came First?

It’s often impossible to say which problem came first. In one case, a person may experience anxiety from a childhood trauma and turn to drugs to cope, developing an addiction. In another case, the person may use heroin and have negative experiences that could lead to post-traumatic stress disorder. The important thing is to get help for both problems—drug problems and any other mental health disorders.

Treating co-occurring disorders can be challenging because often the different specialists involved don’t coordinate treatment for the different problems. Doctors, social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists most often treat mental health disorders, whereas a mix of health care professionals with various backgrounds may provide treatment for drug addiction.

Treatment Must Address the Whole Person

The National Institute on Drug Abuse and other Federal agencies are working to make sure people who have co-occurring disorders receive integrated treatment that addresses both substance use and other mental health disorders. Some medications may ease symptoms of a mental health disorder and also may help the person stay off a certain drug.

Other types of treatment also may be effective. For example, for teens with co-occurring disorders, cognitive behavioral therapy can help. This therapy helps the person change harmful beliefs and behaviors, and provides skills to handle stressful circumstances.

Find the original blog post at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/what-are-co-occurring-disorders>.

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

Discussion Questions: What Are “Co-Occurring” Disorders?

1. What does it mean if someone has “co-occurring disorders”?
2. When someone has both a mental health and a substance use disorder, is it always clear which disorder came first?
3. Why do people with co-occurring disorders need personalized treatment?

Related Resources

- *Comorbidity, a Word for Thought*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/comorbidity-word-thought>
- *In Recovery—Steps to Overcoming Addiction*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/recovery-steps-overcoming-addiction>
- *Treating Addiction With Medication*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/treating-addiction-medication>
- *Fear of Stigma: Does It Hold You Back?* Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/fear-stigma-does-it-hold-you-back>
- *Drug Facts: Addiction and the Brain*, NIDA for Teens:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/brain-and-addiction>
- *Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction*, National Institute on Drug Abuse:
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/science-addiction>

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

Real Teens Ask: Why Do Teens Who Smoke Think They Are So Cool?

By The Sara Bellum Blog Team



Many teens have asked the National Institute on Drug Abuse: Why do teens who smoke think they are so cool? There could be many reasons why teens who smoke think they're cool—maybe their friends smoke, maybe their parents told them not to smoke, maybe they think it gives them an edgy look, or a temporary high. But the truth is, as far as your health goes—smoking is so not cool.

And who defines cool anyway? What's cool to one person may not be cool to another. Just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, coolness is an individual decision. Not everyone

thinks that doing something illegal or unhealthy because your friends are doing it is cool. Lots of teens would say it's cooler to hold a pen, paintbrush, or drum stick between your fingers, instead of a cigarette.

When our parents were younger, many of them thought “the Fonzy” from the hit TV show “Happy Days” was the epitome of cool. Pretty dorky now.

Today it seems like a lot of teen smokers are figuring out that smoking is not very cool at all. According to a 2007 survey from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 50% of all high school smokers are actively trying to quit. And, according to the 2013 Monitoring the Future study of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders, smoking among American teens is at an all-time low.

Coolness is a funny thing. Some things are cool one year (or one minute!), and not the next. Other things are cool no matter how much time has passed. What's cool is also influenced by your gender, age, where you live, and, most of all, by who you are.



Image Courtesy of FCharlton

Find the original blog post at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/real-teens-ask-why-do-teens-who-smoke-think-they-are-so-cool>.

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

Discussion Questions: Real Teens Ask: Why Do Teens Who Smoke Think They Are So Cool?

1. What are some reasons why teens may think smoking is cool? Do you agree?
2. Why is smoking *not* cool?
3. How would you define “cool”?

Related Resources

- *Does Smoking on TV Influence You?* Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/does-smoking-tv-influence-you>
- *Mini Cigars: The Facts Behind the Flavors*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/mini-cigars-facts-behind-flavors>
- *Product Placement—Sneaking Messages to Your Brain*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/product-placement-sneaking-messages-your-brain>
- *Smoking Cessation*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/cessation/quitting/index.htm
- *Trends in Current Cigarette Smoking Among High School Students and Adults, United States, 1965–2011*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/tables/trends/cig_smoking/index.htm
- *Monitoring the Future*, National Institute on Drug Abuse and University of Michigan:
<http://www.monitoringthefuture.org>

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

Why Does Peer Pressure Influence Teens To Try Drugs?

By The Sara Bellum Blog Team

Risk Versus Reward



New research shows that, when making a decision, teens think about both the risks and rewards of their actions and behaviors—but, unlike adults, teens are more likely to ignore the risk in favor of the reward.

In a 2011 study funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, teens driving with their friends in the car were more likely to take risks—like speeding through yellow lights—if they knew that two or more of their friends were watching. Teens were also significantly more likely to act

this way than adults in the same experiment.

Researchers monitored the brain activity of all the teen drivers in the study. Results showed that just knowing friends were watching activated brain regions linked with reward, especially when the teen drivers made risky decisions.

So, be aware: The desire to impress your friends may override your fear of taking risks. This could also apply to deciding whether to try drugs or alcohol—your decision might be influenced by who is around and if you think they'd be impressed.

Find the original blog post at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/why-does-peer-pressure-influence-teens-try-drugs>.

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

Discussion Questions: Why Does Peer Pressure Influence Teens To Try Drugs?

1. How do teens and adults react differently to risks and rewards?
2. What are some ways you could put the “brakes” on to give more thought to risky actions before doing them?
3. In your experience, are you more likely to do something risky if you know your friends are watching you?

Related Resources

- *Let's Talk: How Do You Avoid Peer Pressure?* Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/lets-talk-how-do-you-avoid-peer-pressure>
- *Fear of Stigma: Does It Hold You Back?* Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/fear-stigma-does-it-hold-you-back>
- *Good Riddance: Peer Pressure*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/good-riddance-peer-pressure>
- *Peers Increase Teen Driving Risk via Heightened Reward Activity*, National Institute on Drug Abuse:
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/news-events/nida-notes/2012/03/peers-increase-teen-driving-risk-heightened-reward-activity>

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

Parents: How Much Do They Influence You?

By The Sara Bellum Blog Team



Someone offers you a cigarette or a beer. In the split second that you have to consider your answer, what do you think about?

What your friends will think?

What about what your parents would think?

When you know that your parents don't want you to drink, smoke, or use drugs, is that enough to stop you from doing it?

The evidence points to yes: In 2012, 3 out of 4 teens said parents were the biggest influence on their decision on whether or not to drink alcohol.

And another survey showed that teens who thought their parents would strongly disapprove of smoking were *very* unlikely to report smoking cigarettes in the past month.

Communication and Respect Are Key

Separating yourself from your parents is an important part of growing up; teens need to learn to think for themselves and make decisions on their own, after all. But that doesn't mean parents can't have some influence when it comes to their kids' health.

But instead of simply disapproving, isn't it more about *how* parents talk to their kids that makes them pay attention—or not? For example, a parent saying “Don't do this because I said so” may have less impact than if they communicated in an open-minded and respectful way, even about unhealthy behaviors they disapprove of.

Find the original blog post at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/parents-how-much-do-they-influence-you>.

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

Discussion Questions: Parents: How Much Do They Influence You?

1. Do parents influence whether or not teens use drugs?
2. What is the best way for parents to communicate with their kids about risky behaviors, such as taking drugs?
3. How can teens balance their need to think independently with listening to their parents' advice?

Related Resources

- *Parents: Can They Deter Teens' Online Risky Behavior?* Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/parents-can-they-deter-teens-online-risky-behavior>
- *Let's Talk: How Do You Avoid Peer Pressure?* Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/lets-talk-how-do-you-avoid-peer-pressure>
- *Fear of Stigma: Does It Hold You Back?* Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/fear-stigma-does-it-hold-you-back>
- *Parents: Drugs and Your Kids*, NIDA for Teens:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/parents/drugs-and-your-kids>
- *Preventing Drug Abuse Among Children and Adolescents (In Brief)*, National Institute on Drug Abuse: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/preventing-drug-abuse-among-children-adolescents>

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

Fear of Stigma: Does It Hold You Back?

By The Sara Bellum Blog Team

If you're like most people, you may try to avoid revealing anything about yourself that will make people think differently or negatively about you. Basically, you're avoiding stigma—which is being marked by shame or disgrace.

But what if you have a drug problem and want to get help?

For a long time, our society has “stigmatized” drug use and addiction, judging people with drug or alcohol problems. Fear of being judged can be dangerous if it keeps someone from getting treatment.

One way to combat the stigma associated with drug addiction is to teach people the facts. Science from the National Institute on Drug Abuse shows that addiction is a disease, just as cancer and asthma are diseases. It's not just that the person chooses to take drugs. In fact, an addicted person no longer *chooses* to take drugs—rather, their brains have been altered by drugs to the point where free will has been cruelly “hijacked,” and the desire to seek and use drugs is beyond their control. **Addiction is a disease of the brain that manifests itself in compulsive behaviors.** Helping people understand this sad truth may lead to more support for those battling addiction.

It's also important to stop labeling people as one thing or another. Try to avoid saying “addicts.” This label makes it easier to dismiss people as not worthy of help or notice. It's better to say, people with “drug use problems” or “substance use disorders.” It may be a mouthful, but this phrase makes it clear that these are *people* who are facing challenges. They are more than just *drug addicts*.

Find the original blog post at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/fear-stigma-does-it-hold-you-back>.



Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

Discussion Questions: Fear of Stigma: Does It Hold You Back?

1. What is stigma?
2. Do you avoid certain hobbies, interests, or even potential new friends because you're afraid of what your current friends will think?
3. What would you say to someone who needs drug abuse treatment but isn't getting it for fear of being judged?

Related Resources

- *Let's Talk: How Do You Avoid Peer Pressure?* Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/lets-talk-how-do-you-avoid-peer-pressure>
- *Good Riddance: Peer Pressure*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/good-riddance-peer-pressure>
- *Comorbidity, a Word for Thought*, Sara Bellum Blog:
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- *In Recovery—Steps to Overcoming Addiction*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/recovery-steps-overcoming-addiction>
- *Parents: Can They Deter Teens' Online Risky Behavior?* Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/parents-can-they-deter-teens-online-risky-behavior>

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

Truth in Advertising? Super Bowl Alcohol Commercials

By The Sara Bellum Blog Team

Everyone knows that many of the fans of football's biggest game are there for the commercials. Companies selling all types of goods—from cars to snack foods to insurance—pay top dollar (more than \$2 million for 30 seconds in 2011) to spread the word about their products.

Alcohol companies are part of this media frenzy, and their messages reach all members of the TV audience—from adults to teens to young children.

Even adults have a hard time separating the myths of marketing from the truth, so see if you can figure out how the company is trying to make you want what they're selling. Below are several real-life examples to test your skills.



2011 Super Bowl Alcohol Ads

During the Green Bay Packers' win over the Pittsburgh Steelers, the audience saw five alcohol ads. Here are four:

The Ad: A woman and man have won a home makeover and the only change made was to put a bucket of Bud Light on the kitchen counter. The “host” of the home makeover show states that they gave the room “a fun vibe” and “*clearly* this is the room people want to hang out in.”

The Message: This one's pretty obvious. Alcohol = fun = partying with more friends.

The Ad: A friend dog-sits for someone and is invited to drink the Bud Light in the freezer. Cut to a party scene with lots of attractive people being served by dogs, who have gone up on two legs to become waiters and bartenders.

The Message: This ad uses humor as its main vehicle. The dogs are funny to watch, and while the scene is absurd—obviously a dog could never serve someone a beer—the implication is that alcohol is a fun, light-hearted, even “fantastical” treat.

The Ad: Movie star Adrien Brody serenades a roomful of women with a romantic tune—only for the ladies to find out that he's actually singing to a glass of beer.

The Message: Alcohol is romantic. This ad may appeal to women and teen girls more than men, as the ladies in the room clearly swoon for the singer.

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The Ad: It's the Wild, Wild West, and a villainous cowboy enters a saloon and threateningly asks the bartender for a "Bud." Upon hearing the bar is out of that particular drink, the cowboy fingers his holstered gun until a deliveryman—who arrives in a wagon pulled by the ever-popular Budweiser Clydesdales—enters with an icy case of Budweiser. The scary cowboy starts to sing and soon the whole bar is harmoniously singing along.

The Message: Lack of alcohol is a serious mistake, a critical missing piece. And once alcohol is produced, all hostility melts away—implying that alcohol is a cure for problems and that it brings people together.

To cut to the truth about alcohol, check out The Cool Spot (www.thecoolspot.gov), a Web site for teens from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

Find the original blog post at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/truth-advertising-super-bowl-alcohol-commercials>.

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

Discussion Questions: Truth in Advertising? Super Bowl Alcohol Commercials

1. What are some of the messages of alcohol ads?
2. Why is it important to think about an ad's underlying message, even if it's not always obvious?
3. In the ads described, what might be some information about alcohol the advertisers left out?

Related Resources

- *Does Smoking on TV Influence You?* Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/does-smoking-tv-influence-you>
- *Product Placement—Sneaking Messages to Your Brain*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/product-placement-sneaking-messages-your-brain>
- *Don't Be Fooled—Even Your Phone App Could Be Advertising*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/dont-be-fooled-even-your-phone-app-could-be-advertising>
- *Super Bowl Commercials: Which Do You Remember?*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/super-bowl-commercials-which-do-you-remember>

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

Don't Be Fooled—Even Your Phone App Could Be Advertising

By The Sara Bellum Blog Team



As more and more people use smartphones, a world of virtual games, social networking, and fun apps are at their fingertips 24/7. Photo-sharing and exercise-tracking apps can be useful and fun. Others, though, may have devious intentions, like trying to get you hooked on smoking.

Cigarette advertising was banned from TV and sports stadiums because of the terrible health risks of smoking and because it was an easy and effective way to market cigarettes to youth. But with each technological advance, tobacco companies and other advertisers are looking for new ways to reach teens—even if that means developing games and free apps for your phone.

A study of available apps on Apple and Google Play during a single month in 2012 found 107 phone apps that promoted smoking! Some of these let users smoke virtual cigarettes while others compare cigarette prices.

Many of the virtual smoking apps allow you to “smoke with friends,” and they use catchy animations that make them seem like a game. Don't be fooled.

Next time you download an app, pause a moment to ask: “Is this app just a game or is there a hidden message?”

Find the original blog post at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/dont-be-fooled-even-your-phone-app-could-be-advertising>.

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

Discussion Questions: Don't Be Fooled— Even Your Phone App Could Be Advertising

1. Why are phone apps a good tool for advertisers?
2. Why is it important to think about any “hidden” messages that might be included in the apps you download?
3. Can you think of any examples of apps you've seen that may have hidden messages?

Related Resources

- *Does Smoking on TV Influence You?*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/does-smoking-tv-influence-you>
- *Truth in Advertising? Super Bowl Alcohol Commercials*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/truth-advertising-super-bowl-alcohol-commercials>
- *Product Placement—Sneaking Messages to Your Brain*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/product-placement-sneaking-messages-your-brain>
- *Super Bowl Commercials: Which Do You Remember?* Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/super-bowl-commercials-which-do-you-remember>
- *Fashion Inspired by Rx Drugs? Mary Kate and Ashley's Pill Bag*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/fashion-inspired-rx-drugs-mary-kate-and-ashleys-pill-bag>

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

Helping Children of Addicted Parents Find Help

By The Sara Bellum Blog Team



Children look to their parents or caregivers for total support—from birth to adulthood. But what happens to children when their parents are addicted to drugs or alcohol?

It's estimated that 25% of youth under age 18 are exposed to family alcohol abuse or dependence. Research shows that children in this environment are more likely to develop depression or anxiety in adolescence and use alcohol or other drugs early on. Having a parent who is addicted to drugs or alcohol can lead to lifelong problems if the child or teen doesn't get help and support.

Children of Alcoholics Week, held in February, is an event to celebrate the recovery of children *of all ages* who have gotten the help they needed to recover from the pain they experienced as a result of a close family member's alcohol problems. The observance also offers hope to those still suffering.

Help is out there. Teens can talk to a school guidance counselor, coach, or trusted teacher. For those who attend religious services, a clergy member is also an option.

Teens may be reluctant to talk to an acquaintance about such a personal problem. Another good option is Alateen, a program that offers support for children of parents who are addicted. Alateen members come together in a free and confidential setting to:

- Share experiences and hope.
- Discuss difficulties.
- Learn effective ways to cope with problems.
- Encourage one another.

Another option is the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). This service is also confidential, and counselors can help with substance abuse and family problems, in addition to suicide prevention. Find out more about Children of Alcoholics Week (www.nacoa.org/coaweek_tools.html).

Find the original blog post at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/helping-children-addicted-parents-find-help>.

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

Discussion Questions: Helping Children of Addicted Parents Find Help

1. What are some challenges that might be faced by children of parents who abuse drugs or alcohol?
2. Where can youth with parents who abuse drugs or alcohol turn to get help?
3. How do you think having parents who abuse drugs or alcohol can change someone's childhood?

Related Resources

- *Comorbidity, a Word for Thought*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/comorbidity-word-thought>
- *In Recovery—Steps to Overcoming Addiction*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/recovery-steps-overcoming-addiction>
- *Treating Addiction With Medication*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/treating-addiction-medication>
- *Fear of Stigma: Does It Hold You Back?*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/fear-stigma-does-it-hold-you-back>
- *Drug Facts: Addiction and the Brain*, NIDA for Teens:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/brain-and-addiction>
- *Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction*, National Institute on Drug Abuse:
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/science-addiction>

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

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Addicted to French Fries: Is Food a Drug?

By The Sara Bellum Blog Team



According to the American Heart Association, about one in three kids and teens in the United States is overweight or obese. Obesity can lead to chronic health problems like heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure. Obesity can even shorten your life.

You probably already heard this in the news. But, did you know that a diet high in saturated fats, refined sugars, corn syrup, and carbohydrates literally tricks our brains into craving more unhealthy stuff?

Brains React to Food

Most people don't just consume food for "fuel" or energy. Most of us *enjoy* eating, especially our favorite foods. Science backs this up: Consuming tasty foods can satisfy the natural brain reward system, releasing the chemical dopamine, known as the feel-good brain chemical, to add to overall feelings of contentment and satisfaction. This is good for our survival since we have to eat to survive.

Overeating is different from drug abuse, but is also based in the brain. Scientists now understand that, for a growing number of people, certain foods trick the brain into wanting more. Pizza, French fries, chocolate, and colas are high on the list of foods that trigger dopamine.

In this way, food causes reactions in the brain similar to those caused by some drugs, like cocaine, methamphetamine, and marijuana, which also affect dopamine levels and lead to compulsive drug seeking and use.

According to the Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, Dr. Nora D. Volkow, "We are finding tremendous overlap between drugs in the brain and food in the brain."

Steps You Can Take

It's important to balance your diet with healthy choices and right-sized portions to ensure you get all the nutrition you need to be healthy.

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Here are a few tips from Michelle Obama's Let's Move! Campaign:

- Try new fruits and veggies. Add variety to your meals to make eating healthier, fun, and interesting.
- Drink smart. Skip soda and other drinks flavored with sugar or high-fructose corn syrup. Choose water—make it more exciting by adding a splash of lemon or a few mint leaves.
- Move every day. Walk or bike to your destination. Turn off the TV and go outside.

Find the original blog post at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/addicted-french-fries-food-drug>.

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Discussion Questions: Addicted to French Fries: Is Food a Drug?

1. How does some food affect the brain?
2. What is dopamine?
3. What are some ways you can improve your physical health and avoid becoming overweight?

Related Resources

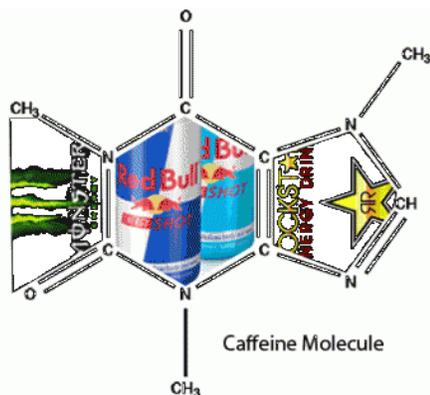
- *Word of the Day: Brain Reward System*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/word-day-brain-reward-system>
- *Word of the Day: Dopamine*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/word-day-dopamine>
- *Word of the Day: Limbic System*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/word-day-limbic-system>
- *Drug Facts: Addiction and the Brain*, NIDA for Teens:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/brain-and-addiction>
- *Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction*, National Institute on Drug Abuse:
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/science-addiction>

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Energy Drinks: A Boost in the Wrong Direction?

By The Sara Bellum Blog Team



Energy drinks—You see them at X Games events, basketball arenas, and rock concerts. You can even “like” some of them on Facebook. What these brands don’t tell you, and what science is now showing us, is that their drinks can really be unhealthy.

Energy drinks often pack in extra vitamins, along with caffeine, which delivers the eye-opening jolt of energy, and is supposed to boost your brain power. People, even teens, seek that extra kick from energy drinks to stay alert longer or perform better sometimes. *But do these drinks really boost your brain?*

The makers of these drinks claim their drinks deliver energy, but in fact, what they deliver are monster-doses of caffeine and other supplements that rev up your system. Although they may deliver a temporary jolt of energy, they also boost your heart rate, making you feel jittery and on-edge—and too much caffeine can cause your heart to race, your palms to sweat, and your stomach to hurt. Plus, having an energy drink every day might fool you into thinking you can’t function without it.

Teens are busy. School, sports, a part-time job, and never-ending homework...finally sleep, then having to get up while it’s still dark out to do it all over again. No wonder energy drinks are appealing!

But do these drinks deliver what they promise? And is drinking such high doses worth the possible health risks? Probably not. Better to get more sleep and exercise so you don’t have to depend on chemicals for your energy.

Find the original blog post at <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/energy-drinks-boost-wrong-direction>.

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

Posts From the Sara Bellum Blog

Discussion Questions: Energy Drinks: A Boost in the Wrong Direction?

1. What are some of the risks of consuming too much caffeine?
2. Why do energy drinks make you feel like you have more energy?
3. What are some healthy ways to boost your energy level?

Related Resources

- *Not LOKO for Alcoholic Energy Drinks*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/not-loko-alcoholic-energy-drinks>
- *Are You Sure You Want To Drink That?* Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/are-you-sure-you-want-drink-that>
- *Take a Breath of Fresh...Energy?* Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/take-breath-freshenergy>
- *The Buzz on Caffeine*, Sara Bellum Blog:
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/buzz-caffeine>

Topics Related to Drug Abuse and Addiction

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More Resources

Web Sites and Online Tools

- Sara Bellum Blog: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog>
- NIDA for Teens Web Site: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov>
 - Drug Facts: <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts>
 - Test Your Knowledge (online drug facts quizzes):
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/activities/test-your-knowledge>
- NIDA's PEERx Program (teen prescription drug abuse prevention materials):
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/our-projects/peerx>
- Choose Your Path Videos (where the viewer can choose what the characters do):
<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/our-projects/peerx/choose-your-path>
- Easy-to-Read Drug Facts: <http://easyread.drugabuse.gov>
- Heads Up: Drugs and Your Body (lesson plans and materials): <http://headsup.scholastic.com>
- National Institute on Drug Abuse Home Page: <http://www.drugabuse.gov>
- Family Checkup: Positive Parenting Prevents Drug Abuse: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/family-checkup>

Publications

- Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction:
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/science-addiction>
- Preventing Drug Abuse Among Children and Adolescents:
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/preventing-drug-abuse-among-children-adolescents>
- DrugFacts Fact Sheets: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/term/160/DrugFacts>