

How to Help Your Teen with.....



A Handbook for Parents

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Alcohol and Drugs

What... Some adolescents experiment and then stop using them while others continue to use occasionally or socially without significant problems. These are the majority. There are still others who develop a dependency or addiction. The signs of alcohol and drug abuse can mimic the symptoms of depression or stress. In habitual use there will be changes in a number of areas of functioning.

What to look for...

Experimental/Social Use

- Uses drugs/alcohol occasionally--weekends, parties
- Has no major changes in behaviour although may lie about use
- Uses drugs/alcohol because of curiosity, peer pressure , boredom, rebellion

Regular Use

- Engages in daily use
- May use drugs/alcohol alone
- Buys enough for future use/may sell
- Experiences decline in school performance, attendance, mood swings, lying, changes in appearance, increased family conflict

Dependency/Addiction

- Uses continuously and thinks about when the next high will occur
- Takes serious risks or may engage in criminal behaviour
- May have left home from time to time
- Has changes in personality/changing emotions
- Shows signs of physical deterioration- health problems, weight loss

Who.... Experimentation with alcohol and drugs is common during adolescence. It occurs across cultures, genders and economic backgrounds. Adolescents who are at risk for developing serious alcohol and drug problems include those with the following:

- Family history of substance abuse
- Suffer from depression
- Have low self-esteem
- Feel they don't fit in

Anxiety

What... Anxiety is best described as “tension, or a feeling that something is not going to go well”. It can become problematic when it is persistent, irrational, frequent, intense, or begins to interfere with daily activities. Anxiety disorders are the most commonly occurring mental health problem in children and youth.

What to look for...

Mild

- Slight agitation or worry
- Little impact on daily functioning
- Anxiousness is rational
- Some minor physical symptoms

Moderate

- Agitation/worry is fairly persistent
- Daily functioning is being impacted (e.g. avoidance of some classes)
- Anxiousness is not completely grounded in rational thought (e.g. a failed exam may have a bad impact on their immediate future)
- Increased physical symptoms (e.g. heart racing, some sleep disturbance)

Severe

- Persistent and intense agitation/worry
- Daily functioning is being impacted on a large scale (e.g. complete avoidance of school)
- Anxiousness is not grounded in rational thought (e.g. a failed exam may have disastrous consequences on their future)
- Increased and frequent physical symptoms (e.g. sweating, frequent heart racing, persistent sleep disturbance)

Who... Anxiety is an emotion common to all people. Many things can contribute to a teen experiencing anxiety:

- Peer pressure
- Family conflict
- Anxious living environment
- Traumatic events
- Low self-esteem
- Physiological issues
- Alcohol or substance abuse

Depression

What...Depression is an emotional state that is usually described as low or sad. It is often accompanied by thoughts of a negative and/or dark nature (e.g. preoccupation with death and dying). Depression is the second most commonly occurring health problem in children and youth.

What to look for...

Mild

- Slight low mood/feeling blue
- Little impact on daily functioning
- Minor negative thoughts
- Minor physical symptoms (e.g. slight drop in appetite)

Moderate

- Low mood is fairly persistent
- Daily functioning is being impacted (eg not engaging in pleasurable activities)
- Negative thoughts are somewhat persistent and have a dark nature to them—possible thoughts of suicide
- Increased physical symptoms (e.g. loss of appetite, fatigue)

Severe

- Low mood is persistent
- Daily functioning is being impacted on a large scale (e.g. complete avoidance of pleasurable activities)
- Negative thoughts are persistent and have a darker nature to them (e.g. thoughts and plans for suicide)
- Physical symptoms are persistent (e.g. complete lack of appetite, extreme fatigue)

Who...depression occurs in all cultures, genders, and economic classes. Some underlying factors are:

- a family history of depression
- psychological or emotional vulnerability to depression
- biological factors
- life events or environmental stressors

SELF-HARMING BEHAVIOUR: FACT SHEET FOR PARENTS

Prepared by TDSB School Social Work Services

WHAT.... Self-harm (self-injury) is a term frequently used when someone is intentionally injuring herself/himself by such methods as cutting, burning, hitting, picking or hair pulling.

WHO....This behaviour is more common among females but there is a rising occurrence among males. It is prevalent in all ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds. Young people who engage in this kind of behaviour tend to have difficulties coping with strong emotions. They often experience frequent mood swings, alienation from their body and lack of control over their lives. They often feel misunderstood and angry with themselves. Students who engage in self-injury tend to be dealing with issues of loss and hurt.

WHY....Self-harming behaviour is an attempt to cope with and manage strong feelings. Students report that it provides comfort and relieves tension- “it works” in the short term. IT IS NOT DONE TO ANNOY OR FOR ATTENTION.

Self-harming tends to be progressive in nature and requires intervention. While self-harming and suicidal behaviours can be similar, and may co-exist for some individuals, the INTENT is quite different.

HOW TO RESPOND.... Parents are often shocked and upset by their children’s self-harming behaviour. They are sometimes angry. It may be helpful to keep the following guidelines in mind when dealing with your child:

- Try to keep your own strong feelings in check
- Your unconditional love and support is critical
- Keep in mind that your child is trying to cope with strong feelings
- Show concern about the injuries
- Acknowledge how difficult it must be to talk about something so personal and private
- Your child needs professional help
- Try to find some support for yourself
- Your school social worker can provide information and support
- Good websites: **www.selfharm.net** or **www.self-injury.com**

SELF-HARM: INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Prepared by TDSB School Social Work Services

WHAT Self-harm (self-injury) is a term frequently used when someone is intentionally injuring herself/himself by such methods as cutting, burning, hitting, picking or hair pulling.

WHY.... Self-harm is a way of trying to cope with painful and confusing feelings. Difficult things that people who self-harm talk about include:

- Feeling sad, angry, or worried.
- Not feeling very good or confident about themselves.
- Being hurt by others: physically, sexually or emotionally.
- Feeling under a lot of pressure at home or at school.
- Losing someone close to them.

Often, these things build up and self-harm can be a way of trying to deal with or escape these difficult feelings. It can also be a way of showing others that something is wrong.

COPING STRATEGIES.... Replacing the self-harm with other, safer coping strategies can be a positive and helpful way of dealing with difficult things in your life. Helpful strategies can include:

- Finding someone to talk to about your feelings, such as a friend or family member.
- Talking to someone on the phone, e.g. you might want to call the Kids Helpline: 1-800-668-6868
- Writing and drawing about your feelings, because sometimes it can be hard to talk about feelings.
- Scribbling on and/or ripping up paper.
- Listening to music or watching a favourite t.v. show.
- Going for a walk, run or other kind of exercise.
- Getting out of the house and going somewhere where there are other people.
- Keeping a diary/journal.
- Having a bath/using relaxing oils, e.g. lavender.
- Hitting a pillow or other soft object.

What does Help look like?

- It usually starts with an assessment to understand the situation, identify goals, and figure out ways to meet those goals
- It's usually voluntary
- A more thorough assessment to understand how someone learns, or how they see the world around them is usually done by a psychologist
- An assessment about whether a person is experiencing a serious mental health issue is done by a psychiatrist

Types of Services:

- Counselling may be offered to individuals, couples, families, and groups
- Counselling can be obtained from: schools, hospitals, mental health agencies, community agencies, through Employee Assistance Programs, and by private practitioners.

Mental Health Professionals:

Psychiatrists: are medical doctors who specialize in the area of mental health. They can make diagnoses and prescribe medication, and can provide counselling as well.

Psychologists: have a M.A. or PhD in psychology and are registered by the Ontario Psychological Association. They generally use standardized tests to assess intelligence, personality and/or learning disabilities. They can provide counselling as well.

Social Workers: have a degree in Social Work (BSW, MSW, DSW) and must be registered with the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers. They can provide assessments and counselling but do not make diagnoses. There is a focus on individuals, families, groups, and assisting people with connecting to community supports.

Child & Youth Workers: have a College diploma in Child & Youth Work and generally provide skill-based support to individuals and families.

Community Resources

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Counselling

Aginccourt Community Services (MST)	416-321-6912	www.agincourtcommunityservices.com
Aisling-Discoveries	416-321-5464	www.aislingdiscoveries.on.ca
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health	416-535-8501	www.camh.net
Children's Aid Societies		
Metro CAS	416-924-4646	www.torontocas.ca
Catholic Children's Aid Society	416-395-1500	www.torontoccas.org
Jewish Family and Child Service	416-638-7800	www.jfandcs.com
Native Family and Child Service	416-969-8510	www.nativechild.org
Chinese Family Services of Ontario	416-979-8299	www.chinesefamilyso.com
Hospital for Sick Children (HSC)	416-598-6333	www.sickkids.ca
East Metro Youth Services	416-438-3697	www.emys.on.ca
Kennedy House Youth Services	416-299-3157	www.kennedyhouse.org
Rosalie Hall	416-438-6880	www.rosaliehall.com
Shoniker Clinic	416-281-7301	www.rougevalley.ca
Scarborough Hospital ADHD Clinic	416-431-8135	www.tsh.to
Scarborough Women's Centre	416-439-7111	www.scarboroughwomenscentre.ca
South Asian Family Support Services	416-431-4847	www.safss.org
Tropicana	416-439-9009	www.tropicanacommunity.org
Youthdale Treatment Centre	416-363-9990	www.youthdale.ca
Youthlink	416-967-1773	www.youthlink.ca
YWCA	416-266-1232	www.ywcatoronto.org
TDSB—Professional Support Services--Psychological services, Social Work, and Speech-Language Pathology		contact local school www.tdsb.on.ca

Crisis

Chinese Family Services of Ontario	416-979-8299	www.chinesefamilyso.com
Rouge Valley Health Centre	416-285-7270	www.rougevalley.ca
Shoniker Clinic—1 st episode clinic	416-281-7301	www.rougevalley.ca
The Scarborough Hospital—Birchmount	416-495-2550	www.TSH.to
The Scarborough Hospital—General	416-431-8181	www.TSH.to
Toronto Police Services	416-808-2222	www.torontopolice.on.ca
What's Up Walk-in Mental Health Clinic (EMYS)	416-438-3697	www.emys.on.ca
Youthdale Treatment Centre	416-363-9990	www.youthdale.ca

Health Care

Rouge Valley Health Centre	416-284-8131	www.rougevalley.ca
Scarborough Volunteer Health Clinic	416-431-8200	www.tsh.to
The Scarborough Hospital—Birchmount	416-495-2400	www.tsh.to
The Scarborough Hospital—General	416-438-2911	www.tsh.to
The Scarborough Hospital--Community Mental Health Outpatient Program	416-431-8135	www.tsh.to
Toronto East General Hospital Child	416-469-6580	www.tegh.on.ca
Toronto Public Health Clinic	416-338-7438	www.toronto.ca/health
Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities	416-642-9445	www.schcontario.ca
Dental Services in Scarborough--free	416-338-7442	www.toronto.ca/health
Scarborough Community Volunteer Clinic	416-397-4753	Medically uninsured--drop-in
POP (Pediatric Outreach Program)	" " "	Jennifer D'Andrade

Housing

Scarborough Housing Help Centre	416-285-8070	www.shhc.ca
Second Base Youth Shelter	416-261-2733	www.secondbase.ca
Rosalie Hall	416-438-6880	www.rosaliehall.com
Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities-- Supportive Housing Program	416-284-5309	www.schcontario.ca

Legal

East Scarborough Storefront	416-208-9889	www.thestorefront.org
Scarborough Legal Services	416-438-7182	www.scarboroughcommunitylegal.ca
South Asian Legal Services	416-487-6371	www.salc.on.ca
Malvern Family Resource Centre	416-281-1376	www.mfrc.org

LGBT Services

East Metro Youth Services	416-438-3697	www.emys.on.ca
Youthlink	416-967-1773	www.youthlink.ca
Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line	416-962-9688	www.youthline.ca
PFLAG	416-406-6378	www.pflag.ca
TDSB Triangle Program	416-393-9830	www.tdsb.on.ca
Planned Parenthood	416-961-0113	www.ppt.on.ca

Newcomer Services

Settlement Workers//Newcomer Services	416-396-5323	www.newcomeryouth.ca
East Scarborough Storefront	416-208-9889	www.thestorefront.org

Section Programs

East Metro Youth Services	416-438-3697	www.emys.on.ca
Kennedy House	416-396-5967	www.kennedyhouse.org

Substance Abuse:

Breakaway	416-234-5702	www.breakawayaddictions.ca
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health	416-535-8501	www.camh.net
Chinese Family Services of Ontario	416-979-8299	www.chinesefamilyso.com
East Metro Youth Services	416-438-3697	www.emys.on.ca
Adolescent Substance Abuse Outreach Program (Hospital for Sick Children)	416-813-5097	www.sickkids.ca
Youthlink	416-967-1773	www.youthlink.ca

Other

Boys & Girls Club of East Scarborough	416-281-0262	www.esbgc.org
YWCA--Girls & Family Support Centre	416-266-1232	www.ywcatoronto.org
Kids Help Phone (Canada)	1-800-668-6868	www.kidshelpphone.ca
Ontario Works	416-397-0330	www.mcass.gov.on.ca
Toronto Police Services	416-808-2222	www.torontopolice.on.ca
Youth Assisting Youth	416-931-1919	www.yay.org
West Hill Community Services—social support	416-847-4141	www.westhill-cs.on.ca
211 Toronto		www.211toronto.ca
Parent Help Line:		www.parenthelpline.ca
Kids Mental Health		www.kidsmentalhealth.com
Employee Assistance Programs		check with your employer
Family Doctor		
Toronto District School Board Professional Support Services		www.tdsb.on.ca