

When an Adult You Care About Misuses Substances

10 Tips for Teens



1 EDUCATE YOURSELF

It can be helpful to **educate yourself** about why people use alcohol and other drugs, how addiction happens, and why people make the choices they do. Learn about signs and symptoms, tolerance, cravings and withdrawal.

2 HAVE A PLAN

Unpredictable things can happen when an adult in your life abuses substances. It's a good idea to **have a plan** in case there is ever a time when you are feeling unsafe (even if you never have to use it). Think of safe people & places, and make an emergency contact list. Decide what you can do if you ever feel at risk.

3 SEEK OUT SUPPORT

Tell someone what is happening & how you feel. Speak to a trusted adult (eg. grandparent, teacher, coach, counsellor or family doctor) or find a support group. Sometimes youth feel pressured to keep the substance-abusing adult's 'secret.' However, to support your own mental health, it is important to **seek out support** when you need it.



4 NOTICE & NAME YOUR FEELINGS

When a significant adult in your life abuses substances, it can bring up many different feelings. You might feel scared, angry, confused, disappointed, sad or uncertain. **Notice & name your feelings.** Know that all feelings are okay. After naming your feelings, try to express them. Write in a journal, draw, paint, sing, or talk to a trusted support person.

5 ACCEPT WHAT YOU CAN & CANNOT CONTROL

You can only control your own thoughts, feelings & behaviours. You cannot control the choices of others, and trying to do so creates a lot of disappointment. Try to be realistic and **accept what you can & cannot control.** Remember, your job is to take care of YOU. It's not your job to take care of the adults in your life.

6 TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

It is important to **take care of yourself** so you are in a good position to cope. Luckily, what is good for your body is also good for your brain. Try the **Big 5 For Mental Health**: regular physical activity, healthy eating, getting enough sleep, maintaining supportive connections with others & helping out. It's also wise to drink water, limit caffeine & avoid alcohol or drugs.

7 GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK

We all need a break sometimes, especially when we are dealing with difficult situations. **Give yourself a break** when you need it. Explore and practice things that can quiet your mind. These may include:

- taking slow, deep breaths
- going for a walk
- trying meditation
- progressive muscle relaxation
- having a warm cup of tea
- practicing gratitude



8 DO WHAT YOU LOVE

Even when times are hard, there are also good things in life. It's ok to take your mind off your problems and **do what you love.** Dance, write, draw, read, play with your pet, listen to music, watch a funny show, spend time with friends
- whatever makes you smile and feel encouraged.

9 APPRECIATE THE GOOD TIMES

Even if they abuse alcohol or drugs, the significant adult in your life has times when they are sober, feel better or are having a good day. When this happens, try to do something together. **Appreciate the good times** - even if they don't happen as often as you'd like. Let your parent or caregiver know that you care about them & enjoy spending time with them.

10

HOW DO I LEARN MORE?

There is much more to learn to help yourself and others.

Visit mentalhealthliteracy.org to get the info you need.