NMRC Opioid and Mentoring Resource

2022
What Are Opioids?

Prescription versus Illicit

Opioids, as defined by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), are a class of drugs that include prescription pain relievers, synthetic drugs like fentanyl, and the illicit drug heroin. Originally derived from the poppy plant, opioids have been used both recreationally and medically for thousands of years. Today, prescription opioids such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, and methadone are legally prescribed by physicians to relieve moderate to severe pain, treat coughs and diarrhea, and sometimes to help treat addiction to other opioids. These drugs interact with opioid receptors in the body and brain and provide euphoria, pain relief, and a relaxed high. It is because of these properties that opioid use can lead to habitual abuse, overdose, and even death.

Abuse of opioids can occur in variety of ways:

• Not taking the medication as prescribed (different dose or different method of consumption).
• Taking someone else's medication.
• Taking the medication with the purpose of getting high.

Research indicates a sharp increase in prescription opioid misuse, abuse, and related overdose deaths in the United States. Beginning in the late 1990s, physicians increasingly prescribed opioids to their patients. As a result, there has been a steady rise in opioid abuse and related overdose deaths over the past 15 years. Prescription opioids and heroin have similar chemical makeups and result in the same feelings of euphoria. In many areas of the United States heroin is cheaper and easier to access than prescription opioids, which oftentimes leads to people switching to heroin.

COMMERCIAL AND STREET NAMES

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) provide examples of commercial and street names for both heroin and prescription opioids.

HEROIN

Street Names: H, White Horse, Smack, Brown Sugar

PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS

Commercial: Codeine
Street Names: Captain Cody, Sizzurp, Purple Drank, Lean

Commercial: Fentanyl, Actiq, Duragesic, Sublimaze
Street Names: Dance Fever, TNT, Murder 8, China White

Commercial: Hydrocodone, Vicodin, Lortab, Lorcrat
Street Names: Vike, Watson-387

Commercial: Oxycodone, OxyContin, Percodan, Percocet
Street Names: Oxy, OC, Percs, Hillbilly Heroin

Commercial: Oxymorphone, Opana
Street Names: Blues, Biscuits, Blue Heaven, Octagons, Stop Signs

IMPACT ON BRAIN AND BODY

How opioids affect the brain

**Short-term**
- Fatigue
- Numbness
- Euphoria
- Drowsiness
- Lethargy
- Nausea

**Long-term**
- Irritability
- Hallucinations
- Hypoxia
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Possible Hyperalgesia

Signs and Symptoms of Opioid Use Disorder

Short-term effects include reduced pain, feelings of euphoria, fatigue, and numbness. With long-term use a person can experience irritability, hallucinations, hypoxia, anxiety, etc.


How opioids affect the body

Your pupils may **dilate**.

You may develop a **tolerance**, meaning that you gradually need more to produce the same effect.

Your breathing will slow. Overdosing can stop breathing and cause brain damage, coma, or even death.

Stopping the drug can cause **withdrawal symptoms** like shakiness, vomiting, and diarrhea.

You become **constipated**.

You’ll **begin to feel their effects** 10-90 minutes after use, depending on the method used.

Opioid painkillers can have effects similar to heroin and morphine, especially when taken in ways that other than prescribed by a doctor.

They **capitalize on our body’s natural pain-relief system** by binding to special pain receptors on cells in the brain and other parts of the body.

Your skin may feel **flushed and warm**.

They can **stop breathing and cause brain damage, coma, or even death**.

Combining them with **alcohol or other drugs** — even when taken as directed — is especially risky.

A report found that people who’d abused them were **40x as likely to abuse** heroin than those who hadn’t.

Their effects can **last anywhere from 4-12 hours**.

Source: https://artakeback.org/wellness/opioids-harm-the-body-brain/
Culture of Conversation

The opioid epidemic has affected each of us in different ways. Some have lost loved ones, while others have personally struggled or have had a family member who struggled with addiction. The misuse of opioid-based drugs has escalated in recent years, and your relationship with a young person is one of the most significant protective factors to help them develop resilience in the face of mounting social pressure.

The best way to talk about opioid misuse with your youth is through a series of informal conversations. Develop a culture of conversation through chatting about opioids while driving in the car, at a restaurant, or while you are on a walk. This reduces the shame, secrecy, and guilt often associated with substance misuse and provides a platform for young people to feel safe to come to you when they need help with a serious issue.

Often, adults hesitate to talk to youth about substance misuse because they fear disclosing their past usage or battle with addiction. Although it may be uncomfortable to talk to youth about your history with drugs or alcohol, as the RehabCenter.net states, “it’s probably one of the most valuable and important discussions you can have.” Contrary to popular thought, when done well, sharing your history of substance misuse provides the opportunity to strengthen your relationship with your youth, further reinforcing a sense of safety. Our experiences, both good and bad, make us who we are. Although there might be a lot we don’t share with our youth, vulnerability of how we made and fixed our mistakes make us more approachable when the going gets tough.

To Share or Not to Share

Disclosing to your youth your past with substance misuse can be uncomfortable. Start by identifying what you hope to accomplish by revealing your story. Not much is achieved when adults share stories about their crazy college days, inadvertently using stories to sound cool. A well-meaning story can quickly diminish toward permission to experiment with drugs. Yet a thought-out conversation allows you to build trust with your youth while boosting your own mental health.

When to Start the Conversation

There is no right or wrong time to start a conversation about opioid misuse. Depending on the age of the youth and their unique risk factors, it may be important to start the conversation as soon as possible, or you may choose to wait. Connect with your mentoring or support team, your youth’s guardian, and/or other supports to ensure everyone is on the same page. Substance misuse is a sensitive topic but important to address, especially since there could be a history of substance misuse within the family.

What to Say

As you build a culture of conversation with your youth strive for an open and continued conversation around this topic. This should not be a one-time talk, but a topic that you routinely return to with support, honesty, and validation.

• Age Appropriate: Strive to keep the conversation age appropriate and provide basic information during the first conversation with encouragement to talk more if the young person has any questions.

• Stick to the Facts: This is not a time to embellish or give gory details. Instead, talk about the peer pressure you were under or your initial romance with the drug. This will provide a firm foundation for real, lasting awareness.
• **Admit Your Mistakes:** Alongside the reasons why you chose to use, explain the consequences of your drug usage. What happened? What have you learned? What would you have done differently?

• **Actively Listen:** Your youth may be open to the conversation or resistant. That’s okay. Provide a safe space for them to digest the information and reflect what you hear them saying (“It seems like you are feeling...”).

• **Be Mindful of Your Language:** Narratives around drug use and misuse are often stigmatizing and shaming. Choosing phrases such as “person with a substance use disorder” versus “addict” provides a compassionate and empathetic attitude. For more information go to: [ChangingtheNarrative.news](http://ChangingtheNarrative.news)

**Youth Whose Family Members Are Struggling with Substance Misuse**

Many young people who grow up with a substance use disorder in their family feel responsible for their family member’s substance use disorder. They often say, “If I didn’t laugh so loud or didn’t fight with my siblings, my mom or dad wouldn’t use drugs or alcohol.” Dr. Claudia Black created the 7 C’s to help young people understand they are not responsible for the family member’s substance use or misuse. The last four of the 7 C’s focus on healthy coping skills such as communicating feelings and the importance of self-care.

_I didn’t CAUSE it, I can’t CONTROL it, I can’t CURE it, BUT I can take CARE of myself By COMMUNICATING my feelings making good CHOICES, and CELEBRATING myself._

—Dr. Claudia Black, used within the Eluna Resource Center

**Don’t Stop Talking**

Discussions about opioid use and misuse should be regular, ongoing conversations. The more you talk, the easier it gets. Youth are often scared to talk about drug misuse with adults because they don’t want to be judged, feel shame, or feel embarrassed. By providing a safe, relaxed atmosphere you remind the youth that you’re an ally, someone they can feel comfortable talking to when situations arise.

**Know Your Role**

As a caregiver, mentor, volunteer, or coach, you are part of a support network for your youth. The greatest benefit you can provide to your youth is to listen and show unconditional love and acceptance. If you feel your youth is in crisis or struggling with substance misuse or mental health, encourage them to reach out to a professional. Even if you have experience, your role is not that of a therapist, counselor, or doctor. There are many types of professionals and resources that can provide help. Talk with your support team and the youth’s family, if appropriate, as they will be essential partners in supporting the youth through a crisis.

**Know Your Community Resources**

It can be difficult to support someone who’s struggling with their mental health or substance misuse, yet the sooner they can find professional help, the better. Take some time to know the support systems in your area. An online search will provide you with your region’s quit lines, addiction support groups for youth, or mental health resources. Free and confidential treatment referral information in English or Spanish can be found at National Treatment Locator or by calling 1-800-662-HELP (4357).
 POINT THREE

Tools for Conversation
Mentors and guardians are not expected to be experts in opioids in order to help youth. Most young people are looking for a safe and welcoming platform to talk, yet it’s often useful to have a handful of available resources in times of need.

RESOURCES FOR ADULTS
The resources below will provide additional training and information about opioid misuse, how to support youth, and how to manage one’s own mental and emotional health.

Learn more about how to help youth:

Mental Health First Aid for Youth:
This is a course that teaches caregivers and mentors a five-step action plan to help young people in mental health or substance use disorder challenges.

Operation Prevention – Parent Toolkit:
This comprehensive Toolkit, useful for parents and caregivers, provides background information, statistics, and helpful tips for talking with your youth about substance misuse.

The Developmental Assets Framework:
The Developmental Assets are 40 positive supports and strengths that young people need to succeed. Half the assets focus on external relationships and opportunities, while the remaining half focus on internal strengths.

Generations United:
This organization has resources and programs to support grandparent caregivers.

National Organizations with Resources
• National Mentoring Resource Center:
  This provides youth mentors and programs with a wide range of resources, programs, and best practices to support positive youth outcomes.
• National Association for Children of Addiction:
  NACoA has many resources to help support youth who grow up in homes with substance use disorder, as well as community resources for organizations and mentors.
• Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration:
  This site provides many free tools, publications, and resources to help support young people through life.
RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

Resources for Youth Struggling with Substance Use Disorder

**Talking to Your Parents about Your Addiction:**
This resource provides tools for youth to talk to their parents/caregivers about their substance use disorder.

**QuitLine or Redline:**
A quick online search can connect you with 24/7 access to local resources for substance abuse treatment.

**Help.org:**
Use this site for referrals to local rehab centers and detailed information on drug-specific addiction.

**YOUth Positively Speaking:**
A podcast with candid conversations with youth about substance misuse.

**@addictiontokdok:**
Dr. Elizabeth Zona, aka Dr. EMZ, has a host of short videos to talk to youth about drugs and addiction.

**Nuggets Video:**
A five-minute wordless video about a Kiwi who tastes a golden nugget. A good explanation for youth about substance use disorder.

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Resources for youth whose Family Is Struggling with Substance Use Disorder

**Eluna Resource Center:**
Articles, activities, and resources to support youth and families impacted by grief or substance use disorder.

**The Zones of Regulation:**
A socioemotional learning framework for emotional regulation, with tools, a workbook, and YouTube videos.

**TimbiTalks.com:**
A resource for youth of all ages to support youth who have a family member who struggles with a substance use disorder.

**National Association for Children of Addiction:**
NACoA has many resources to help support youth who grow up in homes with substance use disorder, as well as community resources for organizations and mentors.

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