



CHEMICAL HEALTH TREND CORNER:

Mental health and substance abuse issues are linked

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Often, students and adults talk about using drugs to self-medicate their feelings and/or mental illness. Alcohol, marijuana or other drugs can be abused to self-medicate the symptoms of depression or anxiety. Unfortunately, substance abuse causes side effects and in the long run worsens the very symptoms they initially numbed or relieved.

When you have both a mental health issue and a substance abuse problem such as bipolar disorder, anxiety or depression, it is called a dual diagnosis or co-occurring disorder. Dealing with drug addiction, alcoholism or substance abuse is never easy, and it's even more difficult when you're also struggling with mental health problems, but there are treatments that can help. With proper treatment, support, and self-help strategies, you can overcome a dual diagnosis and reclaim your life.

It is important to understanding the link between mental health and substance

abuse. In the article "We're Related: Substance Abuse and Mental Health," the authors go into further detail about the link. In a dual diagnosis, both the mental health issue and the drug or alcohol addiction have their own unique symptoms that may get in the way of your ability to function, handle life's difficulties, and relate to others. To make the situation more complicated, the co-occurring disorders also interact and affect each other. When a mental health problem goes untreated, the substance abuse problem usually gets worse as well. When the alcohol or drug abuse increases, mental health problems usually increase, too.

A question that often is asked is: What comes first? The substance abuse or mental health problem? Addiction is common in people with mental health problems. Although substance abuse and mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety are closely linked, one does not directly cause the other.

Some interesting facts by the National Alliance on Mental Illness state that; alcohol and drug abuse can make symptoms of a mental health problem worse. Substance abuse may sharply increase symptoms of mental illness or trigger new symptoms. Alcohol and drug abuse also interact with medications such as antidepressants, anti-anxiety pills, and mood stabilizers, making them less effective.

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According to reports published in the Journal of the American Medical Association:

Roughly 50 percent of individuals with severe mental disorders are affected by substance abuse.

Thirty-seven percent of alcohol abusers and 53 percent of drug users also have at least one serious mental health illness. It can be difficult to diagnose a substance abuse problem and a co-occurring mental health disorder. It takes time to tease out what might be a mental health disorder and what might be an alcohol or drug problem.

Denial complicates the issue and is common in substance abuse. It's hard to admit how dependent you are on alcohol or drugs or how much they negatively affect your life. Denial frequently occurs in mental disorders as well. The symptoms of depression or anxiety can be frightening, so you may ignore them and hope they go away. Or you may be ashamed or afraid of being viewed as weak if you admit the problem.

The best treatment for co-occurring disorders is an integrated approach, where both the substance abuse problem and the mental disorder are treated simultaneously. Recovering from co-occurring disorders takes time, commitment, and courage. It may take months or even years but people with substance abuse and mental health problems can and do get better.

Carmen Morrow is School District 423's chemical health intervention specialist. Sources for this column include "National Alliance on Mental Illness", "Journal of the American Medical Association", "We're Related: Substance Abuse and Mental Health" Authors: Joanna Saisan, MSW., Melinda Smith, MA., and Jeanne Segal, Ph.D, October, 2016. You, Your Kids & School is a twice-month-column from School District 423.

Top 5 Reasons Teens Use Drugs

Written by Casa Palmera Staff

There are many reasons why teens abuse illegal or prescription drugs. Past studies used to point to "having fun" as the number-one reason teens used drugs, but more recent studies show that teens are using drugs to solve problems. This is important for parents to understand because most parents severely underestimate the impact of stress on their teens. By understanding what motivates your teen to use drugs, you can hopefully step in help them find better ways to cope with their problems.

Top Reasons Why Teens Abuse Substances

1) Stress: A recent study by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America showed that 73 percent of teens report the number-one reason for using drugs is to deal with the pressures and stress of school. Surprisingly, only 7 percent of parents believe that teens might use drugs to cope with stress, showing parents severely underestimate



the impact of stress on their teens' decision to use drugs.

2) Social Acceptance and/or Low Self-Esteem: The study indicated that 65 percent of teens say they use drugs to "feel cool." Teens' self-worth depends on the approval of others, and their desire for social acceptance can drive them to engage in destructive behaviors, even if they know it could harm them. The same study found that 65 percent of teens use drugs to "feel better about themselves." Teens who have low self-esteem are more likely to seek acceptance from the wrong crowd by using drugs.

3) Self-Medication: The teen years are rough, and many teens who are unhappy don't know how to find a healthy outlet for their frustration. These pent up emotions can take an emotional toll and can even lead to depression or anxiety. A 2009 study reported an estimated 70 percent of teens suffer from undiagnosed clinical depression at some point in their life. Many teens are unaware that they have an underlying mental or mood disorder that is causing them to use illegal or prescription drugs to self-medicate and cope with their symptoms.

4) Misinformation: Studies show that teens are widely misinformed about the dangers of drugs. Did you know that 40 percent of teens don't perceive any major risk with trying heroin once or twice? While abuse of serious drugs is steadily declining among teens, their intentional abuse of prescription and over-the-counter medications remains a serious concern.

Many teens, 41 percent to be exact, mistakenly believe that it's safer to abuse a prescription drug than it is to use illegal drugs. Nearly 1 in 5 teens have already abused a prescription medication or prescription painkiller in order to get high or deal with stress.

5) Easy Access: One reason teens use drugs is simply because they're easy to get. Nearly 50 percent of teens report that it's easy for them to get marijuana; 17 percent say it's easy to get meth; 14.4 percent say it's easy to get heroin; and more than half of teens say that prescription drugs are easier to get than illegal drugs.

Teen Drug Abuse: Prevention and Help

Research consistently shows that kids who learn a lot about the risks of drugs from their parents are 50 percent less likely to use drugs than kids who do not learn about the dangers of drugs at home.

Unfortunately, only 32 percent of teens report that they are getting this vital message from their parents.

If you know a teen who is abusing drugs, don't wait to intervene. The sooner your teen gets help for drug abuse, the more likely they'll be able to avoid the long-lasting consequences. Fortunately, there are many different teen drug rehabs to choose from. The most effective teen drug rehab, however, may be a residential treatment program. Here your teen will have access to 24/7 supervision and care, detoxification, dual diagnosis treatment



and a variety of holistic treatments based on their individual needs. Talk to a medical doctor or a Chemical Health Counselor about your teen's symptoms and determine which type of drug abuse treatment is best for your teen.

Chemical Health Trend Corner: Robo Tripping/Over-the-Counter Drug Abuse

By American society of
Anesthesiologists 2016

What is Robo tripping?

Robo tripping is the act of abusing over-the-counter cough and cold medicines that contain dextromethorphan (DXM). It has become a growing and potentially life-threatening trend among America's youth in recent years.

What is DXM?

DXM is a synthetic drug that produces a hallucinogenic high when consumed in large amounts. It is present in more than 125 medications, including well-known brands.

Does DXM have any slang terms?

Yes. Slang terms for the drug include Robo, Skittles, Dex and Tussin.

How many teens Robo trip?

According to The Partnership for a Drug-Free America, nearly 10 percent of American teens have admitted to Robo tripping.

Do teens Robo trip?

Yes. In fact, children as young as age nine have admitted to Robo tripping.

Why do so many teens and teens Robo trip?

Teens and teens Robo trip often because medications containing DXM are legal, readily available (without a prescription) and inexpensive.

Why are medications containing DXM available without a prescription?

These medications are available without a prescription because DXM is a safe and effective cough suppressant when used properly.

Does Robo tripping have any side effects?

Yes. Consuming large amounts of drugs containing DXM can have a variety of serious and very dangerous side effects on a child's short- and long-term health including:

- Impaired vision, speech and judgment
 - Confusion
 - Lack of motor coordination
 - Hypothermia
 - Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea
 - Abdominal pain
 - Increased heart rate and blood pressure
 - Disorientation and/or loss of consciousness
 - Cerebral hemorrhages
 - Seizures and/or permanent brain damage
 - Death
- Can parents monitor for signs that their children are Robo tripping?



Yes. You should actively monitor for signs that your child is Robo tripping, which include:

An unusual medicinal smell on your child
Empty or missing cough and cold medicine bottles

An unexplainable disappearance of money from the house

A sudden change in your child's physical appearance, attitude, sleeping and/or eating habits

Questionable or unexpected packages arriving in the mail addressed to your child

Visits by your child to pro-drug websites

What should parents do if their children become high on DXM?

Seek emergency medical care if your child is:

Unresponsive

Vomiting

Sweating excessively

Pale or blue in the face

Experiencing an unusually fast or slow pulse

How can parents help protect their children from DXM abuse?

You can help protect your child from DXM abuse by:

Educating your child about the dangers of drug abuse

Controlling access to cough and cold medicines (which may include locking your medicine cabinet)

Keeping your own medications out of reach of your child

Familiarizing yourself with – and not stockpiling – medicines that contain DXM
Actively checking your credit card statements

Monitoring your child's Internet use

Prescription Painkillers: Should Your Teenager Ever Take Them?

By Diana Simeon

Let's be clear. The majority of people who take a prescription painkiller do not end up addicted to either heroin or the painkiller. But a perplexing part of the problem is there is no real way to predict who will become addicted and who will not.

"We know that some people who take it are going to get addicted," says Dr. Stephen Sroka, an adjunct professor at Case Western Reserve University's School of Medicine. "They didn't choose to mess up their life with this drug. It just grabs their brain."

And the current heroin crisis in the United States has been fueled by over-prescribing of opioid painkillers over the past decade or so.

[Click here for a very timely article as the opiate overdose epidemic rages across our nation.](#)

Take It To The Box



What is Take It To The Box?

The Take It To The Box program promotes the safe use, safe storage; in particular the safe disposal of unneeded medication. The McLeod County community and MEADA are serious about preventing medication misuse, abuse and environmentally safe disposal of unneeded medication. Safe medication disposal helps reduce such risks.

How should I get my medicine ready to drop off in The Box?

Medicine should be left in their original container with the label. If the medicine is a prescription, use a marker to cross off your name. Leave all other information on the container.

What kinds of medicine can go into The Box?

Any prescription and over-the-counter medicine can be placed in The Box.

What about syringes, needles or "sharps"?

NO! These items can NOT go in The Box.

Talk to your pharmacist about syringe disposal options and products that are available.

For further suggestions for syringe disposal contact:

McLeod County Solid Waste
At 320-484-4300

Household chemicals like glues, paints and other inhalants can be used to get high. Can these chemicals go in The Box?

No, You are encouraged to store these kinds of chemicals in a safe, out-of-reach location.

Can "inhalers" be put in The Box?

Yes. Inhalers used with various medicines can be dropped in The Box for disposal.

What do I do with medicine that has expired?

Expired medicines are accepted in The Box.

I know someone who has a large amount of unneeded medication but is unable to bring it in for disposal. Can I drop off someone else's medication?

Yes. If needed, friends or family members may bring medication to The Box for someone else. Please call if you have a question about this.

What happens to the medicine dropped into The Box?

The Box will be emptied as needed. Contents are stored in a secured locations. Periodically, law enforcement and a chemist from a qualified disposal company will sort the medication. Medicines will then

be taken to a licensed site to be incinerated.

Who pays for the medication disposal?

Take It To The Box is a very cost effective program. Funding has come from: local law enforcement agencies, McLeod County Solid Waste, a Drug Free Communities grant and a grant from the United Way. There is NO charge to individuals when medications are dropped off at Take It To The Box locations.

Drop-Off Locations:

McLeod County Sheriff's Office

801 East 10th St.
Glencoe

Hutchinson Police Dept.

10 Franklin St. South
Hutchinson

Winsted Police Dept.

201 1st St. North
Winsted

Take It To The Box (TITB) Committee Members have received a lot of questions regarding sharps and needle disposal. These items are NOT allowed in the drop boxes. The link below has a variety of suggested ways to dispose of needles and sharps.

[Sharps fact sheet](#)