

# Just Between Us...

## Teens & Adults Discuss Substance Abuse

People use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs for a wide variety of reasons. Here are a few of them:

- To be accepted by peers
- To look and feel confident
- To relax
- To escape boredom
- To feel less inhibited
- To feel good ("high")
- To handle depression
- Because they're upset by family problems
- Because they're upset by other problems
- To appear more mature

Can you think of others? \_\_\_\_\_

Thinking about people your age, which of the above are the most frequent reasons for using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs?

Think of someone you know who drinks or uses drugs. What reason(s) would they give for this behavior? What reason do you think is the "real" reason they drink or use drugs?

Some people believe that education about the harmful effects of substance use/abuse is the best way to prevent young people from drinking or using drugs.

Others say education has little effect. Think about this:

- Do you or anyone you know well smoke cigarettes?
- At what age did that person start smoking?
- Does that person know about the seriously harmful health effects of tobacco use?
- Does the Surgeon General's health warning have any impact on that person?
- Do you think cigarette advertising has any effect on their decision to smoke?
- What *might* have prevented that person from starting to smoke?
- Has that person ever tried unsuccessfully to stop smoking?
- What *might* help that person be successful in stopping?

Of the following substances, which do you think are the ones the adults should be most worried about preventing young people from experimenting with?

Alcohol	Tobacco	Cocaine	Marijuana
Inhalants	Heroin	Hallucinogens	
Uppers & Downers		Designer Drugs	

At what age, if ever, should people be allowed to make up their own minds about using any of these substances? Do you think the laws regulating or banning these substances should be changed?

Some people believe our society sends young people “mixed messages” about substance use. For example, we hear a lot about peer pressure is responsible for leading people to dabble in drug use, yet we pay little attention to the fact that alcohol is the most widely abused legal substance among both adults and teens. (Even very young kids know that “happy hour” at the bar means cheap drinks, not an extra helping of broccoli and salad.)

- Do you think you have been given clear messages about *if* and *when* drinking may be acceptable?
- What do you think parents of someone your age should do and say about drinking? Smoking? Other drug use?
- What rules, if any, do you plan to enforce about your kids' substance use when you are a parent?

What advice would you give someone your age that is worried about a parent's drug use or drinking?

What advice would you give a parent who is worried about a kid your age's drug use?

Do you think your parents have a realistic understanding of how available illegal substances are at your school? Of how prevalent substance use is here? Of your own use or non-use? Do you *want* them to know more?

What legal things do you and your friends do to relax? Have fun? Celebrate big events? What do you and your family do to relax, have fun, and celebrate?



**Bureau of Addictions**  
7178 Columbia Gateway Drive, Columbia, MD 21046  
Tel: 410-313-6202 Fax: 410-313-6212  
TDD: 410-313-2323 Toll-free: 1-866-313-6300  
website: [www.hchealth.org](http://www.hchealth.org)