

SUBSTANCE/DRUG ABUSE AMONG ADOLESCENTS

DR. VANDANA GUPTA

ASST. PROF.

M. V. COLLEGE OF EDUCATION,

UNIV. OF DELHI, DELHI.

ABSTRACT- The menace of substance abuse by young population can cripple any nation. The adolescents who are the future citizens are rendered useless by this awful and highly addictive habit. The article explores the role of parents, school, community and the state to deal with the situation. It also suggests adolescents various strategies to say no to drugs

KEY WORDS- substances, prescription drugs, role of stakeholders, rehabilitative and preventive measures

INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse by adolescents has been a very concerned area worry in our society and also in many other countries across the globe. In India the state of Punjab has been infamous for substance abuse. Many young lives have been destroyed due to this. Substance abuse by even one family member can destroy not only peace of the whole house but also depreviates the household of economic security as the abuser needs a constant supply of money to satisfy his drug needs. The state is also at a loss as the abuser takes to crime to fulfill his needs. Instances of addicts killing their parents to exhort money from them are often reported in newspapers. A relatively recent trend in substance abuse is prescription drug abuse. This has more to do with using prescription drugs to get high, versus doctors over-prescribing prescriptions, though there is an increase in that issue as well. It is now a global phenomenon that prescription drugs are being used to get high. The Office of National Drug Control Policy has said that prescription drug abuse is now the second most common form of illegal substance abuse in the India. Theoretically, almost any substance can be abused. Alcohol, prescription and over-the-counter medications inhalants and solvents, and even coffee and cigarettes, can be used to harmful excess. Substance abuse is emerging as a major problem. A majority of drug users are below twenty years. Social factors add on to the vulnerability of adolescents to drug abuse. Various drugs can be used to change the way our body works.

The most compelling Abuse are:

- To feel grown up; reasons that Adolescents give for experimenting with Drugs and continuing with Substance;
- To take risks and to rebel against authority;

- To fit into and belong to a group;
- To relax and feel good; and
- To satisfy curiosity.

Risk Factors for Substance-Abuse among Adolescents

Personal factors	Behavioral factors	other factors	cognitive factors
Myths about substances	Rampant use of drugs	Peers supporting drug use	Developing brains and growing bodies are more sensitive to substances that can be abused
Lack of knowledge of consequences of substance use	Adolescents often use more than one substance	Substance use by parents, siblings, and peers	
Low self-efficacy	Adolescents tend to engage in high risk behavior more than adults	Influence/glamorization or advertising and media	
Personality factors, e.g. depression, low self-esteem	Adolescents function irresponsibly and mindlessly in this area	Easy accessibility of substance or drugs	
Poor psychological well-being	Curiosity leads to experimentation	Social and cultural norms accepting substance abuse	
Poorer Academic achievement (statistically low achievement= higher risk)	Lack of various life skills, including critical thinking, ability to cope with stress	Financial factors	

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF SUBSTANCE DEPENDENCE

- Feeling exhausted, depressed hopeless or suicidal
- Unusual flare-ups or outbreaks of temper.
- Withdrawal from responsibility or change in overall attitude;

- Deterioration in physical appearance and neglect of personal grooming habits;
- Association with known substance abusers;

HOW TO SAY 'NO'

Students may face situations that put them in a dilemma. There are many situations which are risky or where they do not want to participate or the actions involved are against their value system and thought process. Some situations can be potentially more dangerous or have a lifelong negative impact and consequences. There could also be requests made on them by their peers that they do not want to fulfill. But many adolescents may be unable to say “No” at such times! All growing children must therefore develop the “skills to say no” so that they can say “No” when they want to do so. These skills will help them throughout their life.

Students need to use a combination of many Life Skills such as Self Awareness, Critical and Creative Thinking, Decision Making, Inter Personal Relationships, Effective Communication, in order to be able to say ‘no’.

METHODOLOGY WHICH MAY BE USEFUL FOR TEACHERS TO INSPIRE STUDENTS

Step 1:

Please prepare and read the Fact Sheet carefully and go through this session well in advance before you carry it out with the students.

Step 2:

Greet the class and introduce the topic. State that there are many situations where we do not want to participate or join, or the actions involved are against our value system. Also there could be requests made on us that we for whatever reasons-do not want to fulfill. But we are not able to say “No” at such times! Ask the class: **“Have there been situations in your life where you did not want to join in an activity or wanted to say NO but couldn’t do so? Give examples.”**

Expected Responses:

- **Yes there have been such situations.** I didn’t want to miss school and go to a movie but couldn’t say no to my friends, I didn’t want to help my friend cheat in the exam but couldn’t say not to him, I didn’t want to lent money to a classmate but couldn’t say no, I didn’t want to bully one of the junior students but couldn’t walk away from my group of friends who were bullying the girl, I didn’t want a friend to hold my hand but didn’t know how to tell him not to, etc.

Step 3:

Applaud the students who have shared their experience. State that many such situations may not have damaged our life severely but **some situations can be more dangerous, risky** or have **a lifelong negative impact and consequences**. Such situations could involve doing some illegal acts or suggestions to start smoking, drinking, cycle without holding the handle, or indulge in violence etc. Our peers may directly or indirectly persuade us to do things that we do not want to do. Thus we need to learn to say ‘no’ to our peers too. State that such situation can come not only in the lives of adolescents but also in the life of adults including Teachers! **Thus all of us must have the “skills to say no” so that we can say “No” when we want to**. The teacher asks the students to collect News Paper clipping describing some children are alive today because they said ‘NO’. These skills will help us throughout our life. State that today we will rehearse some methods of “Saying No”. Divide the class into 3 groups, and assign one role play to each. Give the groups five minutes to prepare and 3-4 minutes each to present the role play. Ask others to watch keenly.

Role Play Scenarios:

- Some boys are forcing Joy to miss school to go to see the latest movie in the nearby hall. He does not want to miss school. They then threaten him that he will have to leave the group since he is too “goody goody”. How can he stick to his point and say ‘NO’?
- Smita’s best friend Suman has invited her to a party at her house. The party will start late in the evening and some boys will also come. Smita does not want to go to such parties, but also does not want to annoy her friend. How can she say ‘NO’?
- Roy’s friends want him to go with them to bully a younger boy. He is totally against bullying people. How can Roy say ‘NO’ to his friends and also prevent his friends bullying the younger boy?

Step 4:

Ask each group to enact their play one by one. Applaud their efforts. Discuss each role-play briefly before proceeding to the next. Write on the board the methods shown by each group to say ‘NO’ or manage the situation. Ask the class if they can think of any other methods of saying ‘NO’? Write those down too. Ask them about other situations where they feel they should say NO.

Note for Teachers:

The students will exhibit various ways of ‘saying no’ through the role plays. Today it may be a role play but tomorrow it can actually happen (in fact these situations are “real life situations that have been picked

up from school students!) And this experience would assist them in dealing with such situations. They will be using skills of:

Self-Awareness for Decision Making, (“I don’t want to do this”)

Critical and Creative Thinking for Problem Solving (How can I get out of this situation?).

Coping with Stress and Emotions (Pressure by friends/peers)

Inter Personal Relationship (“I still want to maintain my friendship”)

Effective Communication to handle these situations.

While doing the role plays, students also develop **Empathy** with others as they are putting themselves in the situation given.

Children usually don’t say NO for fear of offending good friends/peers and the thought of losing them. Tell the students that if their friends were so concerned about their feelings they would not be forcing them to do or participate in certain acts. Explain that at times, having the capacity to say “no” may not be available automatically and we may **have to use all our reserve strength** to say ‘no’. However, **it ultimately feels good to stick to what you believe in**. Remember you have a right to **say no** when you feel that **it is the right thing to do!** Explaining to people in a calm way why you don’t want to be part of something may also **earn you respect** rather than enmity.

Also, in such a situation, even if we say ‘No’ and lose out on our friendship then we’re actually better off, for our friends never really cared for us if they continued to force us to do things against our wishes, character or values! **We can seek out people who have a value system similar to ours and be friends with them. This is how utilizing Life Skills can help us all in charting a life course that is in harmony with our character and values!**

Step 5:

State that students have shown many ways of “saying No”. But we need to understand their **strengths and limitations**. We must know WHERE to (in which situation) and HOW to use each method. Go through the **10 ways to say “NO”** with them on the Chart you have made. **Elaborate a little on each point** and see to it that a brief discussion is held. Specifically point out which methods can be used **with real friends** and which should be avoided as far as possible.

Reiterate that, if you strongly believe and want to say no to someone-including friends-you should go ahead and stick to your point and “Say No” utilizing whichever method you think will work! State that “cold shoulder”, “ignoring the question”, or “avoiding the situation” are **perfectly acceptable**

techniques of managing some situations as sometimes only these methods work. State that **personal safety, character, and value system** are paramount and other considerations should be kept secondary.

REFERENCES

- Aloutte Addictions: Parents Night: Your kids and drugs—a forum (March 30, 2016) Thomas Haney secondary School., Maple Ridge (B.C.)
- Anne-Marie, Ambert (2017), A Qualitative Study Of Peer Abuse And Its Effects, Asian Journal of Psychology and Education, Vol-27, No: 9-10, 1994, Pp 20-28.
- Chopra, R.N. (Sir) and Chopra I.C., “*Treatment of Drug addiction: Experience in India*” (2018) in *Bulletin of Narcotics*,
- Dube, K.C., “*Drug Abuse in Northern India*” (2014) *Bulletin on Narcotics*, N.Y., Vol. XXIV, No. 1,
- Horman and Fox, *Drug Awareness (2016) information centre, New Delhi*, Avon Books, New York.
- Leukefeld, C.G. and Bukoski, W.J. (2015), *Drug Abuse Prevention -Evaluation Methodology; A Bright Future*. Journal of Drug Education, 21(3): 191-201
- Sain, Bhim, “*Drugs: Education as Weapon*: (March 13, 2018) in The Tribune, Chandigarh., “*Drug Addiction on Rise in Schools*,” (Aug. 26, 2018) in *the Evening News*, New Delhi.
- Singh, Ravindra, *I was a Drug Addict*, Orient Paperbacks, (2017)
- Woolfolk, Anita, *Educational Psychology*, (2014) Ohio, Pearson Education