

The SOLUTION source

Thunder Bay Counselling Newsletter
By Colleen Ginter, Clinical Counsellor on behalf of Thunder Bay Counselling

For You & Your Family

Fall 2017

OUR FALL NEWSLETTER WILL FOCUS ON THE SUBJECT OF SUBSTANCE USE. WE WILL ALSO TAKE A LOOK AT THE RELATED RISKS YOUTH FACE AS THEY HEAD OFF TO COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY.

MANY INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR FAMILIES HAVE STRUGGLED THROUGH THE UPS AND DOWNS OF SUBSTANCE USE. BUT, HOW DO WE KNOW WHEN SOCIAL USE IS BECOMING AN ISSUE.

Substance Abuse

You know your friend, partner or family member enjoys a few drinks or likes to dabble in other substances. Over time, though, you slowly notice changes in their behavior that are causing you discomfort and you start looking for answers related to problematic substance use.

The following criteria can help you recognize if substance use is becoming problematic.

Is the individual:

- Using more of the substance than is recommended?
- Wanting to cut down or stop using but not managing to?
- Spending a lot of time getting, using, or recovering from use of the substance?
- Craving the use of the substance?
- Not managing to do what is needed at work, home, or school because of substance use?
- Continuing to use despite the problems its causing or exacerbating in relationships or in mental or physical health?
- Giving up important social, work, or recreational activities because of substance use?
- Using substances repeatedly despite the danger it puts you in?
- Needing more of the substance to get the desired effect?
- Experiencing symptoms of withdrawal that can only be relieved by using more of that substance?

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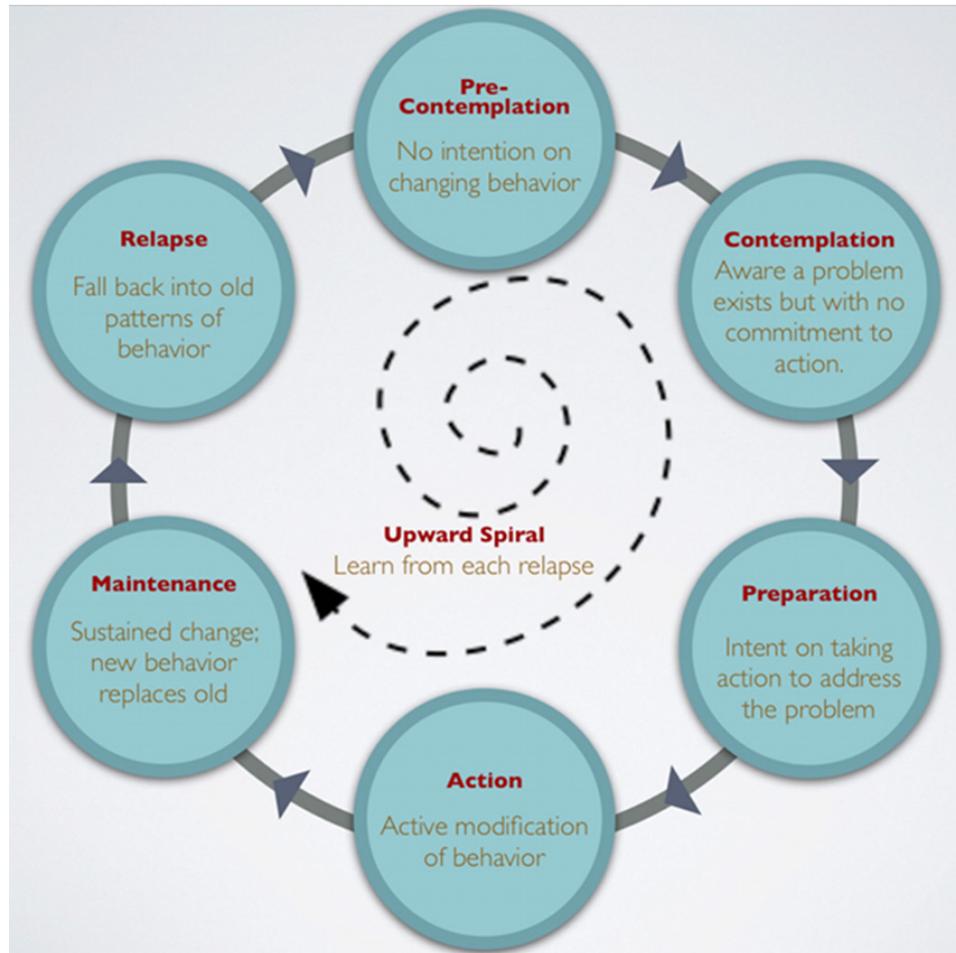
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Timmins Family Counselling Centre
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Change Process

When families or partners first come to realize that their loved one is struggling with substance abuse, they will often come to the disconcerting discovery that the individual is unaware that they even have a problem. The following diagram, based on the Prochaska and DiClemente model for stages of change, outlines the stages that many people go through in making a change. Knowing that change is not always fast or easy will help keep individual's and family members' expectations realistic.



Help with Coping when your loved one is struggling with substance abuse

Educate yourself

Knowledge can help raise hope in families as well as to learn ways to be there for their loved one. If you've never experienced substance abuse issues before, it can be really scary. Education can help families learn about what is happening. It can often help with the sense of responsibility they feel. There is a myriad of resources to learn about substance abuse: groups, books (either from your library or local book store), on-line resources, counselling agencies, etc.

Find a Friend

Supporting someone with these issues can be emotionally draining. Finding a trusted friend or peer who is able to provide a comforting and non-judgmental ear may help ease some of the turmoil you are feeling as a partner or family member.

Self-Care

You need to take care of yourself. You won't be able to be as helpful if your emotional and physical health are compromised. Maintain an exercise program to take care of your body, get enough sleep. How do you care and nurture yourself?

Self Help Support for Families

Al-Anon Family Groups is a self-help resource. There are also other groups that offer support to families regarding other substances. Al-Anon offers family meetings and it also has an excellent on-line resource with questionnaires.

Risk for Youth Leaving Home

Leaving home to attend College or University is an exciting time for youth. They will experience a whole new life. Students will experience a freedom that they have not had while living at home under the care of their parents. With this comes choices but also the responsibility for the decisions they make about their lifestyle and all aspects of their lives. They may be exposed to an increase in opportunities to attend parties that will include drugs and alcohol. Peer pressure and the stress of student life may increase the risks of using and abusing substances.

Not only are youth at risk because of increased availability to drugs and alcohol and peer pressure but they may also turn to them out of a sense of loneliness. At home, they may have had friends and family in their life but, when arriving in a new community, they may know very few people and that can lead to a sense of isolation.

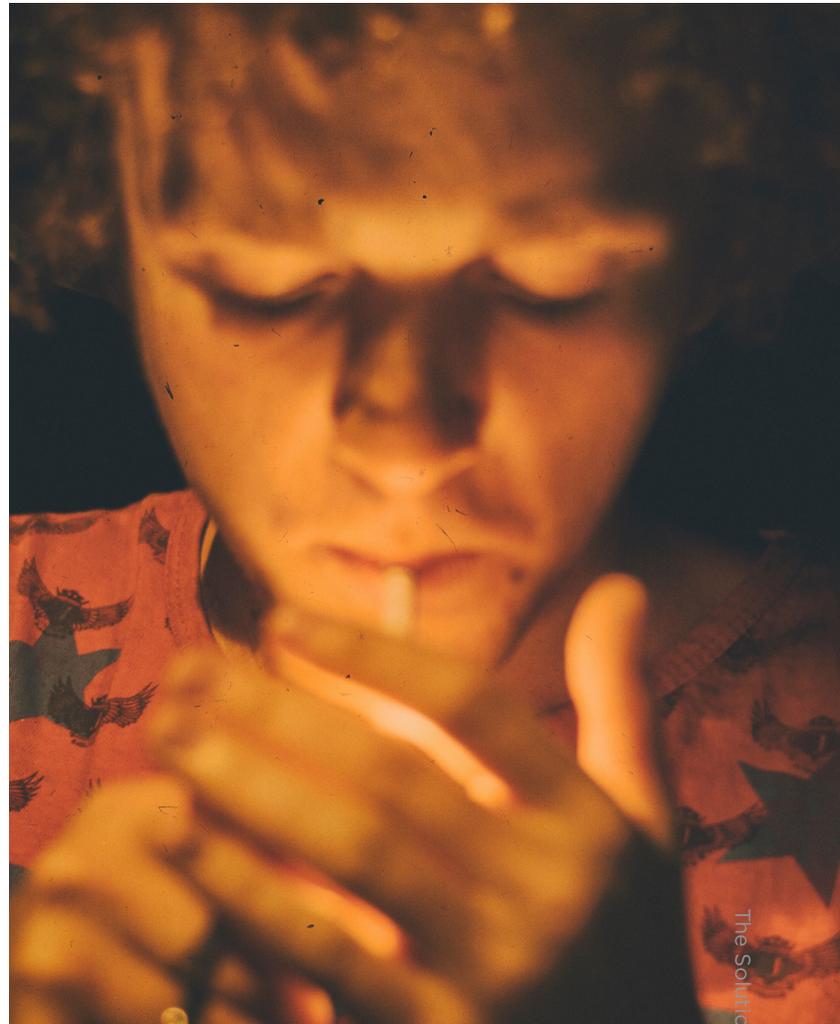
Many Colleges and Universities have extra-curricular opportunities for students to reduce the sense of loneliness and isolation and hopefully lessen the chances that they will turn to substances for comfort.

(Kirk Strosahl and Patricia Robinson)

Ideas for Supporting Youth as they Navigate New Horizons

One of the ways to help youth adapt in a more healthy way when going off to college or university is to have a non-confrontational talk with your child about what they might expect. You might start a preventative conversation, leading with the things that your child values and cares about. They will need to know that drugs and alcohol may interfere with these things they value.

“This technique worked well in my own life. My parents did not spend much time lecturing me about the health effects of drugs. Instead, my mother spoke to us in terms of our goals. ‘When you’re young,’ she said, ‘all the doors of opportunity are wide open, and you can do anything you want or become anyone you want.’ But she warned, ‘Mistakes along the way, like drug and alcohol use, close some of those doors, and you’ll miss the opportunities you once had.’ Every time I was offered a drink in school, I could hear the thud of a door slamming shut and refused. Persuasion is key to making prevention work, so let’s make the argument for prevention more persuasive. Show young people that drug and alcohol use will hinder their goals and dreams and we can increase the effectiveness of our prevention efforts. Start a conversation with your teen about drugs that gets him/her thinking about their own goals and dreams. Try asking your teen these questions.”



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‘What would make doing drugs a big deal for you?’

This gets your teen to think about the future, what her boundaries are around drug use and what would make it “a big deal.” It will give you insight into what is important to her. If use progresses and some of these boundaries are crossed, you can then bring that up at a later date.

‘What are some things that keep you from using drugs?’

This is a question that makes your teen think about the reasons why she doesn’t want to use . It allows her to think about what drugs would interfere with if she did use.”

(Theodore Caputi,Wharton School of Business,University of Pennsylvania)

Using Values as an Opening to Communication with Youth about Substance Use

Why use values as a way to connect with your youth? Here's what writers Kirk Strosahl and Patricia Robinson have to say:

"Humans want to have a say about how they live their lives. It is in choosing that we bring purpose to our life experiences and directions. You first need to define a valued direction, a compass heading, and use it to guide you during your journey. Your values compass will provide the ongoing guidance needed to pursue consistent direction and to deal with the inevitable barriers and potholes along the way. Your values are your personal beliefs about the way you want to live your life and what you stand for in your life." For example:

- I want to be well educated and pass on my knowledge to other people
- I want to continually challenge and improve myself as an individual
- I want to promote my physical and mental health over my lifespan.

Helping people is what we're all about.

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