

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS STRUGGLING...

- Be sure to support and stick with them but make it clear that some behaviours are not okay. Stealing or hurting people physically, or trying to get you or your friends to take drugs is not acceptable behaviour.
- You can give them helpful suggestions, but don't nag or try to be their counselor.
- If they decide to seek help, you could offer to go with them and provide moral support. People who use drugs, will need professional help. As much as we want to support friends, we need to get them the right help.
- It helps to provide encouragement, but talk to a teacher or another responsible adult to get this person some help or call Helpline.

Remember: Talk to a friend or person you can trust if you or someone you know are having a problem. They are there to help.

You don't have to fight this alone; your friends and family can help you succeed and achieve your dreams!

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Schools can contact their local police stations, clinics and hospitals and community organisations.

National Substance Abuse Helpline toll free:

0800 121 314 or SMS 32312

Department of Basic Education toll free line:

0800 202 933

Department of Social Development (Gauteng):

(011) 355 7687/7977/7878

Childline toll free line: 0800 055 555

ABOUT VHUTSHILO

Vhutshilo is a prevention programme implemented in a range of communities in South Africa. It helps young people recognise risky situations and learn how to say no and walk away from dangerous choices.



**HELPING
YOUTH STAY
DRUG FREE
IN
SOUTH AFRICA!**



**MAKE YOUR
CHOICE**

**USE YOUR
VOICE**

**A VHUTSHILO 2
RESOURCE:
#3**

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

IN YOUR
COMMUNITY

ABUSING DRUGS AND
ALCOHOL IS A COMMON
PROBLEM IN OUR
COMMUNITIES. SOME YOUNG
PEOPLE GET CAUGHT UP IN
THIS PROBLEM.

LEARN WHY DRUGS AND
ALCOHOL ARE BAD FOR YOU.

HELP YOUR FRIENDS STAY
AWAY FROM DRUGS AND
ALCOHOL SO ALL OF YOU CAN
REACH YOUR GOALS AND BE
HEALTHY AND
SUCCESSFUL.

WHY DO PEOPLE START USING?

Most times people don't plan to use drugs or drink too much. Often people experience a problem and turn to drugs or drink as a way to cope with a problem instead of looking for a solution. Sometimes people want to experiment and experience what it feels like without knowing the dangers.



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'DRUGS'?

A drug can refer to substances that are legal (e.g., alcohol, tobacco, over-the-counter medications and household goods, such as glue) and illegal (e.g., dagga, tik, heroin, and cocaine). All these substances can affect how people feel or behave.

It is important to know that some legal drugs are used in the wrong way. This is dangerous to a person's health. Illegal and legal drugs that are used incorrectly can be addictive. This means that a person's body begins to need the drug more and more. This type of addiction is difficult to manage.

Some drugs (like dagga) can become a 'gateway' drug because it can lead people to try stronger substances. One thing that all these drugs have in common is that they can affect your health, your ability to think and your behaviour.

DRUG USE AND ABUSE PUTS YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK

The desire to experiment and test what is good and bad behaviour and play with the rules is a normal part of growing up. Unfortunately, drugs can make you confused about what is normal! Here are some of the things that can happen if you choose to play around with drugs:

- Getting involved in violence or crime.
- Physical health problems as you grow older, such as heart and lungs problems or cancer.
- Mental health problems such as depression.
- Increased problems with school work and learning.
- Increased problems at home that affect your family.
- Increased risky behaviour, including unprotected sex and increased risk of getting HIV or other STIs, or falling pregnant.
- Increased risk of injury and involvement in traffic accidents, as either a driver or a pedestrian.

STOP THE PROBLEM BEFORE IT STARTS

Get help from people you trust and through the programmes offered at school and in your community. These programmes can help you and your friends understand what happens when young people get involved with drugs or alcohol and can teach you to make healthier choices and decisions about drugs and alcohol.

VALUING FRIENDS & TRUSTED ADULTS

Many young people feel pressure to use drugs or alcohol to be cool or hip, to feel accepted, because they are shy around other people, or they may be running away from hard and painful feelings.

Child and Youth Care Workers or people working in youth programmes can help you understand that using drugs and alcohol is not a solution to problems—it only creates more problems! They will provide information and help you develop self-respect and an understanding that using drugs or alcohol at a young age can hurt your chances for a bright future. They will talk about the school events and parties and

soccer matches that young people attend, showing you that you can have fun and make friends without being high.

HOW TO TELL IF SOMEONE IS USING

Here are some of the signs that can tell you that someone you know might be using drugs or alcohol:

- A change in their energy level, sometimes very active or sometimes very tired.
- Lack of coordination, moving slowly, being clumsy and falling.
- Speaking in a way that is hard to understand or is confused and forgetful.
- Sudden changes in style of clothing, or becoming careless and untidy.
- Sudden aggressive and violent behaviour, unexplained anger, restlessness, irritability, and destructive behaviour, such as punching walls, swearing and fighting.
- Lack of motivation, sudden loss of interest in things that they used to enjoy, such as hobbies or sports, or lack of concern about life in general.
- Mood swings: from sudden excitement to sudden feelings of depression and hopelessness.
- Dropping out of school or missing days without a reason; not being interested in finishing matric, lying and losing contact with old friends while making new friends who often have links to gangs or drugs.

