

GETTING HELP WITH SUBSTANCE USE: A GUIDE FOR YOUTH



Substance use is common and can affect youth and families in many different ways. Substance use may begin as curiosity, a way to cope with stress, or an effort to fit in, but it can sometimes become difficult to manage on your own. If you are concerned about your substance use, you are not alone.

Support is available, and reaching out for help can make a real difference. This guide is designed to help you take the first steps toward reducing or stopping substance use and finding the support you need.

7 STEPS TO REDUCE OR STOP SUBSTANCE USE

This information is based on [Five action steps for quitting an addiction](#), [Overcoming Drug Addiction](#).

1

Decide You Want to Change

- Be **honest** with yourself about how substance use affects your health, school, work, and/or relationships.

Action: Write down 1 reason you want your life to change.

For example:

- *I want my parents to trust me again.*
- *I'm tired of getting in trouble at school.*
- *I want to improve my health.*



2

Tell a Trusted Adult ➡

- You don't have to do this alone. Find someone you trust to help you on your journey.

Talk to:

- A parent, caregiver, or family member
- A teacher, coach, or school counselor
- Another trusted adult

Action: You can start by saying, *"I'm not okay, and I need help."*



3

Make a Simple Plan

- You don't need a perfect plan, just a starting point.
 - **Short-term plan**
 - Ask yourself:
 - What are you trying to quit or cut back on?
 - What situations trigger you?
 - What can you do when cravings hit? Healthy alternatives may include exercising, writing, talking to someone, etc.

Action: Write down 3 safe alternatives you will use when cravings arise.

- **Long-term plan**

▪ Write it down:

- Set specific and measurable goals, with dates or limits for your substance use or behavior.
- Celebrate when you accomplish each goal!

Action: Write down 2 goals and the dates you plan to reach them.



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4

Reduce Triggers

- Triggers are external events or circumstances that may cause or contribute to cravings. They may include people, places, social situations, or negative emotions such as panic, hopelessness, or negative self-talk that make cravings stronger.

Try to:

- Avoid places where substances or harmful behaviors are present
- Step back from people who encourage your use of substances
- Change your routines accordingly
- Remove contacts or social media that increase cravings

Action: Identify 1 trigger you can avoid or reduce this week.



5

Ask for Ongoing Support

- Reducing or stopping substance use takes time and works best with support.

You can receive support from:

- Family or friends
- Support groups
- Mentors, coaches, or community leaders
- Cultural or faith-based supports

Action: Identify 1 person you can check in with weekly.



6

Take It One Day at a Time

- You don't need to stop substances all at once. That may be the final goal, but you can start with just the day ahead.
- **Celebrate small wins!**

Action: At the end of each day, write down 1 thing you did well to avoid substance use.

7

If You Slip Up, Don't Give Up

- Slip ups happen, but they do **NOT** mean failure.
- Progress matters. Reducing or stopping substance use is a process, not a straight line. **If a setback happens:**
 - Don't hide it
 - Tell someone
 - Restart your plan

Action: Call your trusted adult if you feel like using substances. Use distraction techniques or another coping strategy until the urge passes.



REMEMBER

Using substances can change how your brain works, making it hard to feel good without them. But with time and support, your brain can heal. You can change, and asking for help shows courage.



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TRUSTED HELP & RESOURCES

At any time, you can get **professional help** with reducing or stopping substance use.

Emergency & Crisis Assistance

Call **911** - For emergencies or medical issues, such as an overdose

Call or text **988** - For 24/7 crisis and emotional support

Text your ZIP code to **435748** (HELP4U). SAMHSA is a free and confidential, 24/7 national helpline that texts you a list of local mental health and substance use treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations.



Support Options Near You

findtreatment.gov

Confidential and anonymous resource for locating treatment facilities for mental health and substance use disorders in the U.S. and its territories

[SAFE Project](#)

Find support and treatment for you or your loved one

[Find Support](#)

Find healthcare and support for mental health, drugs, or alcohol

[Narcotics Anonymous \(NA\)](#)

Group support for drug use

[Alcoholics Anonymous \(AA\)](#)

Group support for alcohol use

[Smoking Cessation](#)

Support for smoking and vaping - call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669)

[SMART Recovery](#)

Science-based support for teens & adults

[Al-Anon](#) / [Alateen](#)

Group support for families and teens affected by someone else's drinking

[Nar-Anon](#)

Group support for families affected by drug use

Other Support

School counselor, case worker, or a health clinic

Community youth programs

[Substance Use Support Plan](#)



This information is based on *Understanding Addiction to Support Recovery*, *NIH - National Institute on Drug Abuse*, *Five action steps for quitting an addiction*, *The first step to overcoming drug abuse and addiction*.



refugees.org
refugee-youth.org
ucresourcecenter.org

