

---

Counselling for Caregivers

Unit 5:  
Dealing with  
Substance Abuse



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

---



Unit 5:  
Dealing with Substance Abuse  
Table of Contents

---

Introduction . . . . .	1
Objectives . . . . .	1
Lesson One: What Is Substance Abuse? . .	2
Lesson Two: Why Should We Be Concerned about Substance Abuse? . . . . .	5
Lesson Three: What Causes Substance Abuse? . . . . .	8
Lesson Four: How to Tell if Children/Youth Are Abusing Substances . . . . .	9
Lesson Five: Guiding Children's Attitudes towards Substance Abuse . . . . .	11
Lesson Six: Personal Exploration . . . . .	16
Lesson Seven: Talking with Young People about Substance Abuse . . . . .	19
Lesson Eight: Planning to Prevent Substance Abuse . . . . .	25
Lesson Nine: Resources to Help Substance-Addicted Children. . . . .	28
Summary . . . . .	29
Self-Assessment. . . . .	30
Answers to Self-Assessment . . . . .	32
References . . . . .	35
Glossary . . . . .	36
Appendix A . . . . .	37
Appendix B . . . . .	40

---





## Unit 5: Dealing with Substance Abuse

### Introduction

Substance abuse is a problem in our society today. Many adults abuse alcohol, cocaine, heroin, prescription drugs, and other substances. People abuse substances for a variety of reasons; for example, to forget and escape from problems such as unemployment. Such abuse is especially common in situations where there is little chance of improving one's lot in life.

You are probably aware that helping children avoid substance abuse is vitally important to ensure they do not get addicted to drugs, alcohol, or other substances in the future. You may encounter children/youth that have already abused or are currently abusing substances. This unit will help you work with them, giving you some ideas about preventing further abuse and helping them overcome current habits.

The first lesson explains what substance abuse is, and the second outlines the ill effects that substance abuse has on the abuser and on society in general. Lesson 3 looks at reasons that people abuse substances, Lesson 4 at ways to tell if a person is abusing substances, and Lesson 5 at how to help people avoid getting involved in substance abuse. Lessons 6 and 7 discuss helping people identify their own substance abuse and talking about it in a constructive and positive manner. The last lesson gives ideas to prevent substance abuse by children/youth before they get involved in an unhealthy, destructive lifestyle dominated by addictive substances.

### Objectives

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. Describe substance abuse and identify substances that are abused.
2. Describe signs/symptoms in children who abuse substances.
3. Explain the consequences of substance abuse.
4. Identify strategies that assist children who abuse substances.
5. Organise a program for the prevention of substance abuse.
6. Identify available referral networks for substance abuse.

# Lesson One

## What Is Substance Abuse?



### Activity 1

Tandi has been caring for her niece, Mondì, since Mondì’s mother died when she was 6 years old. Mondì is now 13. She was very upset after her mother died, but soon settled into Tandì’s household where she was pleasant and helpful. She was a very good student and had several good friends in school. At the beginning of the term, Mondì moved to a different school where she didn’t know the other students. Tandì noticed that Mondì was unhappy but she knew it would take time for her to adjust. Instead, Mondì has started skipping school and her grades have dropped. She has become moody and often lashes out at Tandì and others in the family. Tandì wonders what has caused this change.

What do you think might be the cause(s) of Mondì’s changed behaviour? Think of as many possibilities as you can.

---



---



---



---



---

There are several possible explanations for Mondì’s behaviour, and one of these is substance abuse. Use of substances—drugs, alcohol, or inhalants—can produce many of the changes that Tandì has noted in her niece’s behaviour.

To understand what substance abuse means, let us look at the meaning of the words use, misuse, and abuse.

“Use” is the application of a substance correctly or for its intended purpose.

“Misuse” is the application or utilisation of an item or objects wrongly, or for a purpose for which it is not intended, where such use has a tendency to cause harm.

Substance “abuse” can be described as the misuse of substances which have legitimate uses, but which can cause harm when misused. For example, certain drugs are useful as medicine, but may be harmful when taken for non-medical purposes. Adults often have a drink of alcohol on social occasions, but it is harmful and may be addictive when used habitually or excessively. Glue is useful to fasten things together, but very harmful when it is inhaled. Substance abuse can also refer to the use of illegal substances, including “hard” drugs such as cocaine and heroin.

Substances which are commonly abused include:

- Glue
- Petrol
- Paint thinner
- Alcohol
- Marijuana (bhang, weed, hashish)
- Cocaine
- Heroin
- Valium—Diazepam
- Psychoactive drugs—depressants and stimulants



The kinds of harm that can result from substance abuse includes:

- Family problems.
- Problems in the community.
- Problems in school.
- Legal problems—arrest for possession and use.
- Financial problems—stealing to get money to purchase the abused substance.
- Health problems—chest problems, mental instability, unprotected sex which may lead to unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV/AIDS.



### Activity 2

What is the difference between substance use and substance abuse?

---

---

What substances are commonly abused by youth in your community?

---

---

What substances are commonly abused by adults in your community?

---

---

## Lesson Two



# Why Should We Be Concerned about Substance Abuse?

There are two main reasons why we should be concerned about substance abuse. One is the effect that abuse of substances has upon the individual. Substance abuse by youth can alter their lives permanently, destroying their health, productivity, and relationships with others. The other reason is the effect that widespread use of substances has on people around the abuser, and on the society in which they live.

## The Effects of Substance Abuse on Physical and Emotional Health

The abuse of substances can cause many physical and emotional problems. Inhalants such as glue, paint thinner and petrol, when used even once, can cause suffocation, visual hallucinations, and severe mood swings. When used over a period of time, the results can include hepatitis, nausea, nosebleeds, irreversible brain damage, nervous system damage, and death.

The long-term effects of alcohol abuse may include stomach ailments, skin problems, liver damage, memory loss, and heart and central nervous system damage. Over time, marijuana use can increase the risk of cancer and diminish sexual capacity. Appendix A, at the end of this unit, includes a more complete list of short and long-term effects of inhalants, marijuana, and alcohol.

The use of these substances is often addictive. This means that people who use the substances develop a greater and greater need for them, and it becomes very difficult for them to break their habit. Unfortunately, children and youth seem to become dependent on substances more quickly than adults do. They are at risk to develop serious dependency problems if:

- There is a family history of substance abuse. Children may inherit a biological predisposition toward substance dependency. Apart from that, children who grow up in an environment where there is substance abuse have poor role modeling and are more likely to be exposed to violence, abuse, etc.
- They are depressed.

- They have low self-esteem.
- They feel like they don't fit in.

Recent research on brain development has shown us that the human brain is not completely developed until the late teens or early twenties. Because of this, youth may be less able to see the long-term consequences of their actions and to make decisions accordingly. Youth also lack life experience on which to base their decision-making.

Substance abuse eventually causes problems for individuals in their dealings with their family, community, and school. They may have difficulties with the law when they resort to illegal actions to get money to feed their addiction. Under the influence of substances, they may have unprotected sex, which may lead to unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and/or babies being born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) or Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE).



### **The Effects of Substance Abuse on Our Community and Society**

Young people who drink alcohol and/or use and sell drugs create an atmosphere that is dangerous and unsafe for other members of society. Also, they can be disruptive and violent when they are under the influence. They are less likely to become productive members of society because they are at risk of dropping out of school and often lack motivation and self-discipline. Dealing with the consequences of substance abuse, such as health problems and children born to parents who are unable to care for them, places stress on the resources of the community.



### Activity 3

Think of an adult you know who abuses substances such as drugs or alcohol. What effect has substance abuse had on that person's life?

---

---

---

---

Why do you think this person has not stopped abusing substances?

---

---

---

---

# Lesson Three

## What Causes Substance Abuse?



### Activity 4

Why do you think children abuse alcohol or drugs? List several reasons.

---

---

---

---

Did you come up with the following reasons? All of these are reasons that children may abuse substances.

- To reduce stress and forget about problems.
- To feel good.
- Out of boredom, to give them something to do.
- Because they are curious.
- To feel more grown up.
- To fit in.



### Activity 5

Look again at the story of Mondri, at the beginning of the unit. What are some of the reasons that Mondri might be particularly vulnerable to substance abuse?

---

---

---

---

Substance abuse is more likely when a child lives with the stress of an unstable home or social environment, or where there are limited employment and recreational opportunities.

## Lesson Four

# How to Tell if Children or Youth Are Abusing Substances



### Activity 6

How can you tell if the child you are working with is abusing substances? Write as many signs and symptoms as possible:

---



---



---



---



---



Below is a checklist of some warning signs and symptoms of substance abuse that you should look out for. Did your list contain many of these items?

1. Smell of alcohol, smoke, or other chemicals (for example, glue) on the child's breath or clothing.
2. Obvious drunkenness, dizziness, or strange behaviour.
3. Change in dress, appearance, and grooming.
4. Radical change in choice of friends.
5. Frequent arguments, sudden mood changes, and unexplained violent actions.
6. Change in eating and sleeping patterns.
7. Skipping school.
8. Failing grades.
9. Runaway and delinquent behaviour.
10. Suicide attempts.
11. Abrupt changes—lower levels of self-discipline.
12. Unusual flare-ups or outbreaks of temper.
13. Withdrawal from responsibility.
14. General changes in overall attitude.
15. Deterioration of physical appearance and grooming.

16. Wearing of sunglasses at inappropriate times.
17. Continual wearing of long-sleeved garments (particularly in hot weather) or reluctance to wear short-sleeved attire when appropriate.
18. Association with known substance abusers.
19. Unusual borrowing of money from friends.
20. Stealing small items from home or school.
21. Secretive behaviour regarding actions and possessions. Poorly concealed attempts to avoid attention and suspicion such as frequent trips to storage rooms, restroom, basement, etc.
22. Difficulty focussing, glazed appearance of the eyes.
23. Loss of memory (blackouts).
24. Availability and consumption of abused substance becomes the focus.
25. Changes in peer-group associations and friendships.
26. Impaired interpersonal relationships (unexplainable termination of deep relationships and/or alienation from close family members).

It is important to remember that just because a young person you know is displaying one or two of the signs or symptoms in the checklist it does not necessarily mean that they are abusing substances—they could have other problems. The checklist only helps you to become more keenly aware about the young people in your care so that you can notice any drastic changes in their behaviour patterns early.

Note: Appendix B contains a quiz to help teenagers decide if they have an alcohol problem. You may wish to use this quiz with children/youth that you suspect of having a drinking problem. It may help them to become aware of the problem.

## Lesson Five



# Guiding Children's Attitudes towards Substance Abuse

As a caregiver, you are probably asking yourself what you can do to help children under your care not to be tempted to abuse substances. The following are some ways to guide children's thoughts and attitudes about substance abuse.

### Be a Good Role Model

Caregivers, like parents, are the most important role models in children's lives. What they say and do about substance abuse has a significant impact on the choices children make.

Your own habits and attitudes about tobacco, alcohol, and other substances speak louder than words. Take a few minutes to answer the following questions about your feelings and attitudes towards tobacco, alcohol, and other substances (circle Yes/No as appropriate).

1. Do you usually offer alcoholic drinks to friends and family when they come to your home? Yes/No
2. Do you frequently take medicine for minor aches and pains or if you are feeling sad or nervous? Yes/No
3. Do you take sleeping pills to fall asleep? Yes/No
4. Do you use alcohol or any other substance in a way you would not want your child to when he/she is an adult? Yes/No
5. Do you smoke cigarettes? Yes/No
6. Are you proud about how much you can drink? Yes/No
7. Do you make jokes about getting drunk or using drugs? Yes/No
8. Do you go to parties that involve a lot of drinking? Yes/No
9. Has your child ever seen you drunk? Yes/No
10. Do you let minors drink alcohol in your home? Yes/No

### Really Listen to Each Child

Really listen to what each child has to say. Stop what you are doing and make eye contact. Encourage the child to share questions and concerns

about tobacco, alcohol, and other substances. Do not do all the talking or give long lectures.

### **Talk with Children Honestly**

In today's complex and busy world, it is interesting how few chances there are for parents or guardians to have conversations about substance abuse with children/youth. One way to talk to young people about substances is to take advantage of everyday "teachable moments." For example, if you and a child see a group of teenagers sniffing glue and hanging out, talk about the possible negative effects of their actions.

### **Watch TV with Children and Ask Them What They Think**

Whenever you see an anti-substance abuse commercial on TV, use it as an opening to talk with the children about substance abuse. Ask them what they think about the commercial.

Discuss a newspaper article or local event (perhaps an accident) in which substance abuse was a factor.

### **Make Discussions about Tobacco, Alcohol, and Other Substances Part of Your Daily Conversation**

Young people who don't know the facts about tobacco, alcohol, and other substances are at a greater risk of trying them. Be sure that you know the facts about substance abuse and how it can harm people. Clear up any wrong information, such as "everybody drinks" or "marijuana won't hurt you." Talk to them about the dangers of substance use and abuse! It is important to let children know that substance abuse will damage their bodies. Emphasise the health problems associated with substance abuse, such as: malnutrition, stomach ailments, increased risk of cancer, heart attacks, brain damage, nausea and vomiting, hepatitis or HIV/AIDS transmitted through shared needles.

Discuss how the need for peer-group acceptance can lead to substance abuse.

## **Help Children Develop Strong Values**

Children who decide not to use alcohol or other substances often make this decision because they have strong convictions against the use of these substances—convictions based on a value system. Be clear about your own values and explain to the children why you choose a particular course of action and how that choice reflects your values.

## **Be Clear about Rules**

Children want you to talk to them about substances. State your position clearly. If you're not clear, they may be tempted to use them. Tell children that you don't want them to use alcohol, tobacco, and other substances because you love them. Make it clear that this rule holds true even at other people's houses.

Also discuss the consequences of breaking the rules—what the punishment will be and how it will be carried out. Consequences must go hand-in-hand with limits so that children understand that there are predictable outcomes to their choosing a particular course of action. The consequences you select should be reasonable and related to the violation. For example, if you catch children smoking, you might "ground" them, restricting their social activities for two weeks. You could then use this time to show them how concerned you are about the serious health consequences of smoking, and about the possibility of becoming addicted.

## **Teach Them How to Say "No"**

Help to prepare all children for an occasion when peers or adults offer them drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, or other substances by helping them practice what they might say when confronted by this situation. For example, they might:

- Ask questions: "What is it?" "Where did you get it?"
- Say no firmly.
- Give reasons: "No thanks, I'm not into that."
- Suggest other things to do (play a game).
- Leave (go home, go to class, join other friends).

Help the child develop a strong sense of self-worth. Look for all the good things in a child—and then tell the child how proud you are. Praise the child’s efforts as well as successes. Emphasise the things children do right, instead of focussing on what’s wrong. Making a few mistakes is a normal part of growing up, so try not to be too critical when a child makes a mistake. Gradually allow children to make more decisions on their own. Ask for their opinions sometimes.

Discuss the importance of being an individual and the meaning of real friendships. Help children to understand that they do not have to do something wrong just to feel accepted. A strong sense of self-worth will help children to say no to tobacco, alcohol, and other substances.

### **Teach Coping Skills**

Respect a child’s feelings. Pay attention, and be helpful during periods of loneliness or doubt. Offer advice about handling strong emotions and feelings. Help children cope with emotions by letting them know that feelings will change. Explain that mood swings are not really bad, and they won’t last forever. Model how to control mental pain or tension without the use of tobacco, alcohol, or other substances.

### **Get to Know Them**

Get to know children. Find out how their day was, what happened in school, or with their friends. Know where they are at all times. Go to their events; for example, sports games, plays, school shows. Play games with them. Know who their friends are.

Children won’t always be ready to talk just because you are ready to listen. To provide opportunities for children to open up to you, you need to spend time with them. When they have concerns, you need to really listen and try to understand what things are like for them.

### **Encourage Healthy, Creative Activities**

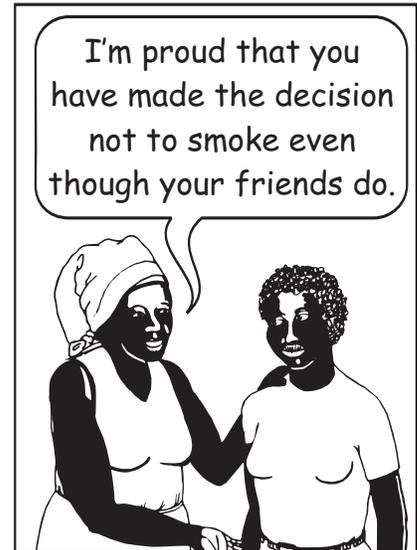
Look for ways to get children involved in athletics, hobbies, school clubs, and other activities that reduce boredom and excess free time. Encourage positive friendships and interests. Look for activities that you and the child can do together.

### **Team up with Parents/Guardians**

Work with children's parents/guardians to build an anti-substance abuse environment for children. When parents/guardians join together against substance abuse, they are much more effective than when they act alone. One way is to form a parent group with the parents of a child's friends. The best way to stop a child from abusing substances is to stop his/her friends from using them too.

### **Encourage Peer Support**

Children and youth can encourage one another to lead substance-free lives. Encourage them to talk with one another about the dangers of substance abuse and to help one another find healthy ways to deal with the pressures in their lives.



### **Know What to Do if Children Abuse Substances**

Realise that children may abuse substances. Learn the signs of substance abuse. Take seriously any concerns you hear from friends, teachers, or other kids about a child's possible substance abuse. Trust your instincts. If you truly feel that something is wrong with a child, it probably is. If there's a problem, seek professional help.

# Lesson Six : Personal Exploration



Many of the children and youth that you work with may already have experimented with various substances. Whether they come to you for help or you find out about their activities in another way, you will need to be prepared to work with them in a constructive way.

We know that one of the keys to being an effective counsellor is to know ourselves. When we understand the experiences and beliefs that we take with us into a counselling situation, we are better able to set them aside and really pay attention to the young person we are counselling.

Almost all of us either know someone who has an addiction or have struggled with one ourselves. This means we take a lot of “baggage” into a counselling situation. If we have an addiction that we haven’t recognised, we might tell ourselves that a young person really doesn’t have a problem. If we have managed to overcome an addiction, we may be impatient with others who are less successful. If we have a dear relative whose life was ruined by drugs or alcohol, we may overreact to a young person’s substance abuse.



Answer the questions in the following activity as honestly as possible.



### Activity 6

Name someone you know quite well who abuses substances.  
What substances are they?

---

---

---

*(continued on next page)*

What are some of the types of behaviour that tell you this person is abusing substances?

---

---

What impact has the substance abuse had on this person's life?

---

---

How has it affected his or her family or other people close to this person?

---

---

Is this person aware that he or she has a substance abuse problem? How do you know?

---

---

Has this person ever tried to quit abusing substances? What was that like? Was he/she successful?

---

---

Do you use, or have you used, alcohol or drugs? If so, have you ever abused these substances? What are your reasons for saying that you have abused, rather than just used, these substances?

---

---

What thoughts and feelings do you have about substance abusers and their lifestyle?

---

---

*(continued on next page)*

**Activity 6 (continued)**

What do your own reactions tell you about the values and beliefs you have about substance abuse?

---

---

---

What are some things that, because of your own history and beliefs, you need to remember when you are counselling a young person who may have a substance abuse problem?

---

---

---

## Lesson Seven : Talking with Young People about Substance Abuse



Remember Mondri, the 13 year old we met at the beginning of this unit? Mondri was a good student who was pleasant and helpful around the house. Now she is moody, skipping school, and her grades have dropped. Her aunt, Tandi, worries about this change in her niece.

Now Tandi's friend mentions that she has seen Mondri with a group of youth who are known to use alcohol and marijuana. Around the same time, Tandi notices that small amounts of money are missing from her purse. Although she finds it hard to believe, she begins to wonder if Mondri might also be abusing substances. She doesn't want to ask Mondri until she has more evidence. How could she know if this is true? What can she do if it is true?

Tandi decides that she will talk to her niece, Mondri, about her suspicion that Mondri has been smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol. She plans carefully how she will do this, as she wants to be able to talk openly with Mondri without her becoming defensive.

Tandi chooses a time when they are alone together in the kitchen after dinner. She asks Mondri if she would have a few minutes to talk about something important. Mondri scowls, but agrees.

Tandi invites Mondri to sit at the table with her. Tandi's manner is calm, caring, and attentive. Tandi says, "I've noticed that you have been acting differently lately. You don't seem to care as much about your appearance and you've missed school 5 times this month." Mondri protests that school is boring and she's not learning anything new. Tandi continues, "We seem to be arguing a lot of the time and I wish we could enjoy being together the way we used to." Mondri looks down at the table and doesn't respond.

"I know that you were unhappy about leaving your friends from your last school."

Mondri replies, "I have new friends now."

"So you're not feeling as lonely now?" Tandi responds.

“I’m okay,” Mondi says sullenly.

“I’ve been concerned about you,” Tandi says, “Because of what’s happening at school and also because I’ve noticed that several times there has been money missing from my purse.”

Mondi looks startled and defensive. “That wasn’t me,” she says quickly.

“It sounds like you know who it was,” Tandi replies calmly.

Mondi is agitated. “I didn’t say that,” she shouts. “I said I didn’t do it.” Then she dissolves into tears, puts her head down on the table and sobs.

Tandi moves closer to her and says gently, “You seem very sad, Mondi. Would you like to tell me what’s happening?”

Mondi sobs out her story: she was shunned as the “new girl” in her new school. Finally two girls, Milimo and Inonge, befriended her. They would miss school to spend time with some older boys and the group would drink alcohol and do drugs. Finally the group told her that she needed to contribute if she was going to drink with them, so she stole money from Tandi’s purse to buy alcohol. Tandi listens attentively. To encourage Mondi to continue talking and to ensure she is understanding, she asks questions that check on feelings: “It sounds like you were happy to have some friends. Am I right?” or clarify content, “So you would wait with Milimo at the corner while Inonge went with the boys to buy alcohol?”

As Mondi talks and Tandi listens, it becomes clear that Mondi is becoming increasingly uncomfortable with the group and their activities. She would like to end her involvement with them but is afraid of repercussions from the group and of once again having no friends at school. Tandi does not hurry Mondi to a solution, but listens and asks questions like “What do you think might happen if you told Milimo and Inonge that you didn’t want to be friends with them?” and “Are



you worried that they might try to hurt you?" She wants to gain as clear a picture as possible of the situation Mondri finds herself in and how Mondri is feeling.

Once they have discussed the situation thoroughly, Tandi summarises the problem and asks Mondri if she has understood correctly. She asks, "Do you have any ideas about how you would like to handle this?" and "Is there something I can do to help you?" Together they come up with a plan, which includes spending time with her friends from her former school and some strategies for making other friends at her new school. She practices what she will say to Milimo and Inonge when they ask her to come out with them. Tandi and Mondri agree to keep talking about what is happening, and Tandi assures Mondri that she will help her in any way she can.



### Activity 7

In this counselling situation, what are some of the things that Tandi does to help Mondri talk with her about what is happening?

---



---



---



---

Your answers might include:

- She chooses a time to talk with Mondri when they are alone and unhurried.
- She checks with Mondri that it is a good time to talk.
- She remains calm.
- She states what she has seen and heard.
- She listens attentively and caringly.
- She does not make judgements about Mondri's behaviour or that of her new friends. In later conversations, she will make sure that Mondri is aware of the possible consequences of substance abuse.
- She asks questions that help her understand Mondri's feelings, such as "I wonder if you were worried when that happened?"

- She is careful to clarify what Mondri is saying: "Do you mean that...?"
- She does not rush to a solution. She first ensures that she understands the situation fully and that Mondri has had enough time to be ready for help in finding a solution.
- She understands that Mondri is the one who will need to solve the problem and her role will be to support her.

These are some ways Tandi makes it possible for Mondri to talk with her about what is happening in her life. Mondri can trust that Tandi will try to understand her and will support her.



### Activity 8

Can you imagine how the discussion would be different if Tandi, instead of listening and supporting, made one of these responses?

1. "If you had not gone with those girls in the first place you would not have this problem now." (Blaming)

What Mondri might have felt:

---



---

Mondri might have responded:

---



---

2. "You need to get your act together because if you do not finish school you will not have any kind of a future." (Lecturing)

What Mondri might have felt:

---



---

Mondri might have responded:

---



---

3. "How could you be so dumb as to get involved with something like this?" (Name-calling) *(continued on next page)*

What Mondri might have felt:

---

---

Mondri might have responded:

---

---

4. "If you do that again I'm going to ask your uncle to give you a whipping." (Threatening)

What Mondri might have felt:

---

---

Mondri might have responded:

---

---

5. "I'm sure it will all turn out just fine." (Reassuring)

What Mondri might have felt:

---

---

Mondri might have responded:

---

---

6. What you need to do is..." (Advice-giving)

What Mondri might have felt:

---

---

Mondri might have responded:

---

---



When we are counselling young people about substance abuse or any other issue, we need to approach them from an attitude of genuine caring and listening. We want to find out what things are like for them and why they are making the decisions they are making. If they feel that we really care about them, they may be able to admit that their decisions aren't working out very well and be willing to accept our help in figuring out how to do things differently.



We want to help young people draw on their inner resources in order to change their lives, and in order to do that we need to let them know that we have confidence in them. If we approach young people by blaming, threatening, name-calling, lecturing, or giving advice we are attacking their already shaky self-esteem by giving them the message that they aren't competent enough to make their own decisions.

Reassuring young people that a bad situation will work out in the end can simply tell them that we don't really understand the nature and difficulty of the problem.

Even when young people ask for our advice, it is better to ask them, "What ideas do you have?" than to give them your ideas right away. This tells them that you have confidence in their ideas, and helps them to think about which ideas might work best.

Of course, sometimes young people will need your help to deal with their abuse or help them find treatment. Then it will be important that you understand their situation clearly and know what resources are available.

Fortunately, Tandi's intervention with Mondri occurred early on in Mondri's experience of substance abuse. As we know, her continued involvement with this group of friends could have disastrous results including addiction, pregnancy, and crime.

Many children and youth do experiment with illegal substances, and fortunately many are able to stop with the help of supportive friends, relatives, and caregivers/counsellors.

## Lesson Eight



## Planning to Prevent Substance Abuse

There are no guarantees that children will not abuse substances, but as a caregiver or parent, you can influence them by:

- Not abusing substances yourself.
- Providing guidance and clear rules about substance abuse.
- Spending time with children, sharing the good and the bad times.
- Encouraging children to support one another in leading healthy lifestyles.

All of these may help children grow up free from the problems of substance abuse.

The routines you create and the activities you plan for young people can help to provide an environment that is secure, stimulating and fun—one where children have better things to do than engage in substance abuse.

To ensure that you have regular get-togethers with children, you might try scheduling meetings. Rituals like having meals together, playing games, or going to school, can be opportunities for establishing better communication that is essential to help children not to abuse substances.

Encourage children to have fun and do worthwhile things outside the home. Avoid turning too much of children's leisure time into chores.

### **Planning Activities for Children**

Children who are busy with interesting activities are much less likely to be drawn into substance abuse. As a caregiver working with children and/or youth, you need to be active and very creative. Children/young people have a lot of energy and they want to be occupied.



### Activity 9

The children/youth you are working with have probably abused or have been exposed to substance abuse. How can you help them stay safe while having a good time?

---

---

---

Your ideas might have included:

- Sports events
- Extra-curricular activities
- Religious activities
- Athletic clubs
- Volunteer work



### Activity 10

List some activities you could organise to keep children occupied.

---

---

---

What are some of the issues you need to consider when organising an outing with children/youth to ensure that it is free of opportunities to abuse substances?

---

---

---

When organising outings, parties, camping trips, or field trips for children/youth you should consider the following guidelines:

- Plan in advance. Go over party plans with the children/youth. Encourage them to plan some organised group activities or games.



- Visit the venue. Make sure you go to the proposed venue for the event to become familiar with it. If you feel it is not appropriate, change venues.
- Arrange for supervision. Ensure there are an adequate number of adults to supervise the children/youth. At least one adult should take care of 10 to 15 children/youth. If you have both boys and girls, ensure the adults are both male and female.
- Develop a participants' list. Together with the children/youth, prepare a list using set criteria that have been agreed upon (for example, consider attendance, age, sex, and discipline). Only those whose names are on the list may attend the party, trip, or workshop. This will help avoid an "open party" situation.
- Set a time limit. Set starting and ending times for the event. If it is an all-day event, ensure it ends early enough.
- Set event "rules." Discuss them with the children/youth before the event. Rules should include the following:
  - No glue, cigarettes, alcohol, or other drugs.
  - No one can leave the venue of the event and then return.
  - If indoors, lights are left on at all times.
  - Certain areas of the venue may be off-limits unless accompanied by an adult.
- Know your responsibilities. Remember, you are legally responsible for anything that happens to a minor who has been served alcohol or taken drugs when in your care or under your supervision. Help the children/youth feel responsible for this as well. Children/youth who bring cigarettes, alcohol, or other drugs to the party should be asked to leave.
- Be there. Make your presence felt—walk around and let the children/youth know you are there.



# Lesson Nine

## Resources to Help Substance-Addicted Children

If a child is addicted to a substance, the problem may be too much for you to handle alone. Don't hesitate to seek professional help, such as a pediatrician, counsellor, support group, or treatment program.



### Activity 11

What are some individuals and organisations in your community that could be helpful in dealing with substance abuse? Think of as many as you can.

---

---

---

---

---



Now look at the list below for some more ideas:

- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)
- Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)
- CARE International
- World Vision
- Africa Medical Research Foundation (AMREF)
- Save the Children Alliance
- Victims Support Unit
- Catholic AIDS
- Community / church groups
- Family Health International
- Social Welfare Department
- Women's hospitals
- Children's departments in ministries



## Summary

- Substance abuse refers to the use of substances in ways other than the use for which they were intended and in a way that could cause harm. Substances most commonly abused include drugs, inhalants, and alcohol. Substance abuse also refers to the use of illegal drugs, such as cocaine and marijuana.
- Substance abuse can harm individuals physically and emotionally. The behaviour of substance abusers is harmful to families and society.
- Children and youth may abuse substances for a number of reasons: to reduce stress, to feel good, to satisfy their curiosity, to feel they are grown up, and to fit in. Youth who live in stressful circumstances or have limited opportunities may be more vulnerable to substance abuse.
- There are a number of types of behaviour that could indicate substance abuse. It is important to notice any drastic changes in behaviour early.
- There are a number of ways that we can guide in a positive direction children's thoughts and attitudes toward substance abuse.
- One of the most important ways to help children not to abuse substances is to set a good example.
- It is important that we are aware of our own experiences, beliefs, and values regarding substance abuse if we are going to be effective in counselling children and youth.
- Children and youth who are busy with interesting activities are less likely to be drawn into substance abuse. When you are planning events for them, there are steps you can take to make sure the events are free of drugs and alcohol.
- If a young person is addicted to a substance, the problem may be too much for you to handle alone. It is important to know the resources that exist in your community for help with substance abuse.



# Self-Assessment Exercise

## Question 1

What do we mean by substance abuse?

---

---

## Question 2

List at least three long-term effects of using inhalants such as glue, paint thinner, and petrol.

---

---

---

## Question 3

One of the youth you are working with has become very moody and unpredictable. He has also started neglecting his appearance. You wonder if he might be abusing substances. List at least five other signs that could indicate that he is engaged in substance abuse.

---

---

---

## Question 4

Your sister (or daughter) has just had her first baby, a little boy. She comes to you to ask for advice about how to raise a child who will not become involved in substance abuse. What will you tell her?

---

---

---

## Question 5

You have considerable evidence that a child you know has been abusing alcohol. You decide to talk with her. You know that you will need to stay calm, tell her what you have noticed that makes you suspect alcohol abuse, and listen to what she has to say. What types of behaviour should you avoid while you are talking with her?

---

---

---

## Question 6

You decide to plan an event for the youth in your group and you want to ensure that it is substance-free. List at least three things you will need to remember to do.

---

---

---



## Suggested Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise

### Question 1

Substance abuse is the misuse of substances such as inhalants, alcohol, or drugs or the use of illegal drugs such as cocaine.

### Question 2

Any of the following can result from long-term use of inhalants:

- Careless behaviour in potentially dangerous settings.
- Headaches.
- Muscle weakness.
- Abdominal pain.
- Decrease or loss of sense of smell.
- Nausea and nosebleeds.
- Hepatitis.
- Violent behaviour.
- Irregular heart beat.
- Liver, lung, and kidney impairment.
- Irreversible brain damage.
- Nervous system damage.
- Death.

### Question 3

Any of the following types of behaviour could be associated with substance abuse:

- Smell of alcohol, smoke, or other chemicals (for example, glue) on the child's breath or clothing.
- Obvious drunkenness, dizziness, or strange behaviour.
- Change in dress, appearance, and grooming.
- Frequent arguments and unexplained violent actions.
- Change in eating and sleeping patterns.
- Skipping school.

- Failing grades.
- Runaway and delinquent behaviour.
- Suicide attempts.
- Abrupt changes—lowered levels of discipline.
- Unusual flare-ups or outbreaks of temper.
- Withdrawal from responsibility.
- General changes in overall attitude.
- Wearing of sunglasses at inappropriate times.
- Continual wearing of long-sleeved garments (particularly in hot weather) or reluctance to wear short-sleeved attire when appropriate.
- Association with known substance abusers.
- Unusual borrowing of money from friends.
- Stealing small items from home or school.
- Secretive behaviour regarding actions and possessions. Poorly concealed attempts to avoid attention and suspicion such as frequent trips to storage rooms, restroom, basement, etc.
- Difficulty focussing. Glazed appearance of the eyes.
- Loss of memory (blackouts).
- Availability and consumption of abused substance becomes the focus.
- Changes in peer-group associations and friendships.
- Impaired interpersonal relationships (unexplainable termination of deep relationships and/or alienation from close family members).

#### Question 4

There is no way to guarantee that a child will not abuse substances. However, there are many things you can do to guide children's thoughts and behaviour about substance abuse. These include:

- Being a good role model, not abusing substances yourself.
- Talking honestly about substances with the child.
- Really listening to the child and showing that you value his/her ideas and opinions.
- Giving the child lots of encouragement.

- Helping the child develop strong values.
- Setting a good example.
- Helping the child deal with peer pressure and need for acceptance.
- Making rules that help the child say “no.”
- Encouraging healthy, creative activities.
- Knowing what to do if you suspect the child of abusing substances.
- Taking part in the child’s life by going to sports, community, and school events together, playing games together, knowing what he/she is doing in school, who his/her friends are, and where he/she is.
- Encouraging children to support one another to lead healthy lifestyles.

#### Question 5

Some types of behaviour you will want to avoid when talking to the child are:

- Blaming
- Lecturing
- Name-calling
- Threatening
- Reassuring
- Advice-giving

#### Question 6

To help make sure that an event is substance-free, you can:

- Plan in advance.
- Visit the venue.
- Arrange for supervision.
- Prepare a participant’s list.
- Set starting and ending times.
- Set the rules for the event.
- Know that you are responsible.
- Make your presence felt.



## References

Grotberg, E. (1995). *A guide to promoting resilience in children: Strengthening the human spirit*. Retrieved August 21, 2006 from <http://resilnet.uiuc.edu/library/grotb95b.html>

Kubler-Ross, E. (1997). *Questions and answers on death and dying*. New York: Macmillan.

Hornby, G. (1994). *Counselling in child disability: Skills for working with parents*. London: Chapman and Hall.

Wipfler, P. (1999). *Listening effectively to children*. Seattle: Rational Island Publishers.

Salk, L. (1983). *A guide to raising your child*. New York: The New American Library of Canada Limited.



## Glossary

**Addiction:** A compulsive physiological and psychological need for a habit-forming substance.

**Hallucination:** The perception that one sees an object that is not there.

**Inhalants:** Substances that are sniffed to intoxicate the user immediately, such as petrol, glue, and paint thinner.

**Substance abuse:** The misuse of substances that may have legitimate uses but can cause harm when misused; for example, drugs, alcohol, or glue.

## Appendix: A

# Straight Facts about Inhalants, Drugs, and Alcohol



### **Straight Facts about Inhalants (Glue, Paint Thinner and Petrol)**

Inhalants are substances that are sniffed to intoxicate the user immediately. Commonly used inhalants include glue, petrol, and paint thinner. Inhalant use can cause a number of physical and emotional problems; and sometimes may result in death.

*Using inhalants even one time can put you at risk for:*

- Sudden death.
- Suffocation.
- Visual hallucinations and severe mood swings.
- Numbness and tingling of the hands and feet.

*Prolonged use of inhalants may also result in:*

- Careless behaviour in potentially dangerous settings.
- Headaches.
- Muscle weakness.
- Abdominal pain.
- Decrease or loss of sense of smell.
- Nausea and nosebleeds.
- Hepatitis.
- Violent behaviour.
- Irregular heart beat.
- Liver, lung, and kidney impairment.
- Irreversible brain damage.
- Nervous system damage.

## **Straight Facts about Marijuana (Bhang, Weed, Hashish)**

*Short-term effects may include:*

- Sleepiness.
- Reduced ability to perform tasks requiring concentration and coordination.
- Lack of judgement in potentially dangerous situations.
- Bloodshot eyes.
- Dry mouth and throat.
- Decreased social inhibitions.
- Paranoia and hallucinations.
- Increased heart rate.

*Long-term effects may include:*

- Enhanced cancer risk.
- Psychological dependence.
- Diminished or extinguished sexual pleasure.

Marijuana blocks the messages to the brain and alters perceptions, emotions, vision, hearing, and coordination.

You may also notice changes in the behaviour of the child/youth. They may display the following symptoms:

- Restlessness.
- Drowsiness.
- Slow reflexes.
- Slow and incoherent speech.
- Violent behaviour.
- Confusion.
- Decreased appetite.
- Tremors.
- Decreased social inhibitions.
- Lack of coordination.

## **Straight Facts about Effects of Alcohol**

### *Short-term effects may include:*

- Distorted vision, hearing, speech, and coordination.
- Altered perceptions and emotions.
- Impaired judgement and reduced inhibitions.
- Slower thought processes, impaired short-term memory, and confusion.
- Bad breath.
- Hangovers.
- Respiratory paralysis and death (if blood alcohol level is .60 or more).

### *Long-term effects may include:*

- Loss of appetite.
- Vitamin deficiency.
- Stomach ailments.
- Skin problems.
- Liver damage (alcoholic hepatitis, cirrhosis of liver, liver cancer).
- Nerve and muscle damage.
- Cerebrovascular disease (stroke etc.).
- Memory loss.
- Cancers of the oral cavity and pharynx, esophagus, larynx, breast, liver, colon, and rectum.
- Heart and central nervous system damage.
- Chronic pancreatitis.

### *Excessive drinking of alcoholic beverages increases the risks of:*

- Motor vehicle accidents.
- Falls, drowning, and other accidents.
- Suicide and homicide.
- Risky sexual behaviour, unplanned or unwanted pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases.
- Fetal alcohol syndrome if a pregnant woman drinks.
- Alcoholism or alcohol dependence.

## Appendix B



A simple quiz to help you decide if you need help with your drinking habits. Circle "Yes" or "No".

1. Do you drink because you have problems? To relax? Yes/No
2. Do you drink when you get mad at other people, your friends or parents? Yes/No
3. Do you prefer to drink alone, rather than with others? Yes/No
4. Are your grades starting to slip? Are you goofing off on your job? Yes/No
5. Did you ever try to stop drinking or drink less and fail? Yes/No
6. Have you begun to drink in the morning, before school or work? Yes/No
7. Do you gulp your drinks? Yes/No
8. Do you ever have loss of memory due to your drinking? Yes/No
9. Do you lie about your drinking? Yes/No
10. Do you ever get into trouble when you're drinking? Yes/No
11. Do you get drunk when you drink, even when you don't mean to? Yes/No
12. Do you think it's cool to be able to hold your liquor? Yes/No

If you can answer "Yes" to any one of these questions, maybe it's time you took a serious look at what your drinking might be doing to you.

Alcoholics Anonymous. Retrieved on October 20, 2004 from:  
[www.soberrecovery.com/forums/showthread-27428.html](http://www.soberrecovery.com/forums/showthread-27428.html)