

let's talk NEWSLETTER

BACK TO SCHOOL

Fall 2022

Don't Be an Island

If you are concerned about your child or have suspicions of substance use, turn to a professional for support. You never have to be alone. There are professionals waiting for your call.

Help for your child:

If your child vapes or smokes, visit teen.smokefree.gov. For resources to help them quit, check out the quitSTART app or Text "Quit" to 47848.

Washington State Recovery Helpline (1-866-789-1511): 24-hour help for substance abuse and mental health.

Teen Link: Offers peer specialists who can speak with your teen about whatever is on their mind. Encourage your teen to call, text, or chat 1-866-TEENLINK (833-6546). For more help connecting to local resources statewide, dial 2-1-1 or visit www.wa211.org.

It's that time of the year again that parents both love and dread. As we begin the back-to-school season, it's important to pay attention to your child's mental health just as much as their physical health.

Cyberbullying, suicidality and self-harm are just some of the topics that cause parents concern as the school year begins, and substance use can be connected to all of these.

Some youth thrive in the face of change but for others, it can be a tricky situation to navigate. Watch for signs of distress in your youth as they transition to a new grade, sport or group of friends. You can help them manage the stress by monitoring mood changes, sleep patterns and watching for signs of isolation. Especially since substance use can be an outlet for many kids, you can encourage healthy coping mechanisms such as maintaining a balanced schedule that includes exercise, nutritious meals and enough sleep, helping them stay connected to positive social supports, and modeling healthy ways to manage stress.

Other things parents can do to help this transition:

1. Teach Peer-Pressure Refusal Skills (read more in the next section)
2. Open communication
3. Stay involved
4. Know the signs of substance use and mental health concerns (see opportunities for learning at the end of this newsletter)



A Message from our Safety Center Staff

ESD 123 Regional Safety Center Coordinator, Shelby Jensen, shares the following trends that parents and guardians should be aware of as we enter the school year.

First, is the **BeReal App**, which is gaining popularity among teens. This new app encourages users to "just be real" and promote positivity. [Watch this news video](#) with info on "What parents need to know about BeReal."

Second, is **Cyberflashing**. While this isn't new, there has been an uptick. Recently it was in the news again, as a pilot refused to take off until the person or people airdropping the 'nudes' stopped. Cyberflashing is illegal in a couple of states and is another way kids bully. They may refer to it as 'flashing.' Students may prevent this from happening by turning off their airdrops settings completely or to "contacts only." As adults, you may want to make sure your settings are off or "contacts only" as well.

Implement the 'X Plan'

This plan gives your child a way out of a bad situation. It works like this: If your teen is in a tough spot with friends, he/she simply texts you the letter "X." Upon receiving it, you immediately call and say there's a family emergency and you need to pick him/her up. For the 'X plan' to work, parents must promise that they will not ask questions or pass judgment on their child.



Peer Pressure

For most kids, going back to school causes all kinds of emotions, from excitement to fear and anxiety. For teenagers and preteens, the emotions can increase and even cause stress due to peer pressure. Especially moving from elementary to middle school or middle school to high school. It is not surprising that the teenage years are when most kids begin experimenting with substance use. We remind you to be alert and proactive parents this back-to-school season to keep your teens safe from drugs and alcohol. Whether you have a child in middle school or high school, warn them of the dangers of peer pressure. It is a major issue in the school system and is part of the reason children suppress their true emotions. Don't stop at warning your students, but also give them useful tools to assist with avoiding peer pressure.

5 Peer-Pressure Refusal Strategies

1. **Say "No"** – Say these words to get out of a peer-pressure situation and repeat yourself every time you are asked.
2. **Walk Away** – Use this strategy to leave a peer-pressure situation.
3. **A Better Idea** – Come up with an alternative to the unhealthy action.
4. **Reverse the Pressure** – Flip the switch by putting the pressure back on the person who is pressuring you.
5. **State the Facts** – Remind yourself of the consequences or what could happen.



COMMUNICATE

BE AN ACTIVE PARENT

Reaffirm your stance on drugs and alcohol: Even if you've talked to your child about the dangers of drugs and alcohol, it's important they hear the message again. Make sure they understand the consequences.

Open the lines of communication: The importance of communicating with your child can't be overstated. A regular, open dialogue will make children more likely to talk to you about peer pressure and stress – the kinds of factors that can lead to drug use. You can foster communication by regularly sitting down to dinner as a family and checking on homework and school projects. Encourage children to invite friends over, so you know more about others with whom they spend their time.

Encourage activities: Support your child's interest and involvement in activities like sports, school clubs, or playing a musical instrument. Many extracurricular activities are known to have positive effects on students' grades, attention span and behavior. After-school activities will keep kids engaged in something positive while they are outside the classroom and also provide an incentive for staying healthy. If your school lacks a particular activity in which your child expresses interest, investigate offerings at local community centers. Studies show kids who stay active are less likely to use drugs and alcohol.

Get in their business: It may feel like you're invading their privacy, but as a parent, it's wise to regularly check your child's phone, search their room, and know who they're hanging out with.

Be Present / Eat dinner together: Research shows that teens who consistently eat dinner with their families are less likely to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, or use drugs. Most teens don't like to talk about their feelings to their parents, simply because they're the parents. Parents may believe the older their children get, the less they want to be around them, but not all are the same. Some teens want to be in the presence of their parents but aren't able to express that. Social media may influence children to believe that spending time with their parents is not "cool." Communication is key, but there are other ways to get through to your child. Reminding them of your place in their life is one.

Pay attention to your teen's favorite hobbies, and

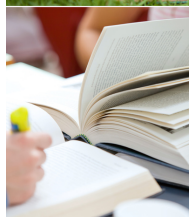
activities: But don't stop there! Attempt to participate in those activities with your child. You can even come up with activities to engage in as a family, such as:

- Family Picnics
- Creating family artwork
- Watching sports
- Letting the children assist with dinner

Remember, any quality time is good quality time.



Adolescents ages 12 to 17 who participate in extracurricular activities are less likely to use alcohol, cigarettes and illicit drugs, according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH).



Learn how to start a conversation around mental health.

Understanding how to talk about mental health — just like with talking about substance use — is likely one of the most important things you will do as a parent. When beginning these conversations, it is important to speak from a place of empathy and express care. It is best to avoid language associated with a particular disorder, depression, or anxiety, but instead to use general language such as “I am worried about you”, “I am here for you”, or “Can we talk about what is going on with you?”



You want your child to know that you are there for them every step of the way. Gentle approaches can go a long way in building trust with your child, so that they are more willing to open up about sensitive issues. Learn more by attending one of our Youth Mental Health First Aid Courses.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

This course is designed to teach parents, family members, caregivers and others how to help an adolescent (ages 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health or addictions challenge or is in crisis. **Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMFA)** is primarily designed for adults who regularly interact with young people. The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations.



Upcoming YMFA Trainings:

- **Wed., October 26 - 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM**
In-person at ESD123 in Pasco
Register free at <https://bit.ly/3CITQ6K>
- **Wed., May 10 - 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM**
In-person at ESD123 in Pasco
Register free at <https://bit.ly/3SFZ6HG>

The ESD 123 is providing these courses for free to our community.

Do you know the signs of teen drug use or other risky behavior? Youth and young adults (in college) are exposed to numerous risk factors that other age groups do not experience in the same way. Although students may be far from home for school, there are ways to identify if your child is struggling with substance abuse. ***Hidden in Plain Sight is a presentation that can help identify those signs.***

The teen years can be difficult. Indicators of teen drug use, mental health concerns, unhealthy relationships, human trafficking and other risk factors can be hidden in plain sight, but easy for parents and other adults to miss. Adults all learn differently just like youth! This presentation brings a unique opportunity to get involved with the presentation through this two-part interactive event.

Come learn what is trending with youth today and how to start the conversations that can sometimes be difficult but are necessary.

Must be 21+ to attend.

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

EVENT DETAILS:

Participants will walk through a mock teen bedroom and try to identify 70+ items, which can indicate problem or risky behaviors. After walking through the teen room, attendees will participate in a presentation and discussion which will cover: Identification and discussion of items and how they may indicate problem or risky behaviors; Popular local youth trends and data; Tools to help navigate the teen years and discussion points for family conversations.

All UPCOMING EVENTS begin at 6:00 PM:

- 10-5-22: Chiawana High School (Pasco)
- 10-10-22: Park Middle School (Kennewick) *
- 10-11-22: Southridge High School (Kennewick) *
- 10-12-22: Columbia High School (Burbank) *
- 10-13-22: Othello Lighthouse Community Center
- 11-16-22: Nuestra Casa (Sunnyside)

* Interpreter available