

Is your teen using?

Signs and symptoms of substance abuse

By: Paula Goblet
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There's no easy way to figure out if your teen is using drugs or alcohol. As you'll see, many of the signs and symptoms of teen substance abuse listed below are also, at times, typical adolescent behavior. Many are also symptoms of mental health issues, including depression or anxiety disorders.

If you've noticed any of the changes related to substance abuse listed below, don't be afraid to come right out and ask your teen direct questions like, "Have you been offered drugs?" If yes, ask, "What did you do?" or "Have you been drinking or using drugs?"

While no parent wants to hear a "yes" response to these questions, be prepared for it. Decide, in advance, how you'll respond to a "yes." Make sure you reassure your child that you're looking out for him or her, and that you only want the best for his or her future.

Of course, not all teens are going to fess up to drug or alcohol use, and a "no" could also mean your child is in need of help for mental health issues. That's why experts strongly recommend that you consider getting a professional assessment of your child with a pediatrician or child psychologist to find out what's going on. In the case of teen substance abuse, don't be afraid to err on the side of caution. Teaming up with professionals to help your teen is the best way to make sure he or she has a healthy future.

Personal appearance

Messy—shows lack of care for appearance; poor hygiene; red, flushed cheeks or face; track marks on arms or legs (or long sleeves in warm weather to hide marks); burns or soot on fingers or lips (from "joints" or "roaches" burning down).

Personal habits or actions

Clenching teeth; smell of smoke or other unusual smells on breath or on clothes; chewing gum or mints to cover up breath; heavy use of over-the-counter preparations to reduce eye reddening, nasal irritation, or bad breath; frequently breaks curfew; cash flow problems; reckless driving, car accidents, or unexplained dents in the car; avoiding eye contact; locked doors; going out every night; secretive phone calls; "munchies" or sudden appetite.

Behavioral issues

Change in relationships with family members or friends; loss of inhibitions; mood changes or emotional instability; loud, obnoxious behavior; laughing at nothing; unusually clumsy, stumbling, lack of coordination, poor balance; sullen, withdrawn, depressed; unusually tired; silent, uncommunicative; hostile, angry, uncooperative behavior; deceitful or secretive; makes endless excuses; decreased motivation, lethargic movement; unable to speak intelligibly, slurred or rapid-fire speech; inability to focus; hyperactivity; unusually elated; periods of sleeplessness or high energy, followed by long periods of "catch up" sleep; disappearances for long periods of time.

School or work-related issues

Truancy or loss of interest in schoolwork; loss of interest in extracurricular activities, hobbies, or sports; failure to fulfill responsibilities at school or work; complaints from teachers or co-workers; reports of intoxication at school or work.

Health issues

Nosebleeds; runny nose not caused by allergies or a cold; frequent sickness; sores or spots around mouth; queasy, nauseous; seizures, vomiting; wetting lips or excessive thirst (known as "cotton mouth"); sudden or dramatic weight loss or gain; skin abrasions/bruises; accidents or injuries; depression, headaches; sweatiness.

Home- or car-related

Disappearance of prescription or over-the-counter pills; missing alcohol or cigarettes; disappearance of money or valuables; smell in the car, or bottles, pipes, or bongs on floor or in glove box; appearance of unusual containers or wrappers, or seeds left on surfaces used to clean marijuana, like Frisbees; appearance of unusual drug apparatuses, including pipes, rolling papers, small medicine bottles, eye drops, butane lighters, or makeshift smoking devices, like bongs made out of toilet paper rolls and aluminum foil; hidden stashes of alcohol.

School Briefs

McDowell Mtn holds P-K registration

McDowell Mountain Elementary School "Round Up" registrations and open house are set for Thursday and Friday, Feb. 20-21.

On Thursday, registration will be held in the evening from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. On Friday, registration will run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

McDowell Mountain offers free full-day kindergarten. Children need to be five years of age before Sept. 1, 2014. The site's academic program includes 350 daily minutes of instructional curriculum including language and literacy, math, social studies, science, music, art, PE and computers.

A birth certificate, immunization records and proof of residency will be needed upon registration.

Developmental and community preschools are both offered for students 3-4 years of age. For more information, contact the school at 664-5212 or 664-5211.

GEEF holds annual meeting

The Golden Eagle Education Foundation will hold its annual meeting tonight, Feb. 19, at 6:30 p.m. in the Fountain Hills Unified School District administration building conference room.

Foremost on the agenda is the seating of new trustees, followed by the election of officers for the year. The board may act upon any other matters that come before it.

The GEEF is a non-

profit coalition of residents dedicated to enriching the educational experience of students.

The foundation is dependent upon the business community, parents and residents to help support the funding of innovative classroom projects and teaching techniques, a mentoring program, outstanding staff awards and student scholarships.

The GEEF is again this year conducting a "Make a Difference" raffle. Tickets are \$20 or three for \$50. First prize is \$1,000 and the second and third prizes will be \$500 each. The drawing will be held on March 19. Winners need not be present to win.

Funds raised will help the GEEF invest in local youth and education, enriching lives and impacting the community.

For more information, call Pam McNeill at 837-1306.

FHMS hosts Goodwill drive

Fountain Hills Middle School has partnered with Goodwill of Central Arizona to host a donation drive fundraiser.

Residents are asked to bring in their gently used clothing, shoes, linens, books, housewares and electronics to the FHMS front office to take part in the event.

The school earns money for every pound of donated items, so the more donations the school collects, the more money will benefit local students in turn.

For more information, visit goodwillaz.org.

Terrific Kids



Fountain Hills Charter School, a public Montessori school, honors students who have displayed good character as Kiwanis Terrific Kids. Congratulations to Lilly Miller, Gracie Kuta, Madelyne Hughes, Skyler Bjerke and Coral Lang for the week of Feb. 9.



McDowell Mountain Elementary School is proud to present Regan Tower (kindergarten), Valentina Glass (first grade), Sydney Wagner (second grade), Kylie Gibbs (third grade) and Kaley Romain (third grade) as Terrific Kids for the week of Jan. 9.



Four Peaks Elementary School is proud to present Olivia Swiapiarski (fourth grade) and Connor Smout (fifth grade) as Terrific Kids for the week of Feb. 9.



Four Peaks Elementary School is proud to present Alyssa Wood (fourth grade) and Catherine Pham (fifth grade) as Terrific Kids for the week of Feb. 2.

Robo winners



Dylan Northern, Olivia Lagnese, Cameron Ferma and Andrew Cooper recently represented Fountain Hills High School in a 12-team Vex robotics competition hosted out of Desert Vista High School. The local squad took first in the qualifying rounds, earning a score of 74 in drivers skills and a world rank of 47th. The team also earned a 32 in programming skills and a 45th world ranking, as well as a design award and the Champion award. The local group will soon compete in the state competition and hopes to qualify for World.

Book fair headed to Four Peaks, McDowell Mtn.

The A+ Book Fair will be held at Fountain Hills Unified School District lower level public schools from Monday, March 3, through Thursday, March 6.

The event will take place from 7:20 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Middle School/Four Peaks each day. The McDowell Mountain book fair will run from 8:45 to 3:30 p.m. those days.

This book sale and literacy event is geared to excite children about reading and learning and will offer age-appropriate books geared to each educational level.

The most popular books and educational products for all ages will be available, including newest titles, award-winners, classics, accelerated books, tests and interactive products from more than 150

publishers.

The entire community is invited to attend, but especially parents, grandparents, children and their teachers. Two special functions will also be held in conjunction with the book fair.

On Tuesday, March 4, at 7:30 a.m., McDowell Mountain will host an hour-long event called "Dudes n' Donuts." Parents are invited to bring their children for complimentary milk, coffee and donuts.

That same morning,

the Middle School/Four Peaks will be offering the same refreshments from 7 to 9 a.m. The children and parents can enjoy browsing the books together and see if there is something that especially appeals to the child.

"We are greatly excited about this event and proud to be able to sponsor it each year," said Tara Lamar, PTO president.

"Last year we had \$20,000 in book sales. This success has enabled us to provide over \$25,000

in books to our school libraries over the past two years...and over \$200,000 in books the past decade. We encourage the public to attend, as these books are very competitively priced.

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School Improvement Bonds, Project of 2013, Series A (2014) (Bank Qualified)

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