

## Why do Young People Use, Abuse and Struggle with Drugs? 4/6/20

I remember the first time I helped a family put their teenager into rehab. It was Christmas time and the last thing this family wanted to do was find the best inpatient facility for their child to spend New Years in. However, after strict discipline and dozens of attempts to intervene they couldn't compete with their child's drug problem. Feeling defeated by substance abuse when you've given your child everything you can is a common emotion for many parents who are trying to help their kids get clean. Substance use and abuse in young adults offers a powerful escape and release for them. If parents don't understand this, they are prone to feelings of guilt, confusion and shame. In my several years of practicing mental health counseling I have found that most substance use and abuse comes down to three main reasons. As I have shared these reasons with different families around Florida I've seen folks move from confused to encouraged, and hopefully you will experience that as well.

### **Trauma or Stress:**

Human psychology is a comfort-seeking machine. We are always looking for ways to relax, have fun, make life more convenient and avoid discomfort and pain. When life becomes stressful it is not uncommon for young people to start dabbling in substances. Drugs have and always will create an instant feeling of relaxation, and more importantly, provide an escape from feelings we don't like. The problem happens when individuals can't stop escaping so people develop what is called a substance abuse problem. Trauma is another form of stress that leads to using. Whether a child's parents have just divorced or a young adult doesn't have a caring role model in their life, there are all kinds of trauma that cause people to find comfort in substances.

### **Peer Pressure:**

Many times a young person will get into drugs because it is what their friends are doing. Despite a person's best intentions, if they are surrounded by people who act and behave a certain way, it has a strong influence on how they will behave as well. This is especially true among young people who desperately want to make their friends happy, and are also around friends all the time as well. For teenagers their whole world is their social life, they don't have a job or a hobby or other interests to distract them. If their friends are using drugs then they will feel like they need too use them as well. Otherwise they run the risk of losing what is most important to every teenager: their social life!

### **Addiction:**

The most difficult to understand reason for drug use and abuse is addiction. A simple definition of addiction is the obsession with securing the supply and use of a particular substance and to continue using it despite serious consequences. Addiction is the most baffling and heart wrenching reason for drug use that any parent will ever have to wrap their mind around. Addiction is complicated because it has very little to do with trauma or stress or even peer pressure, but everything to do with a particular person's wiring. Addiction is a circuitry problem in an individual's biopsychosocial make up that causes them to forfeit everything they care about in order to use a drug. Parents of young adults who are addicts need to understand that

it is not personal, it is physiological and that if you suspect your child is an addict, you should seek out professional help.

**Conclusion:**

In helping our young people to get clean and stay clean, drug testing and mental health counseling play such an important role. It provides the accountability, the open conversation and the foundation of trust for families to be real and to heal as they help each other, and their kids to become productive adults. Consider making drug testing and counseling a regular part of your life as a way to stay ahead of the curb or to get back on the curb in a world where far too many parents and kids struggle to have honest and healthy conversation with each other.

**Bio:**

Nate Webster is a licensed mental health counselor and professor of psychology at Valencia College who has been practicing in the Orlando area for several years. He is certified in Group Crises Intervention (ICISF) and is a relaxation and anti-anxiety expert. He specializes in working with adults, teens and families who have a desire to experience greater freedom in their lives and are seeking for a way to move forward. Nate feels that counseling is a privilege because it allows him to walk through seasons of life with his clients that are powerful and special. Care to learn more? Schedule a 15-minute free phone consultation with him today. <https://www.ncwebster.com/>