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TOPIC ARTICLE

"Substance Abuse and Addictions"

Substance abuse is on the rise and is more prevalent now than ever, mainly due to the legalization of marijuana in many states. Despite this, alcohol is used more than any other drug, including tobacco and marijuana. Binge drinking is the most commonly reported - and most dangerous way - that young people consume alcohol. Athletes who drink alcohol are

more likely to experience consequences such as injury or death, difficulty at school or work, addiction, motor vehicle accidents, high-risk sexual behaviors, mental health challenges and legal problems. The National Institute of Health published an article entitled "Alcohol and the Adolescent Brain: What We've Learned And Where The Data Are Taking Us" in April of 2022. The article states that, in essence, because the brain is still developing during adolescence, when alcohol is introduced to the neuro-development, their brains are damaged much more than the brains of adults who drink alcohol. From this, many problems can and do occur. Similar risks exist for older athletes.

This article focuses mainly on the effects of alcohol on the brain and the damage it can do but the CDC has pointed out that marijuana can be equally if not more dangerous to adolescent brain functioning. In the article entitled "Marijuana and Youth: The Impact of Marijuana Use on Teen Health and Wellbeing," marijuana is linked with depression and social anxiety and, in a small but growing number of cases, to temporary psychosis and long-lasting mental disorders, including schizophrenia.

The developing brain of children and adolescents cannot tolerate the assault of alcohol and marijuana, let alone the drugs that are far more damaging, such as heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamines. While many individual situations are dire, they are not without hope. All of the substances cited above constitute risks to athletes of all ages.

Current brain studies hold positive promise for the future of substance abuse treatment. The likelihood is that, as the substance abuse actions in the brain are increasingly, clearly understood, methods of neutralizing addictions will become increasingly clear, too. For now, substance addictions control the brain. To confirm this point, methamphetamines and other addictive chemicals are more powerful than individuals' will power. Due to this control, individuals crave the substance to which they are addicted, lose their ability to manage their use of the substance, and continue to use the substance despite adverse consequences.

There is no question that teens who use alcohol or any other mind-altering substance are at risk for a multitude of problems and the question that they should ask themselves is "What should I do?" To respond to this question, let's make this plain and simple.

First, do not punish yourself. This does not help you.

Second, pay close attention to others who want you to overcome your addiction. Those who tolerate your addiction simply help you to keep it going.

Third, get good information about the substance you use and its impact on your body. In other words, understand the facts about how your drug(s) of choice may be damaging your brain.

Fourth, decide what you want to do about your addiction. As you decide, keep in mind that your addiction is not a permanent condition. You can and will change.

Fifth, get assistance from others. You may begin by using the Internet. Look for "Substance Abuse Treatment for Adolescents in my area." Many different sources of help are "out there." You can find treatment centers, individual counselors and therapists, and others.

Next Step Resources:

SAMHSA's National Helpline (substance abuse and mental health): 800-662-HELP (800-662-4357) , or TTY: 1-800-487-4889 -- confidential and free in English and Spanish.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA): <https://nida.nih.gov>

Alcoholics Anonymous <https://www.aa.org/>

EMERGENCY

In a crisis call "911" immediately

• If considering self-harm, call "988"
The National Suicide Intervention Lifeline

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

To speak to a counselor,

Call (800) 656-4673
RAINN

BULLYING/HAZING, VIOLENCE, ADDICTIONS & SUBSTANCE ABUSE

For helpful resources,
theBMSproject.org/safety

CHILD ABUSE

To report suspected child abuse,

Call (800) 422-4453
Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline

**It is recommended that incident(s) of serious misconduct be reported to law enforcement.
Minors should report incidents of misconduct to their parent(s) or guardian(s).**

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