

An Issue of Influence...

Mental Health & Substance Abuse

May 3rd through the 9th is Children's Mental Health Week.

Mental Health Influences One of Two Paths to Drug Use

Research on the pathways to drug use and addiction suggests that use of drugs is driven, basically, by one of two types of reasons. On one hand kids try alcohol or other drugs simply for the experience. They've heard about the substance and are curious about how it will affect their thinking and behavior. Some kids start and continue using drugs or alcohol because they feel they have no better reason not to. Kids may feel both invincible and justified in freely experimenting with drugs and alcohol. They are looking for a way to have a good time. These kids also seem to have the best chance of being taught to seek other ways of having fun and to make choices that don't include drugs and other risky behavior when given the appropriate influence and guidance about the dangers of substance use and abuse.

But on the other hand, there is a second, very different group of young people using drugs. These kids are using drugs to try to feel better, or even normal. This group is often made up of people involved in difficult life situations – dysfunctional or abusive families, kids that are being bullied, kids that are neglected or have low self-esteem are a few examples.

Kids suffering from untreated depression, manic depressive illness, panic disorders, anxiety, post traumatic stress and other possible mental health issues are also in this group. As many as 10 million children and adolescents may suffer from emotional and psychiatric problems that interfere with their ability to focus and perform the daily requirements of their school and home life. These kids are at extremely high risk of becoming addicted to drugs or alcohol.

The difference between the two groups of kids is that the latter group is not using drugs just to feel good or have fun or to fit in, but to medicate themselves, in the same way that other people might be given anti-depressants or anti-anxiety medications. The problem, of course, is that using illicit drugs is not an effective treatment. In fact, medical research has shown clearly that this kind of drug use only makes the mental health problems worse. This is not a simple fix and it will not just go away, it requires professional treatment.

For information on local mental health resources:

hubbardcountydrugfree.org



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Over 50 factors have been identified by researchers that might put someone at risk for drug use

According to By Alan I. Leshner, Ph.D., *Director, National Institute of Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health*. These risk factors can be found in the individual, the family, among peers, and in the community. Having too much free time, weak family structures, a dysfunctional peer group, social pressures, and the glorification of drug use by some in the popular media all are examples of risk factors. But they are only possible factors contributing to whether or not young people with certain characteristics might be more or less prone to using drugs. Parents should be alert to these risk factors, but no set of risk factors determines that a particular child will use drugs, and many kids who have many of those risk factors don't even try drugs. So it comes back to the individual child's situational influences and state of mind, or



What do kids say about why they use drugs?

Here is an excerpt from the blog on [FraudWasteAbuse.com](http://www.fraudwasteabuse.com).

"Yesterday I heard a story on [NPR](http://www.npr.org) in which children were asked what they thought about drugs. Each child parroted back, with conviction, all the same false information I believed at their age. They said things like "you'll die" and "you'll lose all your friends."

What will these kids do when they find out it's not true? Drugs. When it is discovered first-hand that drugs aren't so bad what, then, will these kids do? More drugs.

Duh.

Don't get me wrong. I did see a few who "crossed the line" and actually abused drugs. However these kids had a lot of problems, drugs being only one of them. Unfortunately for them, the stigma of drug use would prevent them from seeking help even after they realized they had a problem. Making matters worse, "help" would often put the focus of treatment in the wrong place; they were treated for drug use when the focus should have been more holistic. Even if they got sober, they still tended to be depressed and self-abusive - just without drugs.

So what is the War on Drugs really accomplishing? Or, rather, is it being waged effectively?

Things started to make sense. Kids do drugs because they realize that adults have lied to them about it. If they are to discover the truth, they have only one course of action: Do drugs.

The real reasons kids do drugs is they're curious & think they're indestructible. The real reason the government has a "war on drugs" is cuz they don't get a cut. The real reason parents support the "war on drugs" is because they don't want to do any parenting themselves; school & the government should be doing that for them."

Later another blogger echoed the parents support for the "war on drugs" statement as being *"The most intelligent thing said so far."*

The link is <http://www.fraudwasteabuse.com/2007/04/why-kids-do-drugs.html>

Even kids recognize that untreated mental illness is a path toward drug abuse and addiction, but again we get back to the part that:

It's an Issue of Influence.

Find the Facts:

Here are some websites for the facts about drugs and alcohol:

www.hubbardcountydrugfree.org
www.theantidrug.com

www.drugfreeworld.org
www.abovetheinfluence.com
www.family.samhsa.gov

Or call the 218-252-8275

Be the influence they choose to believe in, trust and follow.

Youth Event Calendar

Alternative High:

Band Concert

May 1st @ the Bemidji Boys and Girls Club

7:30-11:30pm

sponsored by the Bemidji Rock Sober and the Boys and Girls Club

Rock Sober

Creative Expression/ Community Building

May 4th 4:00-5:30 pm @HAPA Office

May 5th 3:30- 6:30 Raking @

Pine Beach Resort, Laporte

Alternative High:

May 8th: Park Rapids End of Year Block Party

8-11:30pm

Movie Marathon Overnight

@ Laporte School 6:30 pm- 8 am

Rock Sober

Community Building/ Creative Expression

May 11th 4:00-5:30 pm @HAPA Office

May 12th 5-6:30 @ Laporte School

Alternative High:

TBA

Rock Sober

Guest Speaker

May 18th 4:00-5:30 pm @HAPA Office

May 19th 5-6:30 @ Laporte School

Alternative High:

TBA

Rock Sober:

Reflection, Totems and Individual Plans

May 25th 4:00-5:30 pm @HAPA Office

May 26th 5-6:30 @ Laporte School

Alternative High:

**Rock Sober Skate @ the Old Laporte
Town Hall 9-11 pm**