

## Reasons Why Youth Experiment with Substance Use

Identifying the major factors that contribute to the use of alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and other substances is critical to understanding the whole picture. Such factors include environmental influences such as peer pressure, media messages and adolescent attitudes.

Young people who are considering experimentation perceive certain advantages about substance use. These advantages need to be deconstructed and examined. It is essential for students to do the thinking about substance use ahead of time-before getting into situations where they are faced with a decision.

	<b>Perceived Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
<b>Personal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To satisfy curiosity</li> <li>• To cope with boredom</li> <li>• To have something to do</li> <li>• To rebel or defy parents</li> <li>• To get revenge</li> <li>• To gain attention from family</li> <li>• To avoid loneliness</li> <li>• To deal with stress/to survive</li> <li>• To forget disappointments</li> <li>• To avoid family arguments or family problems</li> <li>• To forget family (or friends) for a while</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curiosity gets satisfied - then what? May or may not try something else</li> <li>• Excitement levels off</li> <li>• May get the "wrong" type of attention</li> <li>• May lose control of emotions, e.g., may become angry or violent, depressed or anxious</li> <li>• Against family/religious values</li> <li>• Creates problems with family, e.g., loss of trust</li> <li>• Does not resolve family or personal problems</li> <li>• Does not relieve stress</li> <li>• May lose pleasure in everyday activities</li> <li>• May lose self-esteem</li> </ul>
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To fit in with a group or find new friends</li> <li>• To deal with shyness or lack of confidence</li> <li>• To be able to talk with strangers or feel comfortable in large groups</li> <li>• To avoid having to talk</li> <li>• To imitate role models</li> <li>• To create a positive social image (along with "approved" dress, hair and music)</li> <li>• To be the "real me"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often groups/friends change</li> <li>• May let friends down</li> <li>• Gives false, and temporary, sense of confidence or courage</li> <li>• May become more isolated</li> <li>• May say or do things will regret later</li> <li>• May make a fool of oneself or act bizarre</li> <li>• May become uncharacteristically rude</li> <li>• May become someone no one recognizes</li> <li>• May lead to negative episodes, e.g., drive when should not have; get involved in sexual situations otherwise would not have (others could take advantage of you)</li> </ul>