

being a teenager isn't easy, but drugs won't make it better.

Nothing is more irritating than when adults act like it's a breeze to be a teenager. 'It's not that big of a deal.' 'Teens have it so easy these days.' 'It gets better,' they say—but right now, it's really tough. Smartphones and social media. Difficult exams. Drama. Chores. Sports. Lots of anxiety.

But if there's one thing we know, it's that **drugs won't make it better**. But we're here to help you get through the very real struggles you're facing on a daily basis (even if your parents think being a teen is easy).

You've got goals. **Don't give up on them.**

This guide is just a starting point for you. You've got a whole life ahead of you, filled with ideas of where you want to live, what career you want to take on, places you want to travel to, and everything else.

- **Write down your goals**, whether they're academic, personal, or career-related.
- **Use your goals to motivate you** when drugs and alcohol get into the mix.

Self-care: **It starts with you.**

First things first, always remember to focus on your strengths and achievements, and know that you can carve your own path. Write down a series of personal goals that you want to tackle, and celebrate the successes along the way.

- **Engage in positive activities.** Regular sleep, proper nutrition, physical activity, and other positive activities all contribute to your mental, physical, and emotional health. While it takes time, growing your self-esteem will make difficult moments easier to navigate.
- **Know that it's okay to feel overwhelmed or feel out of sorts.** It happens to everyone (including every adult in your life), but know that it's temporary.
- **Take a break and go for a walk.** Relax a bit with a movie that makes you smile. Or play a video game with a group of close friends. These are all positive ways to manage stress that don't involve drugs or alcohol.

Keep tabs on your **feelings**

Do you ever feel stress, anger, anxiety, or sadness? That's normal! What's not normal, though, is lashing out at others or scolding yourself for these emotions.

- **Practice dealing with your emotions.** It's key to better managing both your negative and positive emotions.
- **Try mindfulness, deep breathing, or even journaling.** It may sound corny, but these are real skills that'll carry you through adulthood.
- Again, while it may not feel like it, **emotional pain is temporary.** There are things you can do—hobbies, hanging out with supportive friends, exercising, meditation—to help it go away faster without turning to drugs and alcohol.

Friends and family **matter**

When you surround yourself with supportive, positive people who share similar and healthy values, it's a game changer. It makes everything else a whole lot easier because the people closest to you won't be pushing you into harmful or risky situations.

- **Rely on your support system.** When you have supportive, positive people in your circle, you can always go to them for support. These people could be anyone, from family members and friends to mentors, counselors, or teachers.
- **Find people you can be open with.** You should feel safe discussing any pressures or challenges you're facing regarding alcohol and drugs.
- **Be your own advocate.** If you're close to people that you wouldn't feel comfortable having these conversations with, it's important to set boundaries for these relationships. Be assertive and advocate for yourself if you choose to be around people who don't share your same values.

It's your life. **Take control of it.**

Peer pressure isn't easy to deal with; it's weird and uncomfortable. You want to fit in, after all. But you've got to be prepared to deal with these feelings, no matter how socially awkward the situation might be.

- **Practice saying "no."** It's important to work on refusal skills and strategies, such as role playing with supportive people in your life and getting used to saying "no" to offers of drugs or alcohol. Practice saying firm, confident statements like, "No thanks, I don't want to try that" or "I'm good without it."
- **Know the repercussions.** For teens, the use of drugs and alcohol are associated with a slew of negative consequences, from dangerous drug use later in life and failures in school to poor judgment in risky situations to tickets and other legal consequences.
- **Take control.** Drugs and alcohol can seriously affect your health, relationships, and future. The power to make informed, healthy decisions is in your hands.

It's okay to **ask for help**

Struggling with drugs or alcohol and overcoming addiction is one of the hardest things to go through. Talking with parents, adults you can trust (e.g., your school counselor, a teacher, relatives, or even a doctor), or supportive friends can make all the difference, but we know it's not an easy discussion to have.

You're probably scared that they're going to react with anger and disappointment or even shame you, but opening up to your support network can make them understand what's happening to you. They'll appreciate your honesty, and they can help you get support.



Need support? **Need someone to talk to?**

Visit [drugsmakeitworse.com](https://www.drugsmakeitworse.com) for more info or visit your school counselor.

