Getting Past “No!”

Mary Egan, MA, CADC
Director of Outreach
Even the very best school is a difficult place for a child.

Michael Thompson, Ph.D., The Pressured Child
Children go through more changes in six years of adolescence than at any other time in their lives.
“People without a firm sense of identity are vulnerable to mental illness.”

Michael Thompson, Ph.D.
Adolescents struggling with anxiety and depression will often self-medicate with drugs and alcohol.
Watch for Emerging Mental Health Issues

- ‘I can’t handle the pressure of school/sports/family life (anxiety)’
- ‘I don’t like myself/feel comfortable in my own skin (depression)’
- ‘I can’t take the memory of what happened/is happening (abuse/trauma)’
- ‘I can’t focus in school (ADHD)’
Risk Factors for SUD

- Genetics
- Age of First Use
- Mental Health Issues
- Environment
- Other Factors
Most people who engage in harmful substance use do not fully recognize that they have a problem or that their life problems are related to their use of alcohol or drugs.
Most adolescents do not enter treatment voluntarily and are often apprehensive about the process.
Furthermore, substance abusing teens, much like their adult counterparts, often have a hard time making positive changes in their use patterns.
Understanding How People Change

Traditional vs. Motivating for change
Understanding How People Change

Traditional:

- Change is motivated by discomfort.
- If you can make people feel bad enough, they will change.
- People have to hit bottom to be ready to change.
- Therefore, people don’t change if they haven’t suffered enough.
Understanding How People Change

Traditional:

- If the stick is big enough, there is no need for a carrot.
- If someone doesn’t change they are in denial. The best way to break through denial is direct confrontation.
Understanding How People Change

Motivating for Change:

- People are ambivalent about change.
- Continue to use drugs because of their ambivalence.
- All change contains some element of ambivalence.
- Schools can increase teen motivation with consequences and expectations.
Why don’t people change?
Concept of Ambivalence

- Ambivalence is normal.
- Teens enter treatment with fluctuating and conflicting motivations.
- They want to change and don’t want to change.
**What Does Resistance Look Like?**

- Arguing
- Challenging
- Ignoring
- Non-answering
- Sidetracking
- Discounting
- Hostility
- Lying
- Denying
- Disagreeing
- Blaming
- Excusing
- Rationalizing
- Minimizing
- Pessimism
- Reluctance
- Interrupting
Common Misconceptions about Teenagers, AOD Use, and Treatment

Myth: If a teen is not motivated for treatment, treatment will likely not work.

- Teen motivation is not a prerequisite of effective services – it is a result.
- Wanting vs. Willing

(Baer & Peterson, 2002; O’Leary Tevyaw & Monti, 2004)
Strategies to get past no!:

Rolling with Resistance

There is no way to make people like change. You can only make them feel less threatened by it.

- Frederick Hayes
HOW DO FAMILIES COPE
Family

“Addiction is a family disease that stresses the family to the breaking point, impacts the stability of the home, the family's unity, mental health, physical health, finances, and overall family dynamics.”
Common Mistakes

Minimizing the problem:

- All teens drink
- It’s only marijuana
- They have anxiety or depression

- Not understanding the full scope of a teen’s substance use OR not monitoring a potential concern can delay interventions that can prevent the problem from getting worse.
Common Mistakes

Denying the problem exists:

- Denial is a defense mechanism.
- Become susceptible to emotional manipulations
- Trust your gut – if it doesn’t sound right or feel right, it probably isn’t.
Common Mistakes

Not setting clear expectations:

- Even using substances once or twice can develop into problems with school, the law, their health and hinder good relationships.

- Adults have a difficult time in communicating clear expectations to teens about substance use.
Common Mistakes

Rescuing them from consequences:

- Consequences are a powerful motivator.
- Short term relief doesn’t change long term solutions.
- People learn from their mistakes... Don’t take away these lessons.
End Result: Enabling

• Allowing and even encouraging irresponsible and self-destructive behavior in another by shielding them from the consequences of their actions

• “Helping that hurts”

• Can be parents, spouses, friends, teachers, employers, or co-workers – anyone with an emotional connection
Let’s talk about Emotional Enabling

• True recovery happens when:
  • The addict “does the uncomfortable things in life.”
  • Family members and others become aware of their part in the process.
  • Emotional hijacking of family members with these 4 Feelings.
Why don’t families intervene sooner?

• The addict manipulates the family by hijacking the emotions
  ▪ Guilt
  ▪ Sympathy
  ▪ Fear
  ▪ Hope

Recovery (change) is uncomfortable, the addict wants easy.
Guilt: “You’re too busy with your own life! You drink all the time! I hate you! You’re the reason I use!”

- Guilt is a strong emotion for parents that prevents change – the feeling that “I am a bad parent” and “I am the reason for my child’s problems.” Co-dependency

- Parents become unwilling to “punish” their child for behaviors they feel responsible for.

- The substance use isn’t really their fault.
Common Mistakes: Emotional Manipulation

**Hope:** “I promise I’ll never use again. I’ve learned my lesson.”

- You want to believe this statement, and you hope the problem will go away on its own, but when left untreated, substance use issues tend to get worse.
- Parents are often desperate for hope.
- Understanding the process of addiction is the best antidote.
Common Mistakes: Emotional Manipulation

**Fear:** “I’ll run away! You’ll never see me again!” or “I’ll throw a temper tantrum to get you to back off!”

- You may be afraid of making things worse by addressing the substance use, but avoidance is not the answer.

- Failing to respond allows the problem to continue and sometimes get worse.
Common Mistakes: Emotional Manipulation

**Sympathy:** “My life sucks! I’m bored! I need drugs for my anxiety/depression/pain!”

- Used to minimize or eliminate the concern and get others to back off.

- Other circumstances are not the fault of the individual and that the drugs are needed to alleviate physical or emotional pain.

- You may find yourself backing off, telling them you care for them and what a good person they are.
Intervention
How To Help

Positive change occurs in the context of authentic relationships—people need to know someone cares and will be there unconditionally for them. It is a transactional and facilitating process of supporting change and capacity building—not fixing.
Strategies to get past NO

- **Educate yourself about addiction**
  What does addiction look like for teens? What’s normal behavior and what’s not?

- **Don’t go it alone**
  Involve key people and build support and opportunity for intervention with others.

- **An intervention is not a one time event**
  “Getting past no!” is a process. Continue to monitor with concern.
Strategies to get past NO

- **Act quickly when the time is right!**
  Use a crisis to expedite treatment or action.

- **“Think outside the box.”**
  Remove barriers as they are presented.

- **Don’t underestimate the power of consequences and boundaries**
  Fewer boundaries for teens today. Make the connection between behavior and consequences.

- **Limit teens access to drugs and alcohol**
  Educate others about limiting teen’s access to alcohol, marijuana, RX drugs, and others.
Strategies to Get Past NO

- Provide parental support
  Teens often have less parental involvement and supervision. Validate, be an ally with parents, connect parents with support like Rosecrance Parent Café, Al-Anon or Families Anonymous.

- De-stigmatize the need for help for those with Substance Use Disorders

- Enlist help from Addiction Professionals
  Assessments and consultations are helpful tools.

- Help is available and Recovery happens!
  Be aware that getting help might take time, energy and commitment.
"I'm not telling you it is going to be easy, I'm telling you it's going to be worth it."

Anonymous
Visit our website

www.rosecrance.org
Services offered:

- Free confidential drug and alcohol evaluations
- Residential substance abuse and primary mental health treatment for youth ages 12-20
  - Gender specific counseling
  - Experiential therapies including art, music, recreation, and horticulture
  - Family education and support
  - Transition planning
  - Alumni program
- Recovery homes for teens also offered in Rockford.
Rosecrance Healing Garden at the Griffin Williamson Campus
Adult Services:
• Free Assessments
• Individual/Family Counseling
• Intensive Outpatient Program
• Day Treatment
• Recovery Home

Teen & Adult Services:
• Free Assessments
• Early Intervention Services
• Intensive Outpatient Program
• Urine drug screens offered at an additional cost
• Resources and trainings for parents, professionals and community members
Questions