Module 13: Causes and Consequences of Substance/Drug Abuse

Introduction:

In this module, we are going to discuss various factors that make adolescents vulnerable to substance/drug abuse and the adverse consequences of abuse and addiction. Myths and misconceptions related to substance/drug abuse will also be discussed in this module.

Overall Learning Objectives:

At the end of this session, learners will be able to:

- Identify the causes and consequences of Substance/Drug Abuse.
- Clarify myths and misconceptions.
- Develop skills to resist experimentation with addictive substances/drugs

Activity 1: Causes of Substance/Drug Abuse

Learning objectives:

To enable learners to:

- Understand various causes and consequences of Substance/Drug Abuse

Time required: 45 minutes

Materials required: Activity Sheet, Case studies, Chart paper, Pen and Paper

Notes for the facilitator:

- Initiate the session by dividing the learners into groups, each group having not more than 5-6 learners.
- Allocate 15 minutes to every group to discuss the case study assigned to them and to answer the questions after the case study.
- Ask the group reporter to present the group work, each group taking not more than 5 minutes.

Case Study 1:

Sohan has performed well in class VIII annual exams. Now, he is worried whether he will be able to keep up his performance and score good marks in class IX. His parents always tell him how they expect to see him on the merit list in class X. Afraid of disappointing them, Sohan does not share his concerns with his parents. He feels that some of his friends may be going through the same phase and discusses his problem with them. His friends suggest that smoking may reduce his stress and help him to relax. Sohan wants to feel better and decides to follow his friends’ advice. He starts smoking a cigarette or two everyday. Without realizing, over a period of six months he was smoking 6-10 cigarettes a day. He is now worried as smoking has become a habit with him.
Questions
1. Who do you think is responsible for Sohan’s habit of smoking and why?
2. Do you think smoking helped reduce Sohan’s stress? Why?
3. What else could Sohan have done to reduce his stress effectively?
4. What role could Sohan’s parents have played to prevent him from smoking

Case Study 2

Three friends Mani, Adil and Ronny met at a marriage party. Mani and Ronny wanted to drink in celebration and compelled Adil to join them, for the sake of friendship. Adil is in a dilemma. On the one hand he doesn’t want to lose his friendship but on the other he is conscious that nobody in his family drinks. He has also learnt from his parents that alcohol is harmful for health.

Questions
1. What would you have done if you were in Adil’s place?
2. What are the choices that Adil has?
3. How can Adil convince his friends not to consume alcohol?

Case Study 3

Gudiya was used to seeing both her mother and grandmother enjoy chewing tobacco regularly. When she turned twelve she felt that she was old enough to begin chewing tobacco and (betel) paan along with them.

Questions
1. Enact a 2-3 minutes conversation between Gudiya and her mother in which the mother tries to dissuade Gudiya from picking up this addictive habit.
2. Using the above case study establish the role of family in influencing actions of youngsters.
3. Why do you think Gudiya should listen to her mother and resist the temptation of (betel) paan and tobacco chewing?
4. State factors other than family that attract young people to experiment with addictive substances.

- After every group presentation, add on the points that are missed out the by the group.
- At the end, make sure to repeat the key messages
Summing Up:

Young people are more vulnerable to substance/drug abuse due to the following reasons:

- Lack of basic knowledge about the effects and dangers of consuming drugs/addictive substances
- Urge to try something new, coupled with peer influence and pressure, make young people vulnerable to drug abuse
- Commonly prevalent myths that drugs can help overcome boredom, depression, stress and fatigue may encourage young people to abuse these substances. Also, media images that glamorize substance abuse may also mislead young people.
- If an elder (parent, grandparent) in the family engages in substance abuse, young people in that family are more likely to start abusing the same or a different substance/s
- Factors like relatively easy availability of drugs, community norms, and adverse family situations may push young people into substance abuse

As the attitudes related to smoking, drinking and abuse of other substances are formed during preadolescence and early adolescence, this is an important age to invest in prevention efforts

National Family Health Survey 3 (2005-06) data from India show that in the age group of 15-24,

- 4% females and 40% males reported use of tobacco
- 1% females and 19% males reported ever having consumed alcohol

Activity 2: Negative Peer Pressure

Learning Objective:

Learners will be able to:

- Recognize and resist negative peer pressure

Time required: 30 minutes

Materials required: Activity Sheet, Fact Sheet, Writing Board, Marker/Chalk.

Notes for the facilitator:

- Inform learners that there will be a Role Play activity and ask for 5 student volunteers to play the roles of five characters mentioned in the Activity Sheet.
- Assign the roles of the five characters, one role to each student volunteer
- Give them 5 minutes to enact this role play.
After the Role Play, ask the following questions and write the responses given by the learners on the Writing Board:

1. What are the different situations you have observed from the role play?
2. Why is it that some of the characters give in to smoking while the others don’t?
3. Is peer pressure always negative? If not, can you share an example of positive peer pressure?

Use the summing up points to recapitulate and highlight the key messages.

**Summing Up:**

- It has been observed that young people are highly influenced by their peers and mimic their behaviors. Hence, parents/guardians should always be aware of their children/wards’ friends.
- In many instances, young people are influenced by their peers to experiment with cigarettes, alcohol and other harmful substances.
- Peer pressure can be managed by being aware of the implications of drug abuse and developing skills to manage peer pressure. One can save oneself from adopting risky behaviour under peer pressure and also persuade the peers not to engage in unhealthy behaviors such as substance abuse.
- Young people should also be educated to recognize that a friend is someone who cares, protects and looks after the welfare of their friends rather than coerce them/initiate them into unhealthy habits.
Empowered with adequate information and skills, young people should be able to decide that it is their body, their life and hence, they should be taking well-informed and responsible decisions.

Note: Please refer to Activity 6: ‘Communicating Effectively’ to reinforce assertive style of communication as an important skill that an individual should have for positive and responsible living.

**Activity 3: Clarifying Myths and Misconceptions**

**Learning Objective:**

To enable learners to:
- Recognize and counter common myths and misconceptions related to substance abuse

**Time required:** 30 minutes

**Materials required:** Slips of paper with myths/misconceptions written on them

**Notes for the facilitator:**

- Prepare slips with different myths related to substance abuse, written on it
- If required, please refer to the list of myths provided in the fact sheet at the end of this module.
- Keep all slips on the front table and tell learners to come one by one and pick up one slip. Once every one has picked up the slip, tell them to read the statement on the slip and decide whether he/she agrees with it. He/she has also to think about the reason why he/she agrees or disagrees with the statement. The time for thinking and responding is only 2 minutes.
- Once everyone has reviewed the statements on the slips, ask the learners to respond to the statement. If two learners get a slip with the same statement, ask them to respond consecutively.
- The facilitator would supplement with accurate information wherever there is a gap.
- End the session by repeating key messages.

**Summing Up:**

- Commonly abused substances among adolescents are tobacco and alcohol which act as gateways to the use of other drugs
- Factors which make adolescents vulnerable to substance/drug abuse are poor self-esteem, family history, low academic achievement and peer pressure.
- Drug/substance abuse have both short-term and long-term effects
- Experimenting with a drug even once may lead to addiction
FACT SHEET

ADOLESCENCE EDUCATION

Causes of Drug abuse:

Young people are more vulnerable to substance/ drug abuse due to the following reasons:

- Lack of basic knowledge about the effects and dangers of consuming drugs/ addictive substances
- Urge to try something new, coupled with peer influence and pressure, make young people vulnerable to drug abuse
- Young people are highly influenced by their peers and mimic their behaviors. Hence, parents/ guardians should always be aware of their children/ wards’ friends
- In many instances, young people are influenced by their peers to experiment with cigarettes, alcohol and other harmful substances
- Commonly prevalent myths that drugs can help overcome boredom, depression, stress and fatigue may encourage young people to abuse these substances. Also, media images that glamorize substance abuse may also mislead young people.
- Young people may be under pressure from family or friends to perform beyond their capacity in any field related to academics, sports or winning over friends and under the false impression that drugs may help them; many young people fall into the vicious cycle of substance abuse
- If an elder (parent, grandparent) in the family engages in substance abuse, young people in that family are more likely to start abusing the same or a different substance/s
- Factors like relatively easy availability of drugs, community norms, and adverse family situations may push young people into substance abuse

National Family Health Survey 3 (2005-06) data from India show that in the age group of 15-24,
- 4% females and 40% males reported use of tobacco
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Prevention of substance abuse:

*Paying attention to the following may prevent young people from abusing substances/ drugs:*

- Peer pressure can be managed by being aware of the implications of drug abuse and developing skills to manage peer pressure. One can not only save oneself from adopting risky behavior under peer pressure but also persuade the peers not to engage in unhealthy behaviors such as substance abuse
- Young people should also be educated to recognize that a friend is someone who cares, protects and looks after the welfare of their friends rather than coerce them/ initiate them into unhealthy habits
Empowered with adequate information and skills, young people should be able to decide that it is their body, their life and hence, they should be taking well-informed and responsible decisions

As the attitudes related to smoking, drinking and abuse of other substances are formed during preadolescence and early adolescence, this is an important age to invest in prevention efforts

**Common myths related to substance/drug abuse:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myths</th>
<th>Facts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is no harm in trying just drugs once, because one can stop after that.</td>
<td>Almost all drug addicts start by trying just once. Once the drug is taken, the user is always amenable to further drug intake, which becomes a part of his/her habit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs increase creativity and make the user more imaginative</td>
<td>Drug addict loses clarity and becomes incoherent in action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs sharpen thinking and lead to greater concentration</td>
<td>Drugs induce dullness and adversely affect normal functioning of body and mind. Drugs may remove inhibitions but temporarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will power alone can help a drug addict stop taking drugs</td>
<td>Addiction transforms into a disease, which requires medical and psychiatric treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the addicts get their drugs from a peddler or a pusher</td>
<td>Most of the addicts get their dose of drugs from a friend or a close associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol helps people forget their problems.</td>
<td>Very often the opposite is found to be true. People bring up forgotten problems under intoxication. Alcohol only adds on other problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug use makes one ‘cool’ and better accepted by peers</td>
<td>In the beginning, it may seem that use of drugs helps in winning more friends but this is a myth as these peers are not true friends or well wishers. Furthermore, over a period of time, drug dependence makes one asocial and isolated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Effects of Substance/Drug Abuse:**

Substance/Drug Abuse leads to a number of short-term and long-term effects that are detrimental to health.

**Short-term Effects:** These are effects that appear only a few minutes after the intake of drugs. The drug abuser feels a false sense of well-being and a pleasant drowsiness. Some of the short-term effects are distorted vision, hearing and coordination, impaired judgment, bad breath and hangovers.
**Long-term Effects:** Drugs have long-term impact that lead to serious damage due to constant and excessive use. These effects show over a course of time and are usually caused by progressive damage to different body organs. Substance abuse impairs both physical and mental functioning leading to compromised quality of life. Several long-term physical ailments, including loss of appetite, stomach ailment, skin problems, liver, heart and central nervous system damage, memory loss etc may occur. In general drug use weakens the immune system and makes the individual more vulnerable to acquire infections.

Drug abuse in itself is not a cause of HIV/AIDS or other STDs but under the influence of drugs, people may engage in risk behaviors that make them more susceptible to these infections.

Drug abusers may even die suddenly from a so-called **overdose** when one takes too much for the body to bear. Death may also occur from long-term damage.

Although substance/drug abuse is harmful at any stage of life, these substances are especially harmful if consumed during pregnancy as these substances are absorbed through blood and as the growing fetus (unborn child) gets nutrition from blood, these substances can reach the fetus and harm him/her.

Furthermore, substance abuse influences not only the individual but their families and communities. The person who gets addicted often loses interest in other activities be it school, job or any other responsibility. As a result, they are not able to take care of their responsibilities and may become a liability for their families. Furthermore, it is expensive to buy substances/drugs on a regular basis. Hence, in desperation, addicted individuals may be forced to engage in petty crimes.

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If the online feedback page does not open on your internet browser, please type the above-mentioned link manually in your browser, or simply copy-paste the link.