

Allyship and Substance Use - Tips for Educators by Youth

Resource: Vaping Education Resources

Grade(s): 4 5 6 7 8

Division(s): Intermediate

Set the Limits of Confidentiality

- Students will feel more comfortable knowing the boundaries for conversations ahead of time. Communicate your limits.
- Students need to know that conversations will not lead to “outing” them with other adults. Make sure you consider how caregivers will respond.

Honour Consent

- You must be a trustworthy adult and need to respect their right to consent.
- Youth need to know conversations are about caring for their well-being and not about getting them in trouble.

Be an Advocate

- Educators need to advocate for and speak up against youth stigmatization. Remember the bystander effect: If you don’t intervene, who will?

- Don't contribute to a self-fulfilling prophecy for students. Consider how your conversations with and about students impact how they are treated by others and can reinforce the 'bad' kid image.

Remember What It Was Like

- Remember what it was like to be a student. Youth have real problems too.
- First, find out why someone is using substances. Students are fully autonomous human beings who make choices. Understanding the 'why' is important - don't just suggest alternative methods to address the same need.

Provide Resources

- Remember that conversations about substance use don't happen in a classroom alone. It's not entirely up to educators to educate students.
- Knowing about resources and other sources of information that can be accessed and the availability of a caring educator can go a long way in supporting students.

Recognize That Distrust Might Exist Regardless

- Just because youth are not saying anything, it doesn't mean they are not observing, listening, and absorbing information.
- It's common for people using substances to be distrustful of others. Make sure students know the intention is not to get them in trouble but about caring and setting them up for success in the future.