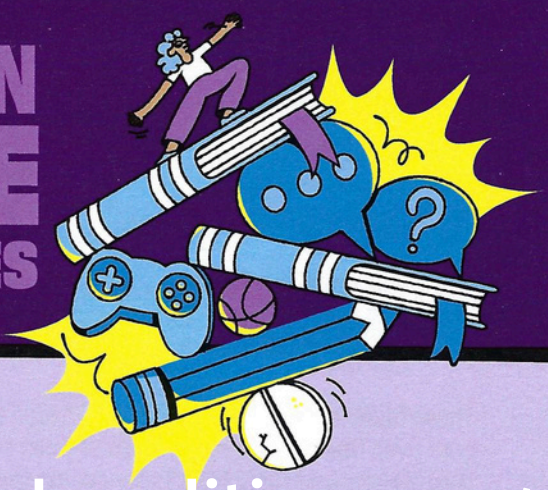
THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TEEN DRUG USE AND MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

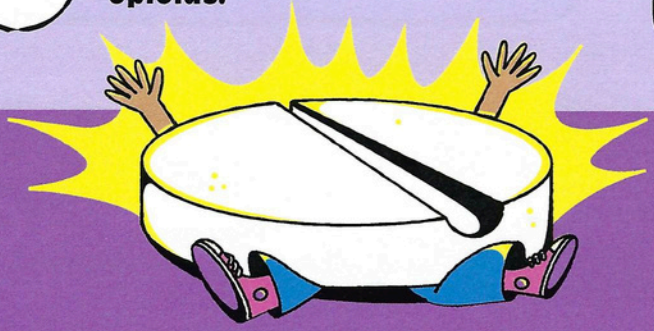


The number of teens reporting poor mental health has increased over the past decade.[1]

40% of high school students in 2023 stopped regular activities because of persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness.[1]

The same study found that among high school students in the last 30 days:

- **29%** reported experiencing poor mental health.
- **22%** drank alchohol.
- **17%** used marijuana.
- **4%** misused prescription opioids.[1]



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Linking Substance Use and Mental Health Challenges

Teens may use alcohol and other substances to help them cope with mental health challenges, like stress, anxiety, and depression. Over time, this ongoing use can lead to a substance use disorder (SUD).[2]

Mental health conditions and SUDs are often ***co-occurring***. This means that if a teen has an SUD, they are more likely to have a mental health condition. The reverse is also true: teens with a mental health condition are more likely to use substances.[3]

A 2023 SURVEY FOUND:

Teens ages 12–17 who had a major depressive episode in the past year were more likely than their peers to:

- Use illegal drugs, marijuana, and tobacco products.

- Misuse prescription opioids.

- Binge drink alcohol.[4]

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