

OFFICE OF WELLNESS PROMOTION

STUDY DRUGS

PARENTS & SUPPORTERS



PRESCRIPTION STIMULANTS

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, life (for us all) is more stressful than ever before. Like most things this year, the holiday season may feel like one more disappointment at the end of a long, challenging year for your student. Over the past several months, your student may have found themselves dealing with heavy course loads, countless assignments, and distance from friends; all while learning in a remote environment.

Prescription stimulants are frequently misused by students around stressful times. “Study drugs” like Adderall or Ritalin are commonplace – in fact, 1 in 5 college students admits to misusing these medications and the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) reports that 18 to 25 years old’s use stimulants at significantly higher rates than any other group.

GENERATION RX

Data shows that students who took prescription stimulants chose to do so because they thought they would help with studying or improving their grades; however, study drugs have no significant positive impact on GPA. Additionally, many of these drugs are Schedule II controlled substances, meaning that they carry a significant potential for abuse and addiction.

Stimulants are prescribed to people for medical reasons, but they may also be obtained secondhand through friends, family members, classmates, or from someone selling illegally. Although they have been cleared by the FDA, prescription stimulants are unsafe for misuse and can have serious side effects when used incorrectly. Dr. Tanya Zielinski, a psychiatrist based in Texas, states "prescription stimulants can be very addictive, especially for those who already struggle with substance abuse and mental illness because it can be used as a coping mechanism."

Therefore, it is vital for friends and family members to identify a loved one's addiction or mental illness as early as possible.

Signs of addiction to prescription stimulants include:

- Decreased appetite
- Weight loss
- Changes to sleeping habits
- Seeming hyper, excitable, or talkative
- Social isolation
- Lying about one's whereabouts or substance use
- Memory problems
- Frequently observed taking pills
- Needing new prescriptions frequently
- Aggression and agitation
- Financial difficulties
- Manic episodes
- Seeming overworked or hyperfocused

Pinegrove Treatment, 2020
www.pinegrovetreatment.com

POINTS TO REMEMBER

You may be concerned about substance misuse in your student who has been prescribed stimulant drugs to treat ADHD. Studies so far have not shown a difference in substance use in young people with ADHD treated with prescription stimulants compared with those who didn't receive such treatment. This suggests that treatment with ADHD medication does not positively or negatively affect a person's risk of developing problem use.

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT YOUR STUDENT

1

Talk about sleep and its benefits

Even 1 more hour of sleep a night can make a huge difference. Explain that getting a couple hours of sleep is better than no sleep at all.

2

Encourage your student to practice stress management skills

Discuss ways to make the weeks ahead less stressful, such as preparing nutritious snacks for study sessions or building 10 minutes into their day to get outside for fresh air and a change of scenery. Remind them that staying healthy also means taking time to relax and connect with others.

3

Check in with your student

As we get closer to the end of the semester, offer support frequently by checking in with your student. Let them know you understand their feelings of disappointment this year. Encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings and help them appreciate why things have to be different.

4

Know when to turn to the professionals

Discuss the resources available to them - these conversations can empower your student to think about their plans, rather than misuse substances.

WCU Counseling & Psychological Services

www.wcupa.edu/counselingcenter | wucc@wcupa.edu | 610-436-2301

Learning Assistance and Resource Center (LARC)

www.wcupa.edu/LARC | larc@wcupa.edu | 610-436-2535

Rammy's Resource Navigator

www.wcupa.concerncenter.com

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