



Diving Into the One Choice 5: Prevention Framework for Parents 21st Century New Basics

Parent Movement 2.0/One Choice Five

Debbie Berndt helped create *The One Choice 5 Prevention Framework for Parents* with the Institute for Behavior and Health. In addition, she hosts the podcast, *What Parents are Saying*, part of the nationally recognized *Talk. They Hear You.* prevention campaign from SAMHSA. She is also the Director for *Parent Movement 2.0* and *Substance-Free Athletics*, both of which are educational programs designed to help reduce underage substance use through targeted curriculum and messaging.

We were honored to be included in last month's PAN Newsletter as a Noteworthy Resource and this month to expand how parents can use *The One Choice 5* this summer.

Summer is a wonderful time to downshift. There are different routines and times to be with our kids in diverse ways. This can make parenting easier but sometimes harder, as time is less structured. The threat of alcohol and drug use among our kids does not entirely wane in summer, which means parents need to stay vigilant.

Interestingly, many parents feel ambivalent about underage substance use. Even if committed early on, when a son or daughter gets to high school, thoughts like these can set in... "is this really a big deal, I used a little in high school;" "isn't marijuana better for them than alcohol;" "I'm so tired of arguing about everything, maybe I'll just ignore her/his looking a little high Friday night."

Unfortunately, many mental health issues, as well as addiction, stem from underage substance use. Specifically, Substance Use Disorder (addiction) is

now understood to be a childhood-onset disease, underscoring the importance of both prevention and parental influence against substance use.

The One Choice 5 is part of the Institute for Behavior and Health's (IBH) work to normalize substance **NON-use** for youth, reframing the goal of youth substance use prevention as *One Choice: no use of any alcohol, marijuana, nicotine, or other drugs under 21 for reasons of health.*

This goal is a new and clear health standard based on decades of research. It's like all other health standards that materialize to protect kids after decades of research and analysis; i.e., wearing bike and ski helmets, wearing seatbelts, etc. But substance use can be harder. Even if not feeling ambivalent, parents can be confused and overwhelmed when it comes to prevention, so IBH developed *The One Choice 5: Prevention Framework for Parents* to offer a simple yet comprehensive starting point that helps parents understand and integrate prevention into their thinking.

Of note, marijuana can have uniquely bad impacts on the developing brain and brains in general (see more about marijuana on ***The One Choice 5 website***), but saying, "just stay away from weed, and everything will be okay" is not true. Use of all substances can potentially hurt young people.

The curated ***One Choice 5: Prevention Framework for Parents*** website provides information as well as reputable sources associated with each point that can be incorporated into parenting tactics right away.

- **#1 Know that Youth Substance Use is NOT Inevitable** – find out how many kids are not using today and how important parents' influence is.
- **#2 Be Brain Development Savvy** – brain-based parenting is a real opportunity given today's understanding of neuroscience and human brain development.
- **#3 Be Substance Savvy** – the drug and alcohol landscape, as well as usage patterns, have changed since parents were in high school. To have conversations, parents need to know something about the substances to which their children are exposed.
- **#4 Talk Early and Often** – find age-appropriate ways to chat with your kids throughout their lives. "One and done" doesn't work. Summer is a great time to get started.

- **#5 Act Quickly If You Suspect Use** – there is much at stake and there is good news for children who stop soon after the onset of use. The same thing that makes young brains more susceptible to the harms of substance use (elasticity), can make stopping easier and any resulting damage heal more efficiently.

Lastly, parents can do everything right and their children may still experiment with drugs and alcohol, and that use may turn into real problems for their children and their families. “#5 Act quickly if you suspect use” is not intended to trivialize nor imply this will be easy. A child’s substance use can be one of the most difficult things a parent encounters. Our hope is to increase the number of parents intentionally working to help their kids navigate away from drugs and alcohol as early as possible.