

On the RAYSAC Radar

Teen Drug Use and School Pressure

A new study released in August by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America reveals a troubling new insight into the reasons why teens use drugs. According to the 2007 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study of 6,511 teens (PATS Teens), the number one reason teens see for using drugs is to deal with the pressures and stress of school. In this nationally projectable study (margin of error +/- 1.6 percent), 73 percent of teens reported that school stress is the primary reason for drug use, indicating that teens' perceptions of motivating factors for using drugs are dramatically different than past research has indicated.

Over the past decade, studies have indicated a steady changing trend in what teens perceive as the motivations for using drugs. The "to have fun" rationales are declining, while motivations to use drugs to solve problems are increasing.

An accompanying 2007 Partnership study of parents attitudes about teen drug use, released in June, showed that parents severely underestimate the impact of stress on their teens' decision to use drugs. Only 7 percent of parents believe that teens might use drugs to cope with stress.

Teens continue to take their lives into their own hands when they intentionally abuse prescribed medications. Whether it's to get high or deal with stress, or if they mistakenly believe it will help them perform better in school or sports, teens don't realize that when used without a prescription, these medicines can be every bit as harmful as illegal street drugs. According to the survey:

- 1 in 5 teens has abused a prescription medication
- Nearly 1 in 5 teens has already abused a prescription painkiller
- 41 percent of teens think it's safer to abuse a prescription drug than it is to use illegal drugs

On the positive side, the study confirms that overall abuse remains in a steady decline among teens. Marijuana, ecstasy, inhalants, methamphetamine alcohol and cigarette usage continue to decrease.

Parents! Talk to your teens; maintain an open honest dialogue with them. Have frequent, positive conversations with them to keep them healthy and drug free. They will listen!



Roanoke Area Youth Substance Abuse Coalition
Promoting a Safe & Drug Free Roanoke Valley