

Showing Up With Support: Tips for Teachers and Adults

Avoid assumptions and be non-judgmental. It is best to approach students struggling with substance misuse and addiction in a non-judgmental way. This is very important. Being non-judgmental will make students more comfortable with you and more likely to ask for help, if they need it. This is especially true with a topic like substance use, as youth are scared of getting in trouble. If you want to educate youth about the risks of substance use or help them find services they may need, you need to establish trust first.

If a student feels judged, they will:

- Withdraw
- Decide not to seek out help from others in the future. One bad experience might discourage a young person from reaching out again.
- Feel ashamed. Youth are malleable and often have less understanding of and confidence in who they are. Therefore, they are more likely to feel ashamed of their struggles, and feeling judged may cause them to put up walls.

Tips to Show Up With Support:

- Approach students in a kind and comforting manner
- Reassure students that struggling with substance misuse and mental illness is not something to be embarrassed of
- Offer to help them find the right resources
- Never threaten to get a student in trouble
- Build relationships before issues surface. This way, if something comes up, you already have a foundation of trust between you and the student.