

Digital Citizenship with Youths

The online world has become increasingly dominant over the last few decades. Starting from loosely connected chat rooms, it has grown into a vastly intricate network that dominates a majority of all our social interactions. Youths today have never experienced a world without this network. In fact, a third of all internet users are beneath the age of 18. Because of this, the approach we take to practicing and teaching digital citizenship matters more than ever.

Digital Citizenship began in the 1990s, where it was used to describe internet competency, and one's ability to participate with society through the use of technology. However, with the advent of the 2000's, digital citizenship became more focused on internet safety due to concerns of the older generations. Rumors ran rampant of the negative impact of the internet on children, such as claims that it was lowering their test scores, increasing their aggression, and hypersexualizing them at an early age. However, data doesn't back up these claims. For instance, SAT scores improved in Math and held constant in English until 2016, when they both saw a massive improvement after the test's redesign.

In her TED talk, "The Heart of Digital Literacy", Anne Collier discusses how to approach digital citizenship, given the mistakes that had been made with it in previous years. She places a strong emphasis on respecting the digital citizen, and learning from them as one tries to teach them about digital citizenship. Collier states that there were three main literacies to focus on and to attempt to demonstrate to youth. The first is digital literacy, which is the competency with which one utilizes the digital sphere. The second is social literacy. With the massive power of social networking websites and apps, teaching children how to interact competently with others online is a necessity. Finally, the third is media literacy. This is particularly relevant, as it is one's ability to read and assess the information presented to them and determine whether it is trustworthy and reliable.

Using these pillars, it's recommended that people experience the digital sphere *with* their youths, in order to demonstrate proper digital citizenship directly. This may look like:

- Listening, when they talk about newer interests, without expressing judgment.
- Experiencing newer facets of their digital lives with them. Have them show you the apps or games that they're on, and ask them to teach you how to use the app or play the game alongside them.
- Expressing judgment of the content, rather than of the youth for viewing the content. For instance, one might question an unreliable source in media, rather than criticizing a teen for having watched the video that cited it.

For more information on Digital Citizenship, take a look at some of the resources that Common Sense has published on their website:

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship>

Watch Collier's TED Talk here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uww2XHnijKw>

Watch Dr. Finkelhor's lecture here:

<https://vimeo.com/16900027>

School Community Intervention and Prevention

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https://www.ted.com/talks/keegan_korf_kid_you_posted_what_how_to_raise_a_digital_citizen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uww2XHnijKw>

<https://respons-ability.net/definition-digital-citizenship/#:~:text=Digital%20citizenship%20has%20evolved%20from,literacy%2C%20to%20use%20that%20technology.>

<https://blog.prepscholar.com/average-sat-scores-over-time>

<https://www.cigionline.org/publications/one-three-internet-governance-and-childrens-rights/>

<https://vimeo.com/16900027>



Overdose Deaths on the Rise

Most of us recognize the serious dangers of using substances such as methamphetamines, cocaine and heroin. We understand and believe there is a real potential for overdose and death that exists with the use of these substances.

While cocaine and methamphetamines continue to see increases of overdose deaths, heroin has been on a downward trend (decrease) in overdose deaths the last few years.

There are likely reasons for the downward trend of deaths related to heroin use.

One likely reason, for the downward trend of overdose deaths associated with the use of heroin, is the stark reality that heroin addicts are actually using Fentanyl that is marketed and sold as heroin. While someone is more likely to overdose and die in this manner, it is counted as an overdose death caused by Fentanyl and not heroin.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is about 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. Fentanyl is as highly addictive as it is deadly.

Another factor that may contribute to the downward trend of overdose deaths related to heroin is the availability, access and use of naloxone/Narcan. Naloxone/Narcan is an FDA approved emergency nasal spray treatment that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose.

Naloxone/Narcan is an opioid antagonist. Essentially, the spray/medicine attaches to opioid receptors and reverses and blocks the effects of opioids. This allows regular/normal breathing to occur quickly for a person who's breathing has slowed or stopped because of an opioid overdose.

Here are common signs to look for with an opioid overdose:

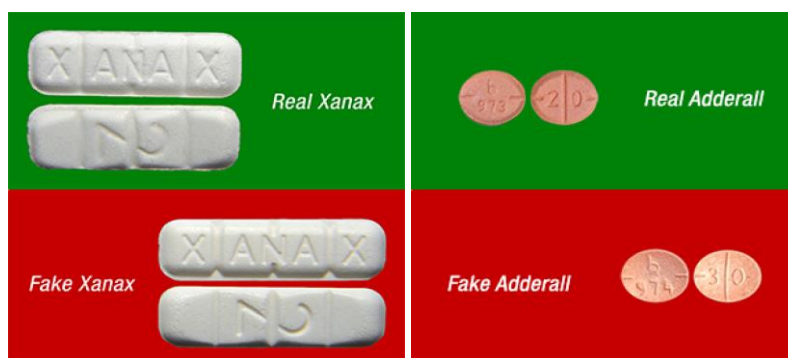
- **Small, constricted/pinpoint pupils**
- **Falling asleep or losing consciousness**
- **Slow, weak, or no breathing**
- **Choking or gurgling sounds**
- **Limp body**
- **Cold and/or clammy skin**
- **Discolored/bluish skin (especially in lips and nails)**

Furthermore, naloxone/Narcan has no effect on someone who does not have opioids in their system. It should also be noted it is not used to treat opioid addiction, but rather used to reverse an opioid overdose occurrence. Some examples of opioids include heroin, fentanyl, oxycodone/OxyContin, hydrocodone/Vicodin, codeine, and morphine.

What has become more alarming is the reality that the use of Fentanyl has spread well beyond lacing or replacing heroin and other opioid related prescription drugs.

Fentanyl has been used to make not only counterfeit opioid/pain pills but has and is now used to make fake prescription pills that mimic ADHD, antidepressant and anxiety pills as well. These pills are sold on the dark web and marketed as authentic pills. This is particularly alarming as many of these kinds of medications are frequently prescribed to our youth.

And while it is illegal and unsafe to give or sell prescribed medications to others, kids at times partake in such activities, often making those connections through social media apps. Just like many adults, kids don't associate the same dangers of taking another person's prescribed medication as they do with illicit street drugs, nor do they think a pill could be fake. After all, many of these pills look almost identical to those produced by pharmaceutical companies.



Source: Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)

Overdose deaths among youth have increased exponentially in the last two or three years. Overdose rates among youth from 2010 thru 2019 remained virtually the same but nearly doubled from 2019 to 2020 and continued to rise another 20% partway through 2021.

According to Joseph Friedman, an addiction researcher and M.D./ Ph.D., “The increases are almost entirely due to illicit fentanyl, which are increasingly found in counterfeit pills”.

Because of the opioid crisis and the common presence of Fentanyl, some states, Nebraska included, are providing naloxone/Narcan to those who want to have the life-saving product on hand in case of an emergency. Please click on the link below for a list of participating pharmacies in Nebraska that provide naloxone/Narcan at no cost to Nebraska residents. <https://stopodne.com/see-all-narcan-pharmacies/>

STOPODNE (Stop Overdose Nebraska) is a program that provides awareness and resources to help combat the opioid crisis and deaths associated with it. STOPODNE partners with SAMHSA and the Nebraska DHHS. You can visit stopodne.com for more information about this program and other resources they provide.

For more information about fentanyl or opiate/opioid abuse please visit

www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/fentanyl or the SCIP web page www.SCIPnebraska.com

Sources:

<https://stopodne.com/?radius=10>

<https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/trends-statistics>

[National Drug Involved Overdose Deaths 1999-2020.pptx](#)

<https://www.dea.gov/factsheets/fentanyl>

Mental Health Stigma

Mental illnesses are among the most common health conditions in the United States (National Institute of Mental Health). When it comes to kids, 1 in 6 youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year, yet it is estimated that less than half of those with diagnosable mental health conditions receive help (JAMA Pediatrics). While there are varying factors that may contribute to this lack of treatment, such as inadequate insurance coverage and access to care, we can't ignore the role that stigma may play. Stigma comes from negative or incorrect beliefs, or stereotypes.



Despite advances in the awareness of mental health, stigma surrounding mental health is still common. Attitudes toward mental illnesses tend to be more negative than those toward other medical conditions. This can result in a lack of understanding from family, friends, and other support systems. For those living with a mental illness, stigma can erode the confidence that mental illnesses are real, treatable health conditions. In fact, research has shown that stigma is one of the leading risk factors contributing to poor mental health outcomes as it is one of the major reasons people, including children, adolescents, and families, do not seek mental health care, delaying treatment.

The stigma associated with mental health conditions can be divided into two types:

- Social stigma- involves the negative and prejudiced attitudes others have around mental illness.
- Self-perceived stigma- involves an internalized stigma the person with the mental illness suffers from.

Mental health stigma can be attributed to several different factors including lack of awareness and understanding, negative media depictions of people with mental illness, and generalized and discriminatory stereotypes about people with mental illnesses. Despite the cause, both social stigma and self-perceived stigma can result in feelings of shame, embarrassment, distress, and hopelessness. A key component in reducing mental health stigma begins with the way in which we address mental health as a society.

Countering mental health stigma starts with education. Education includes providing accurate information about mental health conditions and treatment, as well as responding to misperceptions and myths about mental health. Framing mental health as part of our overall health is a great way to engage in educational conversations.

Below are some additional suggestions that we can do as individuals to help reduce the stigma of mental health (National Alliance on Mental Illness):

- Talk openly about mental health- this is one way that we can use social media for good by sharing positive messages about mental health awareness and treatment.

- Encourage equality between physical and mental illness- provide perspective by drawing comparisons to how we treat someone with cancer, diabetes or other physical health conditions.
- Normalize mental health treatment, just like other health care treatments.
- See the person, not the condition.
- Show compassion for those with mental illness- offer support if you think someone is struggling.
- Be conscious of language- words matter; use respectful language to talk about mental health conditions.
- Be a mental health advocate- search for creative ways to increase mental health awareness in your school and community.

On a final note, research shows that one of the most effective ways to reduce stigma is by connecting with others who have lived experience with mental health conditions. For those who may be hesitant to open up about their own mental health and seek help, messages of mental health management and recovery can be especially impactful and inspire hope.

References: American Psychiatric Association; JAMA Pediatrics; Mayo Clinic; National Alliance on Mental Illness; National Institute of Mental Health; The Mental Health Literacy Library