

Parental Substance Abuse and It's Impact on Children

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Substance Abuse Definition:

Harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances.

But how do you know when it's harmful?

- 1) recurrent substance use leading to a **failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home**
- (2) recurrent substance use in **physically hazardous situations** (e.g., driving an automobile or operating machinery when impaired)
- (3) recurrent **legal problems** caused by substance use (e.g., substance-related disorderly conduct)
- (4) the continuing use of substance despite having persistent or recurrent **social or interpersonal problems** initiated or exacerbated by the effects of the substance (e.g., loss of personal relationships, frequent physical domestic altercations)

How does this affect children?

Drug abuse may lead to a decrease in effective parenting

May lead to an increase in more punitive punishments for children

Can elevate the risk of abuse/neglect

Substance use may:

- + Compromise the parent's ability to make appropriate judgement about their own and their child's safety
- + Make it challenging for parents to form and maintain trusting and healthy relationships
 - + Impair the parent's capacity to regulate emotions
- + Lead to poor self-esteem and development of maladaptive coping strategies (such as abuse and abusive relationships)
 - + Make parents more vulnerable to other life stressors

Impact on early development

From Ryan & Huang:

“During the earliest years-from **prenatal to age 5 years or so-the brain is most open to outside influences.** Because the brain is shaped in important ways by experience at this early age, overly stressful or traumatic experiences-such a witnessing violence or being raised by caregivers by substance abuse or mental health problems can have a powerful impact on the young brain”

What has been your
experience?

What all children need:

R elationships that are safe and secure.

R esponsive interactions that allow a children to interact and grow

R espect for the child, for the child's family and culture

R outines that provide comfort for the child

R epetition of activities that strengthen connection

+ ACS

So... What to do next? How to help?

In general:

- + Concrete support in time of need (for both parents and children)
- + The presence of a good support system
- + The use of good parent skills (teaching, providing information, and peer instruction)

Remember to rebuild resilience!

- + The brain has the capacity to remember the good and the bad. Stick to the good!
- + Provide mental health supports (for parents and their children)