**Lesson 8 – How Can I Help? Recognize and Reach Out to Resources**

**Overview.** Students will learn how to help by recognizing situations and individuals in need of support; reaching out to show they care; and connecting to resources and supports that enhance health. They will learn how to identify signs of substance use or behavioral health needs. Lesson activities are designed to enhance communication skills to deliver caring, judgment-free messaging to support well-being.

National Health Education Standards:

**Standard 1:** Students comprehend functional health knowledge to enhance health.

**Standard 4:** Students demonstrate effective interpersonal communication skills to enhance health.

Healthy Behavior Outcome (HBO):

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| Students will support themselves and others to get help for substance use disorder. |

Lesson Objective - Students will be able to:

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| **Objective** | **Assessments** |
| 1. Recognize signs of substance use, substance use disorder (SUD), and/or a behavioral health need. | Attachment 8.1 – Reaching Out for Help Notes Page |
| 1. Apply “How Can I Help?” to recognize, reach out, and use resources to support someone (self, friend, family, classmate, others) with SUD or a behavioral health need. | Attachment 8.1 – Reaching Out for Help Notes Page |
| 1. Describe how to reach out to trusted adults at school and in the community to help with SUD for self or others. | Attachment 8.1 – Reaching Out for Help Notes Page |
| 1. Describe how to respond to a suspected overdose. | Attachment 8.1 – Reaching Out for Help Notes Page |
| 1. Use effective communication skills and stigma-reducing language to support themselves and/or others who need help for SUD. | Attachment 8.2 – Helping a Friend |

Introduction

* Today we will learn “How can I Help? using recognize, reach out, and resources to support someone who has a behavioral health concern. We’ll focus on substance use, but we can use the same strategies to support others who might have a mental health concern or just need some support. Remember: If we recognize something of concern, it is important to say something to a trusted adult and never keep it a secret. Ignoring signs of substance use or a mental health concern can have grave consequences. This lesson will also reinforce how using person-first/stigma-reducing language can help remove barriers and support others in receiving treatment and having successful outcomes with treatment.

Teaching Steps:

* Distribute: How Can I Help? Notes Page (Attachment 8.1)

Activity 1: Bell Ringer – How Can I Help?

* How could I help if someone needs help for substance use or a mental health condition? We can **recognize** the signs, **reach out,** and use **resources.** Ask your students to share how they can help.
  + *Possible answers:* Withdraw from family and friends; not caring about appearance; lying; stealing; seeing paraphernalia; etc.
  + After collecting the answers, organize them around **Recognize, Reach Out,** and **Resources.**
* We can help by recognizing, reaching out, and connecting with resources. Let’s start with **recognize**.
  + **Signs of substance use**: Here are some signs that a loved one may be using substances:
  + **Behavioral:** Increased aggression or irritability • Changes in attitude/personality • Lethargy • Depression • Sudden changes in a social network • Dramatic changes in habits and/or priorities • Financial problems • Involvement in criminal activity • Neglect of grooming • Failure to eat • Covering arms with long sleeves
  + **Appearance**: • Tiny pupils • Sleepy eyes • Tendency to nod off • Slow breathing • Flushed skin
  + **Paraphernalia**: • Burnt spoons • Tiny baggies • Tan or whitish powdery residue • Dark, sticky residue • Small glass pipes • Syringes • Rubber tubing
  + It can be hard to identify substance use and SUD sometimes because people can have a wide degree of functioning and often can hide their alcohol or drug use. These signs of substance use could also be signs of a mental or behavioral health need. The signs may include:
* Behavioral changes such as:
  + Drop in attendance and performance at work or school
  + Frequently getting into trouble (fights, accidents, illegal activities)
  + Engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviors
  + Sudden mood swings, irritability, or angry outbursts
  + Periods of unusual hyperactivity, agitation, or giddiness
  + Lack of motivation
  + Appearing fearful, anxious, or paranoid with no reason.
  + Talk about substance use or thoughts that center on using
  + Physical changes such as:
  + Bloodshot eyes and abnormally sized pupils
  + Sudden weight loss or weight gain
  + Unusual smells on breath, body, or clothing
  + Tremors, slurred speech, or impaired coordination
    - *Note.* Each substance could have a different effect on the body so if you recognize any changes to reach out share you are here to support.
    - \*Signs of an opioid overdose: If you recognize these signs reach out to 911 for immediate medical attention including limp body, pale face, slow breathing and heartbeat, blue fingernails, or lips, vomiting or inability to talk. If you think someone is overdosing, call 911.
  + Social changes, such as:
  + Sudden change in friends, favorite hangouts, and hobbies
  + Legal problems related to substance use
  + Unexplained need for money
  + Using substances even though it causes problems in relationships
* **Physical signs of an opioid overdose:** If you recognize the following signs, reach out to 911 for immediate medical attention: Limp body, pale face, slow breathing and heartbeat, blue fingernails or lips, vomiting, or inability to talk ([Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/mental-health-substance-use-co-occurring-disorders#:~:text=Symptoms%20of%20substance%20use%20disorders,in%20secretive%20or%20suspicious%20behaviors)).
* ***Note.*** Substance use or behavioral health concerns include overwhelming and urgent signs. See HELPs Mental Health Lessons for more information on these signs.
* **Urgent warning signs:** The following are *urgent warning signs* that are observable changes, behaviors or statements that directly or indirectly signal an individual is contemplating suicide ([Wisconsin, Lesson 2](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/pdf/spcurriculumgrades7-12.pdf)). If you notice, see, hear, or recognize these urgent warning signs, talk with a trusted adult right away, call 911, and seek immediate help from a mental health provider:
  + Someone is threatening to hurt or kill themselves.
  + Someone is looking for ways to kill themselves, such as seeking access to pills, weapons, or other means.
  + Someone is talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide in a way that is not typical for them.
* Emphasize: “These are general warning signs that may or may not indicate suicidal thoughts. The FACTS should alert us to ask questions about someone’s feelings and emotional health.”
  + Are you having trouble doing the things you’d like to do or need to do because of how you feel?
  + Changes in appetite or sleep
  + Can’t perform daily tasks like going to school
  + Don’t want to hang out with friends and family
  + Don’t want to do the things they usually enjoy
  + Fight a lot with family and friends
  + Struggle to control emotions, and it’s affecting relationships with family and friends
  + Low energy or no energy
  + Feel hopeless, numb, or like nothing matters.
  + Can’t stop thinking about certain things or memories
  + Confused, forgetful, edgy, angry, upset, worried
  + Wants to harm self or others
  + Random aches and pains
  + Smoke or drink excessively
  + Hear voices
* **Overwhelming feelings** are feelings that hang around for a long time, change the way we feel and behave, and may stop us from doing what we enjoy.
  + We should reach out to resources and supports for overwhelming feelings.
  + For overwhelming emotions, we can help by listening, supporting, and reaching out to a trusted adult or behavioral health resource for support.
* **Big emotions or feelings** are when we have difficulty controlling or regulating the emotion. *Small feelings* are still important feelings, but we still feel in control of our thoughts and actions.
  + We need support and help from resources and tools to manage our emotions to think and act in healthy ways. For big emotions, we can help by listening, supporting, and offering resources.

Activity 2: How Can I Help?

* What would you do if you recognized these signs of substance use?
  + Reach out to resources.
  + It is important to never keep drug use a secret, and if you see something, you should say something and reach out to a trusted adult.
* Who are examples of trusted adults you could reach out for help?
  + Parents, teachers, counselors, faith leaders, coaches, etc.
  + See Lesson 4 of Behavioral HELPs – Mental and Emotional Health for additional information.
* What are some community resources that could help?
  + National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Hotline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
  + [988 Lifeline](https://988lifeline.org/)
    - [What to expect from 988](https://988lifeline.org/get-help/what-to-expect/)
  + <https://findtreatment.gov/>
  + [Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services (OMHAS) – Learn and Find Help](https://mha.ohio.gov/get-help)
  + Support groups and information resources for those who have a loved one with SUD:
    - [Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups](https://al-anon.org/)
    - [Nar-Anon](https://www.nar-anon.org/)
    - <https://www.samhsa.gov/families>

Activity 3: Reach Out – Helping a Friend

* What if you recognize a loved one using substances or are concerned about changes in their behavior?
  + If you see something, reach out to a trusted adult or a resource. Your actions could be saving a life.
  + If your friend shares with you that they need help with their SUD or if you approach your friend, you can use these supportive strategies:
    - FACTS – feelings, actions, changes, threats mean you should ACT
    - Feeling – Recognize the feelings
    - Acknowledge the concern
    - Care – show the person you care about them.
    - Tell a mental health resource including 911, 988, 741741 and/or mental health professionals.
* When should I talk to them?
  + Talk when they’re sober.
  + If they’re under the influence of substances during the discussion, they are less likely to be understanding of the matter.
  + Set a time that is best for both of you to talk. Discuss your concerns, but also allow your friend time to voice their feelings; listen to what they have to say. Your goal is to bring awareness about their substance use, not accuse them of wrongdoing. Creating a supportive, stigma-reducing environment with our actions and language will enhance the connection with your loved one and increase the likelihood of them seeking treatment and having successful outcomes. ([Addiction Center](https://www.addictioncenter.com/community/talk-to-a-friend-about-addiction/))
* How should I talk to them?
  + Start with a discussion starter or a door opener.
* “How’s it going?” “How are you?”
  + Show love and support
  + Let your friend know you’re always there for them. Your unconditional love will express that you have their best interest at heart.
  + Realize, however, that your love and support doesn’t mean you should act as a doormat. Set boundaries on not hanging out when they use substances. Explain how your friend’s substance use makes you feel. If you ignore the signs of SUD they are displaying, they won’t see any reason to overcome it.
  + Keep words and actions consistent
  + Keep your message clear and consistent. For instance, don’t discuss how your friend’s substance use worries you and then watch them partake in that activity.
  + Avoid making accusations and criticizing. Rather than jump to conclusions, show empathy. Being aggressive will only make your friend feel defensive. Try, “I’m worried about your health,” or, “I noticed some difficult situations you’ve been facing lately.”
  + Give examples
    - Sometimes specific scenarios can provide a clear explanation for your concerns. For example, maybe your friend is not performing well in school; not caring about their appearance, or not coming to activities you used to enjoy together. Tell your friend you are concerned about these changes in their behavior.
    - You may even be able to discuss how their behavior changes after using a certain substance. Be honest about what you enjoy when your friend is sober and how circumstances change after they use the substance.
  + Encourage support from resources
    - Offer to go with them to talk to a trusted adult. If they won’t go, or if they ask you to not tell anyone, you can encourage them that everything will be OK and they are not alone. There is no shame in what they have been going through, and they have support to get through this. It is important that a friend’s substance use is never kept a secret and to tell a trusted adult.
    - Provide reassurance when they participate in counseling, support groups, and other recovery services. Sometimes your friend may need a shoulder to lean on or an ear to listen. Taking an interest in their recovery and sobriety plan will encourage them to keep going when times get tough. You can be a supportive friend, but you cannot replace the need for a trained professional. Participate in health-enhancing activities and give positive affirmations.

Activity 4: Put strategies into practice.

* Distribute: Helping a Friend (Attachment 8.2)
* Complete **Scenario 1** together as a class to model the steps to supporting a loved one with SUD.
  + Scenario 1 – Kelsy has been your friend since second grade. She is a talented singer and has started a band with two other friends. You went to support her, and when you go backstage, you see her take a couple of pills from her bandmate and swallow them with a beer. You are shocked and scared. After the concert, she is excited to see you and wants to hear what you thought of the show. What will you do/say when you see Kelsy?
    - Recognize – What did you notice?
    - Ask students: Is this a good time to talk to Kelsy?
      * Student response: No, because she is not sober.
    - Ask students: When would be a good time to talk to Kelsy? What considerations are needed?
      * Student response: The next day when she is sober so she can process the information.
    - \*Share with students that talking to her when she is sober is a good answer, but it is also important to make sure it is a good time of day for both of you so that is not a rushed conversation.
    - Ask students: How would you address your concern about Kelsy’s substance use?
      * Student response: It is important to be supportive and not judgmental. Give the example of what you saw at the concert and that you are concerned for her safety. Encourage her to talk to a trusted adult and that you will go with them for support. If she begs you not to say anything, let her know that you love her and there is support to help her through this difficult time. She may get mad and not want to talk to you. That is OK. Give the conversation a break and tell a trusted adult about your concerns. It is better to have a friend mad at you than to hurt themselves or lose their life. You can share with the trusted adult what you saw and about the conversation you had with Kelsy.
      * \*Share with students that their emotions may be elevated because of being worried, mad, or scared. It is important to have a plan of how to approach the conversation, and during the conversation, it is possible that built-in pauses or deep breaths may be needed.
  + Have students complete the next scenarios independently or with a partner. Tell them to be prepared to share their answers in class.

Closing:

* Exit Ticket:
* What are key things to remember when helping someone who may be struggling with SUD?
  + Talk when they are sober.
  + Give examples of your concern.
  + Show love and support.
  + Keep words and actions consistent.
  + Encourage the person to reach out to resources and support.
  + Use stigma-reducing language
* What are additional resources or supports that can help you in supporting someone with SUD?
  + Trusted adults - Parents, teachers, counselors, faith leaders, coaches, etc.
  + Support groups and information resources:
  + National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Hotline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
  + [988 Lifeline](https://988lifeline.org/)
    - [What to expect from 988](https://988lifeline.org/get-help/what-to-expect/)
  + <https://findtreatment.gov/>
  + [Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services (OMHAS) – Learn and Find Help](https://mha.ohio.gov/get-help)
* What would you do or say if your friend who was using substances begged you not to say anything?
  + It is important that a friend’s substance use is never kept a secret and to tell a trusted adult.
  + You will respect their privacy, but you need to reach out to a resource (e.g., a trusted adult or behavioral health resource) because you recognized a concern and want to help.
  + Offer to go with them to talk to a trusted adult. If they won’t go, or if they ask you to not tell anyone, you can encourage them that everything will be OK and that they are not alone.
  + Remind them that there is no shame in what they have been going through and that they have support.
  + Have students share their answers at the bottom of Attachment 8.2, Helping a Friend.

Lesson Resource:

* <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/mental-health-substance-use-co-occurring-disorders>

Attachment 8.1: How Can I Help?

1. List five signs you could recognize when someone is using substances in a harmful way.
2. List two trusted adults who could help.
3. List at least two community resources for substance use prevention or substance use disorder.
4. List 3 strategies to support or help a friend.

Attachment 8.2: How Can I Help? Helping a Friend

*Directions:* Read the scenarios and answer the questions in a supportive way to help the person who may be struggling with substance use disorder (SUD).

*Scenario: Friend in PE class* —You are working out in physical education class, and you hear a sound that catches your attention. When you turn in the direction of the sound, you see that your friend dropped a vape pen out of her pocket. As she scrambles to hide it away before the teacher sees it, you are in shock because you didn’t even know that she vaped. This may explain why her running times in cross country are becoming slower. What will be your next steps?

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| **Recognize:** What did you notice? |
| Is this a good time to talk to your friend? YES or NO  If not, when would be a good time? What considerations are needed? |
| What will you do or say? *(Write a specific helpful statement.)* |
| What resource(s) could you share with your friend to help them quit vaping? |

*Scenario: Friend needs help* — You and your dad are just getting back from a camping trip when your phone chimes; it’s your friend Rob. He said he needs your help and asks you to come over as soon as you can. When you arrive, you see his house is a disaster from a party he threw the night before. He asks you to help him clean up the place before his parents come home the next day. You see beer cans, pills of various colors, dab pens, and trash all over. You knew Rob would sneak a beer from his parents’ refrigerator every now and then, but now it looks like things are getting out of control. What will be your next steps?

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| **Recognize:** What did you notice? |
| Is this a good time to talk to your friend? YES or NO  If not, when would be a good time? What considerations are needed? |
| What will you do or say? *(Write a specific helpful statement.)* |
| What resource(s) could you share with your friend? |

*Scenario: Supporting a friend* — Your friend texts you and asks if she can come over. You said, “No problem, is everything OK?” She said she would fill you in when she gets there. Once she arrives, you can tell that she has been crying. Your friend shares with you, “My mom comes home and starts drinking right away. She doesn’t even ask about my day; she doesn’t ask me about anything. It’s like I don’t even exist! I love my mom, but I just don’t understand why she chooses alcohol over me.”

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| **Recognize:** What did you notice? |
| Is this a good time to talk to your friend? YES or NO  If not, when would be a good time? What considerations are needed? |
| What will you do or say? *(Write a specific helpful statement.)* |
| What resource(s) could you share with your friend? |

Exit Ticket:

1. Describe two things you remember to help someone?
2. List two additional resources or supports that can help?
3. What would you do or say to a friend who is using substances but begs you not to say anything?