

# A PARENT AND CAREGIVER'S GUIDE TO TALKING TO YOUR COLLEGE STUDENT ABOUT ADHD PRESCRIPTION STIMULANT MEDICATION

YOU CAN HELP PREVENT MISUSE



College students are often stressed by competing academic, social and work priorities, and some students believe it's okay to misuse prescription stimulant medication to try and boost their academic performance<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately, one in six parents believes using prescription drugs to get high is "much safer" than using illicit drugs according to the 2013 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study.<sup>2</sup> But many students may not be aware of the academic, legal and medical consequences of misuse. That's why, as an important influencer in your student's life, we encourage you to speak up and talk with your student about healthy ways to manage college stress so they are less likely to misuse prescription stimulant medication.

## POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF PRESCRIPTION STIMULANT MEDICATION MISUSE

If your student is not diagnosed with ADHD, prescription stimulants won't help them think more clearly or understand subject matter any better or faster<sup>3</sup>, and a 2016 study shows that it won't improve their grades.<sup>4</sup> In fact, prescription stimulant medication misuse comes with potential side effects that could put your student's health and safety at risk.<sup>5</sup> Plus, many universities consider misuse cheating, which can lead to academic probation or expulsion.<sup>6</sup> It's also a felony to share or sell a Schedule II controlled substance, like prescription stimulant medication, which could make it harder for your student to continue their education, get into grad school or secure employment after college.

### HEALTHY WAYS TO AVOID STRESS

- Form study groups with other students
- Seek help from professors, teaching assistants and academic advisors
- Visit the campus learning center
- Organize a to-do list or calendar with realistic goals and timing
- Study a little each day to avoid all-nighters and cramming
- Exercise to reduce tension and increase energy
- Have healthy foods, snacks and drinks during long work sessions
- Take breaks and spend time with friends

### TIPS TO HELP YOU STAY CONNECTED

One mental health college study showed that 63% of students said they would turn to family if they were in emotional distress.<sup>7</sup> Touch base frequently so you always know how your student is doing. Ask if they're feeling stressed and remind them it's normal. Explain that a little stress can be a great motivator, but to reach out if they ever feel overwhelmed. You can get the conversation going with simple questions like:

- Do you like your dorm?
- Are you getting along with your roommate?
- How are you feeling about your classes?
- Does the number of credits you're taking seem manageable?
- What's the social scene like on campus?

## OFFER ENCOURAGEMENT

As a parent or caregiver, you are a major influence for your student, and just being there to provide reassurance and offer advice will help your student succeed. Tell them, "You've got this," and that they can succeed on their own merit. Remind them they've come this far and that you'll be there if they ever need support. Acknowledge the efforts they make and reassure them that you're more concerned with their well-being than their grades.

If you sense your student may be struggling with their emotions or mental health, encourage them to seek out campus resources, such as counseling and health services, for professional help and support. You can visit <https://www.jedfoundation.org/what-we-do/families-communities/> to view our guide "WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR TEEN'S MENTAL HEALTH," and check out our [ulifeline.org](http://ulifeline.org) website for information on your student's on-campus resources.

### TALKING WITH YOUR COLLEGE STUDENT CAN HELP PREVENT THEM FROM MISUSING AND ABUSING PRESCRIPTION STIMULANT MEDICATION.

1. Source: McCabe SE, West BT, Teter CJ, Boyd CJ. Trends in medical use, diversion, and nonmedical use of prescription medications among college students from 2003 to 2013: connecting the dots. *Addict Behav.* 2014;39(7):1176-82. doi:10.1016/j.addbeh.2014.03.008.
2. Source: Partnership for Drug-Free Kids. 2013 Partnership attitude tracking study, sponsored by MetLife Foundation. <http://www.drugfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/PATS-2013-FULL-REPORT.pdf>. Published April 22, 2013. Accessed September 12, 2016.
3. Source: McCabe SE, Knight JR, Teter CJ, Wechsler H. Non-medical use of prescription stimulants among US college students: prevalence and correlates from a national survey. *Addiction.* 2005;100(1):96-106
4. Source: Arria AM, Caldeira KM, Vincent KB, et al. Do college students improve their grades by using prescription stimulants nonmedically? *Addict Behav.* 2016. doi:10.1016/j.addbeh.2016.07.016. Epub 2016 Jul 19.
5. Source: Commonly abused drugs charts. NIDA: National Institute on Drug Abuse website. <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/commonly-abused-drugs-charts>. Published January 2016. Updated July 2017. Accessed November 7, 2017.
6. Source: Carroll L. Conduct policy changes reflect drug abuse. *The Chronicle.* September 6, 2011. <http://www.dukechronicle.com/articles/2011/09/06/conduct-policy-changes-reflect-drug-abuse>. Published September 6, 2011. Accessed September 12, 2016.
7. Source: mtvU. 2006 mtvU college mental health study: stress, depression, stigma & students: executive summary. <http://cdn.halfopus.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/2006-mtvU-College-Mental-Health-Study-Executive-Summary-Final.pdf>.