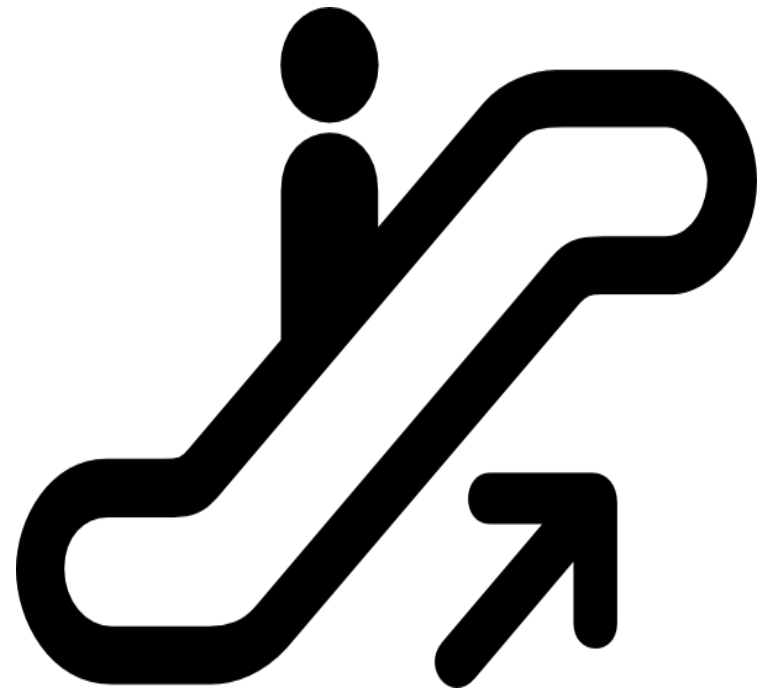
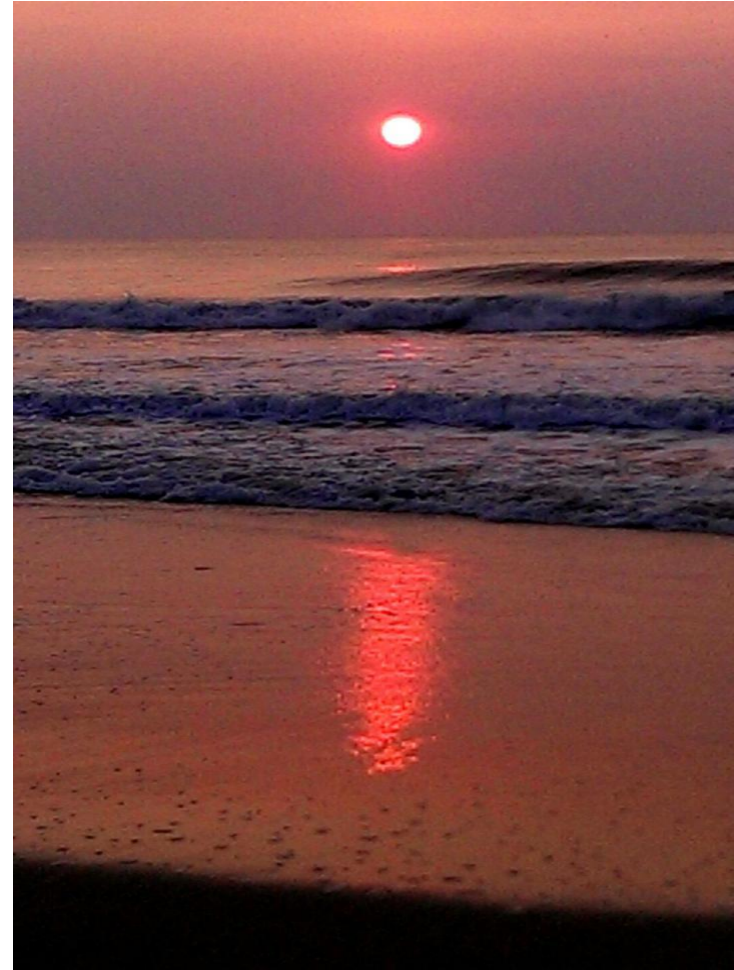


Identifying Teen Substance Use Risks



Kenneth Pecoraro
LCSW, LCADC, CCS



A photograph of two hands, one from a darker-skinned person and one from a lighter-skinned person, holding each other in a supportive grip. They are positioned in the center-right of the frame. The background is a field of tall, golden-brown grass under a clear, bright blue sky. A large, semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

Goal: Putting things in Perspective

- Consider some important information
- Be realistic

Drug of Choice by the Numbers in Substance Abuse Treatment in 2014 in NJ

Heroin, 24,059, 41%

Alcohol, 15,673, 27%

Marijuana, 9,372, 16%

Other Opiates, 4,594, 8%

Cocaine, 3,317, 6%

Other Drugs 1,848, 3%

Source: Borys, S. (2015). Substance Abuse Overview in NJ.

Demographics of the Heroin Addiction Epidemic in NJ

- Heroin- #1 drug for treatment admissions in Monmouth and Ocean Counties
- In one year (2016), the number of heroin deaths of 18-25 year olds in Monmouth County rose 24%.
- Largest group of heroin users are under 26.
- The national purity average of heroin is 31.1%; in NJ the purity average is as high as 65%
- Costs are cheaper than Marijuana and much more potent
- Approximately 10% of heroin users in the in the US live in NJ.

Source: Secondary Data Profile in Monmouth County in 2015. (NJ Department of Education)

New Jersey Heroin Deaths -

YEAR	DEATHS
2004	362
2005	405
2006	451
2007	348
2008	379
2009	351
2010	306
2011	449
2012	591
2013	741
2014	781
2015	961

FROM 2010 to 2014

214%

INCREASE

Since 2004, more than 6,000 people have now died in New Jersey due to heroin.

Source – NJ Attorney General's Office

Fentanyl – On the Rise in NJ

- Fentanyl – A synthetic opiate often illegally imported from Asia can be up to **50X** more potent than heroin
- Carfentanyl – Even stronger

• NJ Fentanyl Deaths 2014 = 142

• NJ Fentanyl Deaths 2016 = 417

Reality

Although long-term heroin and opioid misuse often results in physical deterioration of appearance:

- Many people with opioid use disorders work, go to school, and live among the rest of us in day to day society
- The parents of many young opioid users do not even recognize there is a problem until it is too late because “they didn’t see it”
- Opioid use disorder is not just an “inner city” or “poor” or “minority” issue.



DISCUSS

What is Addiction?



What is Addiction?

- Addiction is a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's life experiences. People with addiction use substances or engage in behaviors that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences.

- *Adopted by the ASAM Board of Directors September 15, 2019*



What is the Optimism Bias?

What is the Optimism Bias?

- **Optimism bias** is a cognitive **bias** that causes someone to believe that they themselves are less likely to experience a negative event. It is also known as unrealistic **optimism** or comparative **optimism**. **Optimism bias** is common and transcends gender, ethnicity, nationality and age. – Wikipedia
- Depending on the study about 10-20% of US experiencing a substance use disorder

What is the Optimism Bias?

- The optimism bias is the tendency for an individual to believe that he or she is at less risk of experiencing a negative event than others.
- “It Won’t Happen to Me”
- Why do we all experience denial?

Is Opioid Use as Bad as Everyone Keeps Saying it Is?

- Discuss



Is Opioid Use as Bad as Everyone Keeps Saying it Is? – **YES!!**

- **Between 50 and 60 percent** of those who use heroin in any given year will suffer from heroin addiction, a figure that dwarfs dependency rates for most drugs.
- From 1999 to 2016, the heroin overdose death rate rose **from 6.1 per 100,000 to 19.9 per 100,000**, an increase of more than 300 percent.
- Four in five new heroin users started out misusing prescription painkillers.
- Drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the US
- 94% of respondents in a 2014 survey of people in treatment for opioid addiction said they chose to use heroin because prescription opioids were “far more expensive and harder to obtain

Do not forget – “The Window”

The five year “window” between
ages 17/18 to 22/23

What you do in this short time
period will define so much of who
you are as an adult later.

Do you want to waste resources
getting high/partying when you
can be doing something much
more important?

> **Ant and grasshopper parable**



Do not forget – “The Window” for Teens

Do you have solid, well thought out plans for your WINDOW?

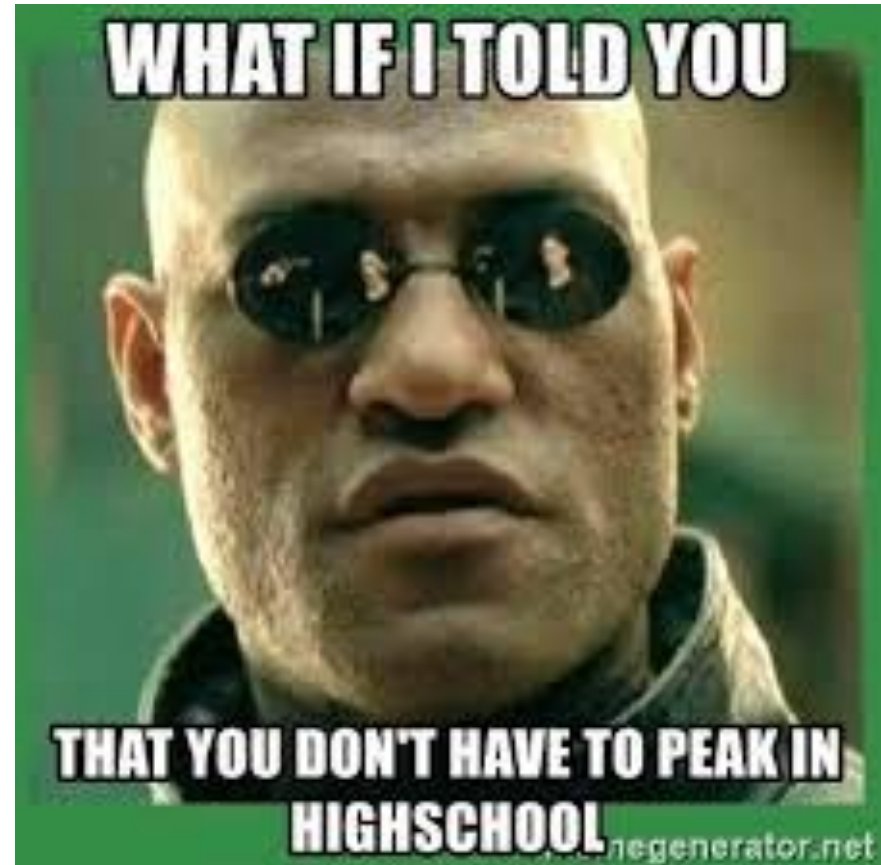
Do you have a back up plan?

Or are you just winging it?

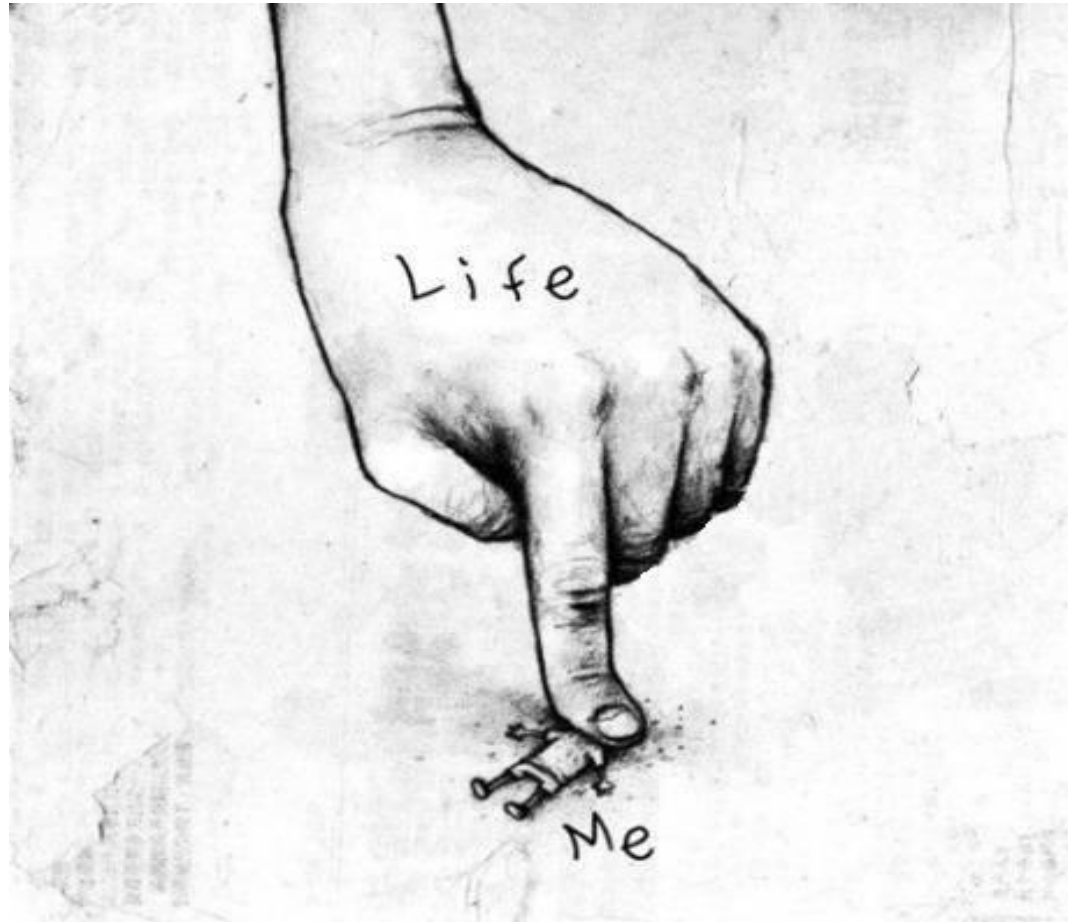


Do not forget – “The Window”

You probably have heard of “Hitting Bottom” but have you ever heard of “Topping Out?”



Risk Factors



Risk Factors for Addiction

Self Rating – Keep Track of Risk Factors Present in Your Life

- # 1 Rule – Be honest with yourself
- Keep to yourself if you are not comfortable
- Use this scale

0 – This does not apply

1 – Slightly at risk

2 – Moderately at risk

3 – Considerable risk

Risk Factors for Addiction

- **Genetics**, including the impact of one's environment on gene expression, account for about 40% to 60% of a person's risk of addiction.³ (NIDA – National Institute on Drug Abuse)



Risk Factors for Addiction

- **Stress Tolerance** – Are you able to appropriately handle stress, calm yourself when needed, and avoid unnecessary stress?



Risk Factors for Addiction

- **Poor family attachment –**
Do you have adults that you can turn to and trust? Do you feel supported?



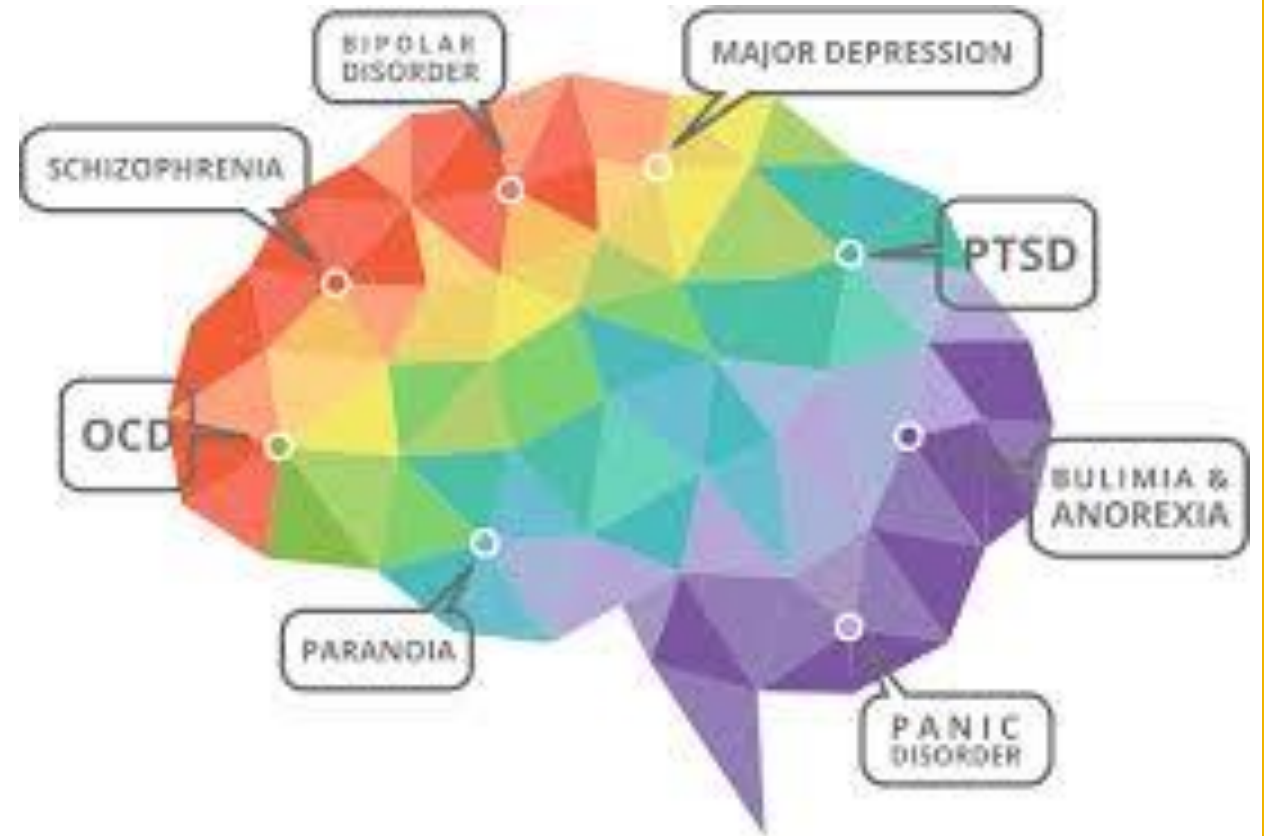
Risk Factors for Addiction

- **Age of first use** – Did you start experimenting with substances at an early age?



Risk Factors for Addiction

- **Existence of another mental health condition –** Individuals with conditions such as depression, anxiety, ADHD, Bipolar, Anger issues, etc. are at greater risk of addiction



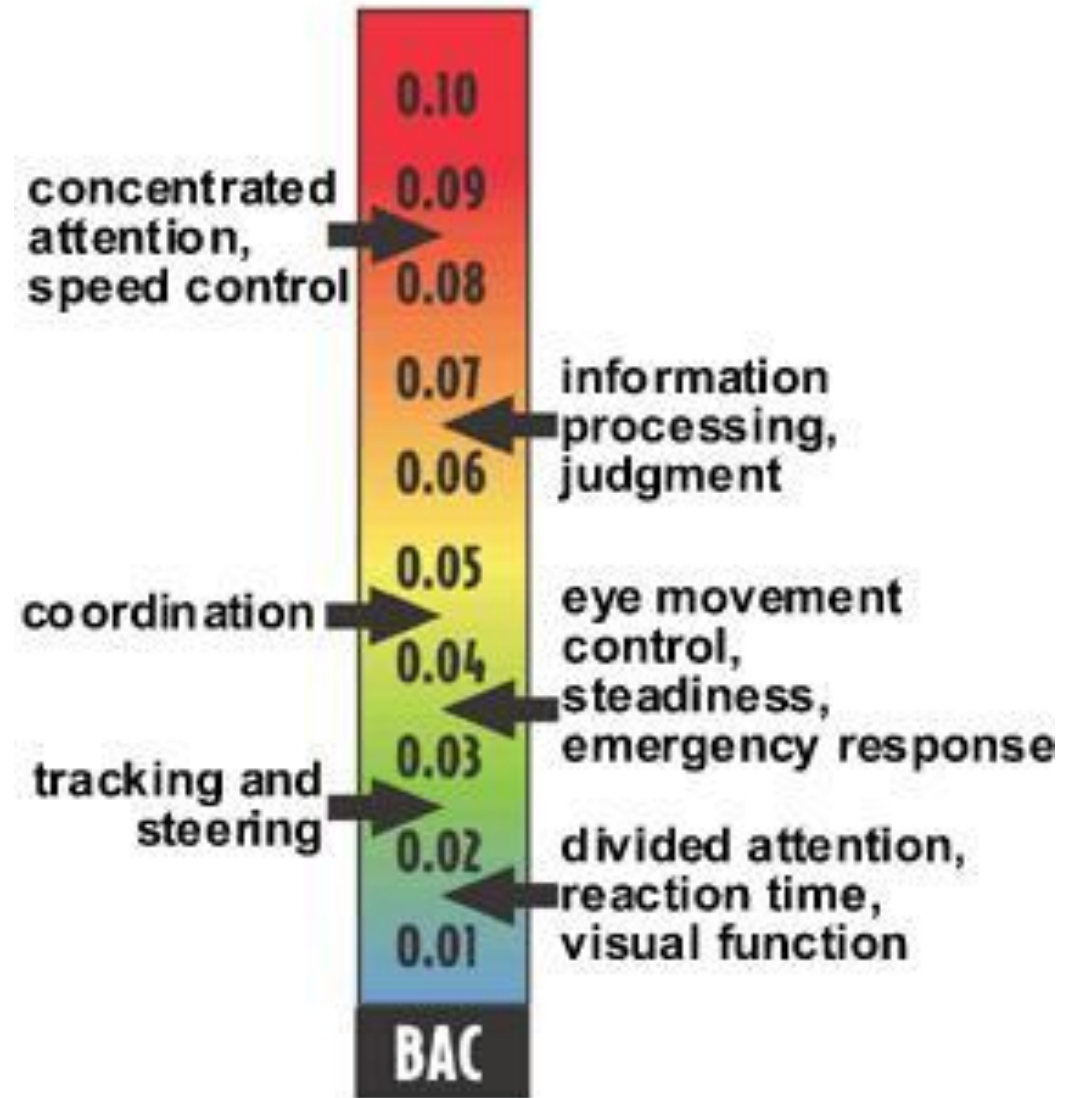
Risk Factors for Addiction

- **Risk Taking/Impulsivity** -
Are you prone to take unnecessary or unsafe risks or act first without thinking things through?



Risk Factors for Addiction

- **Natural Tolerance Level** - People who naturally can “handle” large amounts of substances have greater risk of addiction



Risk Factors for Addiction

- **Loneliness or lack of connection** –Do you feel connected with others in a positive way? Do you feel a sense of belonging?



Risk Factors for Addiction

- **Peer Group** - Do most of, or a lot of the people whom you associate with get high/party/use substances or get into trouble?



Risk Factors for Addiction

- **Turning to substances to cope**– Do you already find yourself turning to a smoke, a vape, a drink or a toké as a way to escape or just deal with negative feelings or a bad situation? Do you find yourself thinking about using when you are not?



Risk Factors for Addiction

Discuss – How did you do? (We reviewed 10 risk factors, there are more but this is a good foundation)

Some other important factors to consider

PRIORITY

Misinformation



Attitude



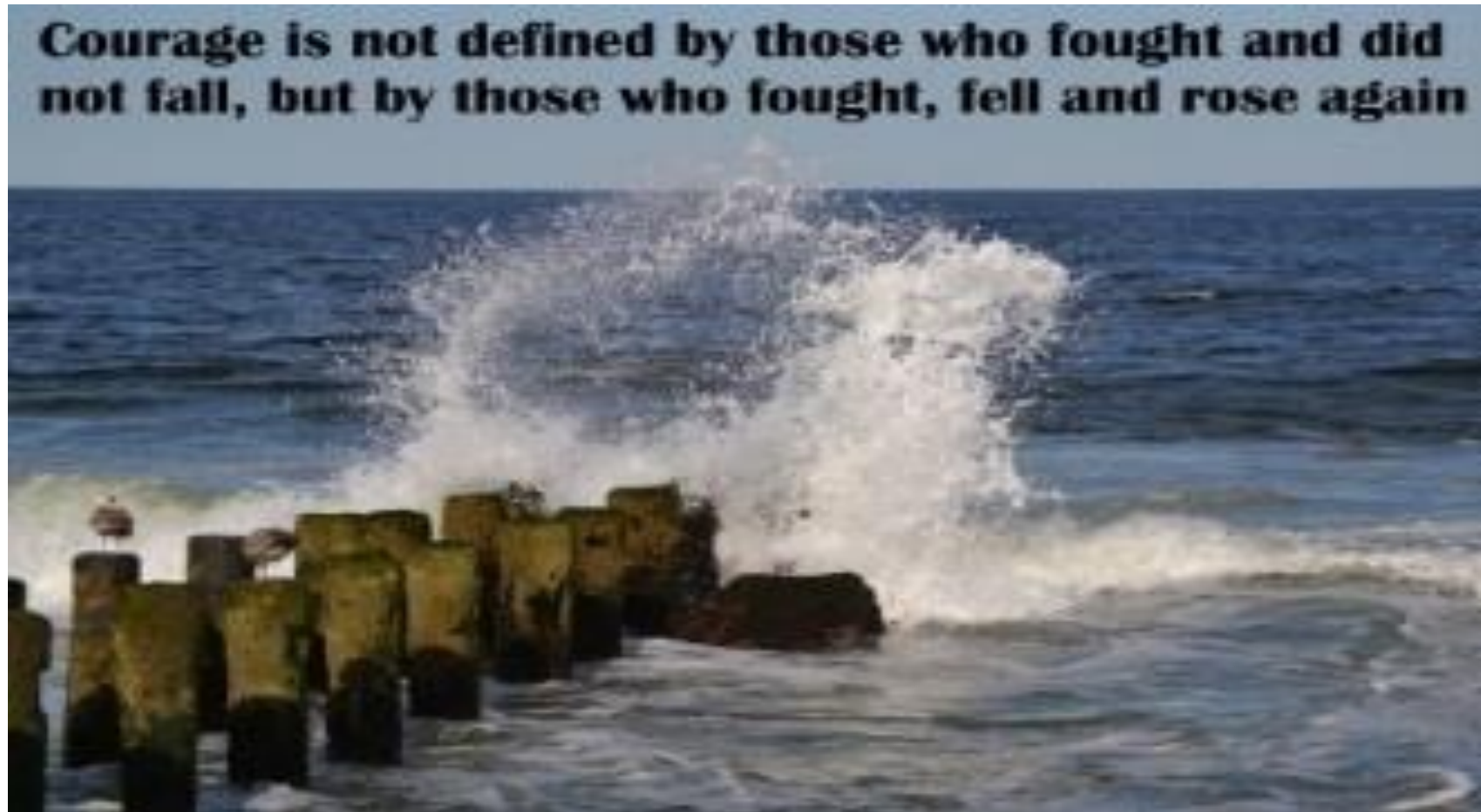
Protective Factors

- **Insight** - The capacity for understanding one's own or another's thoughts, feelings, motives, and problems - "Sight with the eyes of the mind," mental vision, understanding,"
 - How did we build insight?
 - *What events in people's lives build insight and increase awareness? – Eye openers, consequences – very valuable moments*

**The pessimist complains about the wind;
the optimist expects it to change;
the realist adjusts the sails. W.A. Ward**



Protective Factors: Resilience

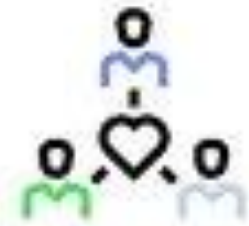


Protective Factors: Support



Core Values

Protective Factors:
Morals and
Values



LOYALTY



PASSION



HONESTY



EFFICIENCY



RELIABILITY



DEPENDABILITY



OPTIMISM



POSITIVITY



COMMITMENT

Protective Factors: Goals and Future Orientation



Protective Factors: Meaning and Purpose



Three Inevitable Questions - Marijuana

DISCUSS –



Three Inevitable Questions - Marijuana

1 – Is Marijuana/Cannabis Addictive?

Three Inevitable Questions - Marijuana

1 – Is Marijuana/Cannabis Addictive?

- Not a YES/NO answer – Truth is it CAN BE addictive.
- Not everyone becomes addicted (In fact, most do not) – But some people do (Use impacts life)
- Marijuana not known for physical dependency* but can be psychologically habit forming

Three Inevitable Questions - Marijuana

2 – Is Marijuana/Cannabis a GATEWAY DRUG?

(First, discuss what do we mean by gateway drug?)

Three Inevitable Questions - Marijuana

2 – Is Marijuana/Cannabis a GATEWAY DRUG?

- Again, Not a YES/NO answer – Truth is it marijuana CAN BE a gateway drug
- Not everyone that uses marijuana progresses to other more serious substances, in fact most do not – But Some Do
- Risk Factors increase the chances of the gateway phenomenon

Three Inevitable Questions - Marijuana

**2 – Is
Marijuana/Cannabis a
GATEWAY DRUG?**

**THREE PATHS
DISCUSSION:**



Three Inevitable Questions - Marijuana

THREE PATHS DISCUSSION:

- **“Stage”**
- **“Lifetime”**
- **“Progression to more serious substance use”**



Three Inevitable Questions - Marijuana

THREE PATHS DISCUSSION:

You do not always get to choose your path – Life often does some choosing for you





**Just Shut Up
and Gimme
My Weed!**

Often the long-term reality of opioid addiction:



But what about “successful” weed users?

- **Discuss**



But what about “successful” weed users?

- **Yes they do exist – But consider the odds:**
- **For every “successful” daily user how many more daily users:**
 - **Are on probation?**
 - **Are unemployed?**
 - **Are not living up to their full potential?**

But what about “successful” weed users?

- **Yes, they do exist – But consider the odds:**
- **Do you seek to become the “Lebron James” of weed?**



Three Inevitable Questions - Marijuana

3 – What about legalization?



Three Inevitable Questions - Marijuana

3 – What about legalization?

Legalization has more to do with politics, money, personal rights, law enforcement and government, than it has to do with addiction

For example – Alcohol is legal, yet millions are addicted. Cigarettes too – Regardless of legality some people will become addicted

Good news, opioid awareness is increasing

- Bad news – that is most likely due to the vast number of people who have destroyed their lives or died of overdose due to heroin/opioids
 - At this point everyone either knows someone, or knows someone who knows someone who died from overdose
- A lingering danger – Benzodiazepines (Xanax, valium, Klonopin, Ativan) – Still being used by teens with less fear of outcome

The Benzo Bridge

Marijuana and Alcohol

**Prescription Opiates
and HEROIN**



Addiction? – What can/should I do?

No one wants to become addicted or ruin their lives.

First and foremost – If you think that you may be addicted to something now – **TALK TO SOMEONE – Waiting for it to go away by itself can be a huge mistake you will regret later – The earlier you get help the better the chances of keeping life on the right track**

BE OPEN MINDED and HONEST



Conclusion - Questions
