

# NYU CHILD STUDY CENTER

CHANGING THE FACE OF CHILD MENTAL HEALTH

OCTOBER 2005

*This monthly newsletter provides parenting and mental health information as well as upcoming events and programs by the NYU Child Study Center.*

## ASK THE EXPERT: DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE

*Melissa Nishawala, M.D., Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the NYU School of Medicine and Director of the Tisch Young Adult Inpatient Program at the NYU Child Study Center answers frequently asked questions about adolescent drug and alcohol abuse.*

### **Q: How common is substance abuse among teenagers?**

**A:** Although drug abuse remains a common problem among teenagers, prevention efforts have been effective in decreasing drug abuse among middle and high school students over the past few years. The National Institute on Drug Abuse, in an annual survey of 8th, 10th and 12th graders found that the percentage of students reporting the use of any illicit drug decreased from 19.4% in 2001 to 16.1% in 2004. However, increases were reported in the numbers of 8th graders using inhalants (sniffing glue, liquid paper, gasoline or other toxic substances) from 15.8% in 2003 to 17.3% in 2004. Abuse of common household medications such as dextromethorphan (cough medicine) is also on the rise.

### **Q: How can parents encourage their teen to stay away from drugs and alcohol?**

**A:** Parents should talk to their kids, listen, and ask questions. Talking about drugs and alcohol does not put ideas in a child's head. Parent involvement is absolutely necessary in prevention, as teenagers are about 50% less likely to try drugs if their parents have addressed the issue of drug and alcohol abuse all along.

### **Q: Since kids are going to drink anyway, isn't better to let them drink at home where it's safe?**

**A:** Teenagers and drinking is never a safe combination. Serving alcohol to teens sends the wrong message and can lead to disaster. Instead, help your teenager

organize alcohol-free celebrations for events such as a prom or graduation. Practice what he/she can say if someone asks them to drink. For instance, "No thanks, I'm really not into that" or "I tried it once, and I really didn't like it." A friendly, but firm response, repeated as many times as is necessary is best. If the other kids won't take no for an answer, encourage your child to leave.

### **Q: What are some warning signs of teen substance abuse?**

**A:** Parents should look for warning signs such as:

- Change in the child's choice of friends, grooming, or sleep patterns.
- Loss of interest in favorite activities.
- Extreme mood swings.
- Decline in grades.
- Frequent arguments or violent actions.
- Smell of alcohol on breath (or strong mints or perfumes to cover up).
- Skipping school, running away or other delinquency.
- Increased secrecy or withdrawal from the family.
- Abrupt changes in behavior or attitude.

### **Q: What are some treatment options for teen substance abuse?**

**A:** First, get a thorough evaluation. Drug addiction is treatable, and a professional evaluation can determine which type of treatment is most appropriate. Treatments range from outpatient individual and group therapies to inpatient care with 24-hour medical monitoring. Intermediate levels include intensive outpatient (usually 3 days per week for 3-4 hours each day while still living at home) and residential care in which a teen lives in a group setting and receives intensive treatment.



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In addition to our clinical services for children and adolescents, the Center offers a variety of programs and services for parents, educators and mental health professionals:

- **ADHD Institute Family Education Series**

This series of workshops is designed to help parents and other family members better understand their child's diagnosis of ADHD and learn more about the most current, evidence-based treatments and interventions. For more information, call (212) 263-8915 or e-mail [ADHD@AboutOurKids.org](mailto:ADHD@AboutOurKids.org).

- **The Sunny and Abe Rosenberg Foundation Lecture Series: *Advanced Seminars for School Professionals***

This series of free professional development seminars will provide school-based practitioners updates on recent advances in children's mental health. To register, e-mail [nyuschoolpartnership@med.nyu.edu](mailto:nyuschoolpartnership@med.nyu.edu) or call (212) 263-2744. Upcoming lecture: When to Worry about Your Students Worries - November 9, 2005.

#### Current Clinical Studies:

- A research study of how **teens with and without an anxiety disorder** make decisions. If you know an adolescent between the ages of 13 and 17 who might be interested in participating in a brain imaging study using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), please contact Sara Hefton at (212) 263-0661 or [sara.hefton@med.nyu.edu](mailto:sara.hefton@med.nyu.edu). Subjects will be compensated for participation.
- We are recruiting teenagers, between **12-18 years of age, who are currently experiencing symptoms of depression** and who have attempted suicide within the past 90 days. The immediate and long-lasting benefits of three treatments are being evaluated to determine which is most effective in reducing suicidal behaviors and depressive symptoms. It is important to note that all study visits, evaluations, and therapy sessions are provided at no cost. For more information, please contact Dr. Barbara Coffey at (212) 263-3926 or Dr. Lori Evans at (212) 263-3661.
- The NYU Child Study Center is currently evaluating **children and adolescents ages 7-18 with tic disorders** or Tourette's Disorder to determine if they qualify to participate in a research study and receive specialized, professional care at no cost. For more information please call Rachel Shechter 212-263-3654.
- **Brain imaging study for adolescents with ADHD and/or Autism Spectrum Disorders.** This study examines structural brain differences in adolescents with ADHD, those with an Autism Spectrum Disorder and typically developing children. We are looking for teens between 12 and 17 years of age who have symptoms of ADHD (hyperactivity, impulsivity, and trouble paying attention), or symptoms related to Autism (difficulty making friends and poor communication skills), **or children without any of these symptoms** (controls). For more information, please contact Snigdha Rathor at (212) 263-8911 or [snigdha.rathor@med.nyu.edu](mailto:snigdha.rathor@med.nyu.edu).

## Events Calendar

### **New Mothers: New Lives**

*Educational Support Group for New Mothers*

*Open to Mothers and babies, 0-9months*

**When: Thursdays**

Continuous Open Enrollment

**Where:** NYU Child Study Center

577 First Avenue

Multipurpose Room

**Time:** 1:00-2:15pm

**Cost:** \$205 for 10 sessions

**Contact:** (212) 263-3927

### **Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP®)**

**When: Sunday, October 9, 2005**

**Where:** NYU Child Study Center

577 First Avenue

**Time:** 10:00am-5:00pm

**Cost:** \$200/couple

**Contact:** (212) 263-8720

For more information on Child Study Center events, please visit [AboutOurKids.org](http://AboutOurKids.org)

### **Sunny and Abe Rosenberg Foundation Lecture Series**

**When: Wednesday, November 9, 2005**

**Where:** NYU Child Study Center

215 Lexington Avenue, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor

**Time:** 4:15-6:30pm

**Cost:** Free

**Contact:** (212) 263-2744

### **SAVE THE DATE!**

### **Eighth Annual Child Advocacy Award Dinner**

*Giving Children Back Their Childhood*

**Honorees:** Bob and Suzanne Wright

**Dinner Chairs:** George and Lori Hall

**When: Tuesday, November 29, 2005**

**Where:** Cipriani 42<sup>nd</sup> Street

**Contact:** (212) 404-3674