

## Vulnerability for Substance Use and Progression to Addiction

### RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Relatively little research was conducted until the 1970s regarding what factors or processes were associated with the onset of substance use. In the mid-1970s, primarily in the United States, several longitudinal studies were conducted that followed cohorts of early adolescents into adulthood that examined factors that were related to substance use initiation. In 1992 two significant works summarized this research on factors related not only to the initiation of substance use but also to the progression from use to abuse.

*The term “etiology” has been defined as “... the science that deals with the causes or origin of disease, the factors which produce or predispose toward a certain disease or disorder”*

Hawkins and Catalano determined that risk factors are defined as measures of behavior or psychosocial functioning (including attitudes, beliefs, and personality) found to be associated with increased risk to use psychoactive substances. Protective factors involve measures that appear to prevent the use of psychoactive substances or reduce the untoward negative effects of risk. Protective factors identified through research include strong bonding to family, school, community and peers that hold prosocial attitudes and support prosocial behaviors.

Risk factors	Protective factors
<b>Children factors</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brain injury/disability/low birth weight</li> <li>• Insecure attachment</li> <li>• Poor social skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social skills</li> <li>• Attachment to family</li> <li>• School achievement</li> </ul>
<b>Family factors</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor parental supervision and discipline</li> <li>• Parental substance abuse</li> <li>• Family conflict and domestic violence</li> <li>• Social isolation/lack of support networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive caring parents</li> <li>• Parental employment</li> <li>• Access to support networks</li> </ul>
<b>School factors</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School failure</li> <li>• Negative peer group influences</li> <li>• Bullying</li> <li>• Poor attachment to school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive school climate</li> <li>• Sense of belonging/bonding</li> <li>• Opportunities for some success at school and recognition of achievement</li> </ul>
<b>Community factors</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighborhood violence and crime</li> <li>• Lack of support services</li> <li>• Social or cultural discrimination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to support services</li> <li>• Community networking</li> <li>• Participation in community group</li> </ul>

# Understanding Substance Use Prevention



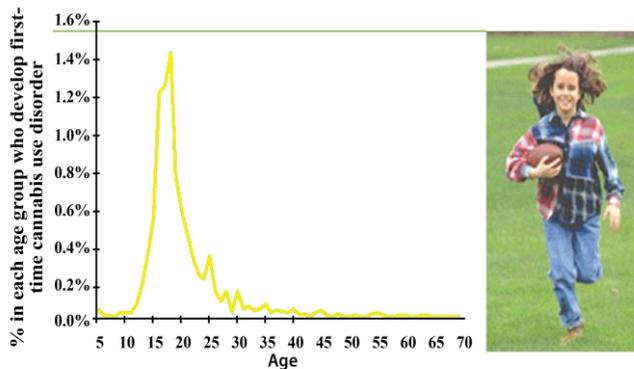
## DEVELOPMENTAL PHASES

Each stage of development, from infancy to early adulthood, is associated with the growth of the following as a person matures:

- Intellectual ability
- Language development
- Cognitive, emotional, and psychological functioning
- Social competency skills

Any major disruption of this growth will make a person more vulnerable to problem behaviors such as substance use.

Prevention needs to intervene early in each developmental phase to prevent the onset of substance use and dependence.



Age at cannabis use disorder as per DSM IV  
 NIAAA National Epidemiological Survey on Alcohol & Related Conditions, 2003

**Figure 1 Substance Use is a Developmental Problem**

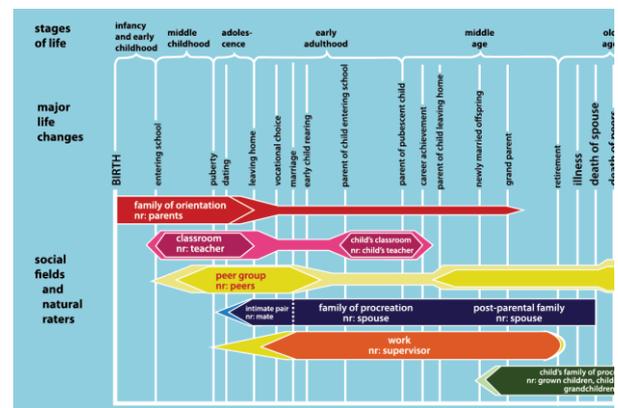
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## SOCIALIZATION

Human infants are born without any culture. Socialization is a process of transferring culturally acceptable attitudes, norms, beliefs and behaviors and to respond to such cues in the appropriate manner.

Since socialization is a lifelong process, the individual will be socialized by a large array of different socializing agents (e.g., parents, teachers, peer groups, religious, economic and political organization and virtual agents, such as mass media).



**Figure 2 Life Course Social Field Concept, (Source: Kellam et al., 1975)**

Science today has progressed to be able to study identify a number of biological, and social determinants that contribute to the likelihood of substance use. The list is long and includes things such as poverty, little or no attachment to adults, influence of peers, epigenetics, and the environment.