



THE DIOCESAN SCHOOL  
FOR GIRLS

# **SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY**

|                                                                                                         |                                            |      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|------|
| Dates of Approval by the Relevant Committee Structures: -<br>Pastoral Committee<br>Management Committee |                                            |      |
| Implementation Date                                                                                     | January 2015                               |      |
| Revision History                                                                                        | Every three years                          |      |
| Review Cycles                                                                                           |                                            |      |
| Policy Applicability                                                                                    | All girls of the Diocesan School for Girls |      |
| Policy Owner                                                                                            | Head of Wellness Team                      |      |
| Implementation Checklist                                                                                | Responsibility                             | Date |
| Girls' Handbook                                                                                         | L. Hobson                                  |      |
| Parents' Handbook                                                                                       | L. Hobson                                  |      |
| Code of Conduct                                                                                         | L. Hobson                                  |      |
| Website                                                                                                 | L. Hobson                                  |      |
| Notification of:                                                                                        |                                            |      |
| Staff                                                                                                   | D. Wright                                  |      |
| Girls                                                                                                   | D. Wright                                  |      |
| Parents                                                                                                 | D. Wright                                  |      |

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse remains one of the most critical challenges facing South Africa and is cause for concern for all parents with school-age children. Research indicates that children in South African schools are being targeted as potential drug users through powerful international, national and local drug syndicates and that the availability of a variety of drugs is widespread and affordable. Young aspirant sportswomen and sportsmen are increasingly turning to performance enhancing drugs to improve their success in their chosen fields of competition.

There are many reasons why children start using drugs; among those regularly cited are the ready availability of drugs and the power of peer pressure. Not only do young people find themselves in an environment in which drugs and alcohol are readily accessible, but very often these substances are used by their peers to whom they relate and with whom they interact. Teenagers often feel indestructible, believe that nothing can happen to them and are willing to take certain risks. Some teens are also curious about drugs and alcohol; hence, their receptiveness to drug and alcohol use increases. However, they often may lack the maturity and strength of character to resist peer pressure. Other reasons given by young people for the use of drugs are for enjoyment, stress relief, and to enhance performance at school.

The importance of educators, parents and guardians in a uniform fight against drug and alcohol use by girls cannot be underestimated. We strive to ensure the best for the girls in our care and recognise that:

- a safe and disciplined learning environment is one of the critical elements to the successful delivery of quality education. We acknowledge the role played by drugs and alcohol in undermining this;
- available evidence indicates that school communities are particularly vulnerable and drug and alcohol use by girls is on the increase;
- there is a high correlation between drug and alcohol abuse and other anti-social and high-risk behaviour, including dishonesty, theft, violence and gangsterism;
- purely punitive approaches to drug and alcohol abuse only part of the solution; and
- drug and alcohol abuse is detrimental to individuals on social, physical, emotional and psychological levels.

**DSG IS COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING A DRUG- AND ALCOHOL-FREE CAMPUS AND WILL APPLY A ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICY TO THE USE OF ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES.**

## 2 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

The school recognises that there is a difference between a person who uses drugs and alcohol and a person who is dependent on these substances.

The aims of this policy are:

- a. Prevention through information and awareness programmes
- b. Provision of channels for girls to seek help without fear of punishment

- c. Fair and considered disciplinary action

The purpose of this policy is to:

- a. Clarify the school's attitude to the use of illegal substances and its intentions regarding prevention, incident management and education;
- b. Give guidance on the management of incidents involving illegal and unauthorised substances;
- c. Enable staff to manage drug- and/or alcohol-related incidents with confidence, consistency and in the best interests of all who are involved;
- d. Reduce the possibility of girls using illegal substances;
- e. Ensure a supportive environment for all girls, teachers and members of the school community.

### **3 THE EFFECTS OF SUBSTANCE USE AND ABUSE**

Young people who abuse substances often experience an array of problems including academic difficulties, health-related problems, mental problems like depression, and anti-social behaviour (including poor peer relationships). Family relationships are also affected. Substance abuse by youths often results in family crises and can jeopardise many aspects of family life.

Younger people are physiologically and psychologically vulnerable to drug use as their bodies are less capable of handling the impact. The teenage brain is still developing and if teens consume drugs or alcohol, they risk causing permanent intellectual and emotional damage. Alcohol consumed in early adolescence can disrupt endocrine development, which regulates mood and reproductive processes. Teens who smoke marijuana perform worse on learning tests and their memory is affected. These are just some of the consequences of the use of drugs. There are many more. (See Appendix 1)

Substance abuse can be defined as a pattern of harmful use of any substance for mood-altering purposes that give rise to both physical and psychological dependence: dependence results in mental, emotional, biological or physical, social and economic instability. The effects of substance abuse on an individual form the basis of its increasing effects on society which is a major danger of substance abuse. In many cases, there is a fine line between regular use, substance abuse and addiction – a very real danger of substance abuse is that of addiction.

## 4 APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all girls of the Diocesan School for Girls, Grahamstown.

- It concerns the possession and/or use and/or distribution of any illegal substance
- The use/abuse of medicines is dealt with in the Medicines Policy.
- The Search and Seizure Policy and the Discipline Policy apply.
- The rules of the school given in the DSG Handbook apply.
- The Code of Conduct, signed by all girls, applies.

**These are all available on the DSG webpage: [www.dsgschool.com](http://www.dsgschool.com) and all girls, their parents and the staff of the DSG are expected to read and be familiar with the contents of these policies.**

## 5 DEFINITIONS

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Campus            | The whole area that comprises the buildings, gardens and sports facilities of the DSG and the campus of St Andrew's College.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Distribution      | Selling or giving any illegal substance to another girl. For the purposes of this Policy, 'distribution' and 'dealing' will mean the same.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Drug              | An illegal chemical substance that produces a psychoactive effect. This includes, but is not limited to, alcohol and tobacco, herbal cigarettes, cannabis, inhalants, pharmaceutical drugs, illicit drugs as well as image and performance enhancing substances                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| DSG               | The Diocesan School for Girls, Worcester Street, Grahamstown                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Head              | The Headmistress of DSG or her delegated authority                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Illegal substance | For the purposes of this policy, illegal substances include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prohibited substances (dagga, ecstasy, cocaine, for example)</li> <li>• Medicines for which the user does not have a prescription (Ritalin, for example)</li> <li>• Alcohol</li> <li>• Inappropriate use of solvents, inhalants or other chemical agents (thinners, for example)</li> <li>• Prohibited performance enhancing drugs or PEDS as they are sometimes known (such as steroids, for example)</li> </ul> |
| Possession        | The presence of an illegal substance in any area belonging to the girl or over which she has control or unfettered access. This includes, but is not limited to, her clothing, her locker, her school bag, her sports bag and any other bag that belongs to her.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| School            | DSG                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| At school         | Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The campus of DSG;</li> <li>• The campus of St Andrew's College;</li> <li>• Any place where girls are legitimately required to be as part of a</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                            | <p>school activity;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any place where a girl is wearing the DSG uniform or parts of it.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                 |
| Outside school             | <p>Situations not mentioned above.</p> <p>A girl who is outside the school but who can be identified as a girl of the school and/or whose behaviour brings the school into disrepute can be regarded as having been 'at school'.</p>                        |
| Staff                      | <p>All individuals employed by the school who have direct interaction with the girls at any level. This definition includes, but is not limited to, teachers and other academic staff, Housemothers, sports coaches, dance teachers and music teachers.</p> |
| Substance                  | <p>Has the same meaning as illegal substance</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Substance use and/or abuse | <p>A pattern of use of any substance for mood-altering purposes that gives rise to both physical and psychological dependence</p>                                                                                                                           |
| PEDS                       | <p>Any illegal substance used to gain an advantage while playing sport.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Use/abuse                  | <p>In this document, these terms are used synonymously.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Equipment                  | <p>Paraphernalia used for taking illegal substances</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

## 6 POLICY

### 6.1 THE USE OF ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES

6.1.1 The use of any illegal substance is forbidden:

- On the school campus
- In any school-endorsed activity that takes place off the school campus
- At any time when wearing school uniform or any part of the uniform
- If the girl can be identified as being a girl of the school

6.1.2 DSG reserves the right to take action according to its:

- Substance Abuse Policy,
- Disciplinary Policy,
- Search and Seizure Policy
- Medicines Policy
- DSG Handbook,

if there is reasonable suspicion that a girl may be using illegal substances. This suspicion can be based on amongst others the girl's academic performance, behaviour, attendance, bringing the school's name into disrepute or reports from any credible source.

There are some exceptions to the use of alcohol. These are covered in the DSG handbook, which is available on the website.

## 6.2 POSSESSION OF ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES

It is forbidden to be in possession of illegal substances:

- on the school campus
- in school uniform
- during intra- or extramural activities on the school, camps, sports tours and meetings, school functions
- at any time or event where the girl(s) can be identified with the school

DSG reserves the right to take action according to its:

- Substance Abuse Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Search and Seizure Policy
- Medicines Policy
- DSG Handbook,

if there is reasonable suspicion that a girl may be in possession of illegal substances. The suspicion can be based on amongst others reports (anonymous or otherwise), credible rumour and identification of the presence of illegal substances by the senses: for example, the smell of marijuana. DSG also reserves the right to conduct random searches from time to time in order to pre-empt illegal substance abuse on the campus and girls and parents have acknowledged that right as a condition of the girl's admission to the DSG.

## 6.3 DEALING IN ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES

It is forbidden to deal in illegal substances:

- on the school campus,
- in school uniform,
- during extramural activities on the school, camps, sports tours and meetings, school functions,
- at any time or event where the girl(s) can be identified with the school.

**NOTE: Dealing in drugs is a criminal offence, as is the possession of illegal drugs. If any girl is suspected of, or caught, dealing in drugs, the school will investigate the matter and, if necessary, will refer it to SANAB (South African Narcotics Bureau) after which normal criminal investigation and prosecution may take place.**

DSG reserves the right in addition to any criminal investigation and sanction to take action on the same basis and upon the same grounds as set out in 6.1 and 6.2 of this Policy if there is reasonable suspicion that a girl may be dealing in illegal substances

The school reserves the right to act against any girl who influences another girl to possess, use or distribute any illegal substance.



## 7 PROCEDURES

In the event of a girl being identified as contravening 6.1 and/or 6.2 and/or 6.3 above, or if there is reasonable suspicion that a girl may have contravened 6.1 and/or 6.2 and/or 6.3 above, the school will take action according to the procedure described below.

### 7.1 GUIDELINES

- a. Each case will be considered and dealt with individually on its merits and within the framework of the school's Policies;
- b. Parents/guardians will be informed;
- c. Each case will be dealt with as confidentially as possible;
- d. Isolated symptoms and rumours without supporting evidence will not be considered as indicators, but a pattern of indicators will be investigated;
- e. Rumours with supporting evidence will be investigated;
- f. Members of Staff who are specifically trained in this area will undertake the investigations.

**NOTE: This is not a process of victimization, but an honest attempt to identify, at an early stage, pupils in crisis.**

### 7.2 DRUG TESTS

In accordance with section 8A of the South African Schools Act of 1996 (the Schools Act), the Head may require any girl to submit to a drug test if there is a reasonable suspicion that the girl has used or is using and/or has in her possession prohibited substances. Some, but not all, of the circumstances that may be construed as reasonable suspicion include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Direct observation and/or confirmation by a member of the school community of alcohol or drug use and/or possession;
  - Abnormal or erratic behaviour, suggesting Substance use;
  - First-hand information provided by reliable and credible sources of use or possession and/or distribution of a Substance ;
  - Physical symptoms indicating Substance use;
  - The presence of an illegal substance on the girl detectable by the senses, such as the smell of marijuana;
  - The possession of alcohol, illegal drugs, prescription drugs for which the girl does not have a medical prescription, or drug paraphernalia.
- a. A report from any source indicating reasonable suspicion that a girl may be in violation of the Substance Abuse Policy must immediately be conveyed to the Head or her appointed delegate.
  - b. In order to protect an informant, the Head reserves the right not to reveal her source but will, if requested, give the essence of the report.
  - c. The Head or her appointed delegate will determine whether the circumstances constitute reasonable suspicion before the girl is required to be tested for illegal substances.

- d. The Head may elect to discuss the matter with the school's clinical psychologist before intervening.
- e. The Head and/or the clinical psychologist will be responsible for making contact with the girl and her parents, collecting relevant information and making an assessment of the situation.

### **7.3 TESTING PROCESS**

- a. Urine tests and breathalyser tests will be the only form of testing conducted.
- b. The school reserves the right, as contemplated in section 8A of the Schools Act, to test for Substance use without consent, but the parents/guardian will be informed of the school's intention to carry out such testing.
- c. The girl will be notified by the Head of the school's intention to test for the presence of illegal substances and why this has been deemed to be necessary. Once a girl has been notified of selection for a drug test, she will be accompanied and observed by a member of the testing team from the time of notification until the testing process is complete.
- d. Testing will be done in the San by the San Sister or the Head's delegated authority in such a way that the girl's dignity is maintained and the integrity of the sample is not compromised and the privacy of the girl is protected.
- e. When the girl arrives at the testing area she will be informed of the testing process that is about to take place and the consequence of a positive test result, before testing commences.
- f. The test will be conducted in the presence of a woman and out of sight of any other person.
- g. The sample will be sent to a Pathologist for laboratory testing. A test report with a unique reference number will be completed for every test.
- h. The results of the test will be conveyed to the Headmistress. The Headmistress will convey the results of the test to the girl and her parents/guardian. It will be at the discretion of the Headmistress whether any other person needs to be informed of the results, but strict confidentiality will apply.

### **7.4 PRESENCE OF ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES:**

Any illegal drug that has been seized (in terms of the school's Search and Seizure Policy) must be clearly and correctly labelled with full particulars, including:

- the name of the girl in whose possession it was found;
- the time and date of the search and seizure;
- an incident reference number;
- the name of the person who searched the girl;
- the name of the witness or witnesses; and
- any other details that may be necessary to identify the item and the incident.

The illegal drug(s) concerned will be handed over to the South African Police Services for disposal in terms of section 31 of the Criminal Procedure Act, 1977.

### **7.5 CONSEQUENCES OF BREACH OF THIS POLICY**

If any girl is found to be in breach of this Policy, disciplinary action will be taken according to the school's Discipline Policy.

**The school will support any individual who voluntarily comes forward, is honest about her substance abuse and shows a willingness to receive help. The school will create a confidential zone for girls to confide in a member of Staff about their own or other girls' alcohol or drug use.**

### **8.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The school's overarching goal is to help girls who:

- may be in crisis in terms of their own use/ abuse of illegal substances
- may be concerned about friends' use/abuse of illegal substances
- may wish to report their observations regarding others' use/possession/distribution of illegal substances
- could be identified as being in breach of the school's rules in terms of 6.1, 6.2 and/or 6.3 above and wish to seek amnesty

In these cases, the school shall endeavour to adhere to the following principles:

- a. Any action taken will be consistent with the school's desire to develop a safe and supportive environment within which the values of forgiveness, compassion and concern for the dignity of every person are expressed.
- b. Recognising that the disciplinary process will be instituted if a girl transgresses the school rules, nevertheless intervention will also be aimed at providing support, restoring health, addressing underlying psychological issues and offering counselling.
- c. All information relating to illegal substance use/abuse by a girl will be treated sensitively and high levels of confidentiality will be observed.

### **8.2 CONFIDENTIALITY**

If amnesty is sought:

- a. A girl may use the services of the school counsellor who will explain the conditions of confidentiality before giving counselling. As a result of the ethics of the counselling professions, there may well be circumstances in which the school counsellor will not pass on information to parents or teachers disclosed in the course of counselling.
- b. In the event of a girl informing a teacher about substance abuse by herself or another person, teachers are not able to maintain absolute confidentiality as the school has a legal and professional responsibility to inform parents.
- c. The school reserves the right, where it is deemed necessary, to inform the pupil body and broader school community of any situation involving transgressions of the code of conduct. However, the school will strive to protect the privacy and dignity of girls in all circumstances.
- d. Each case will be dealt with individually and parents will be informed and involved.

### **8.3 PROCEDURES**

A girl who has voluntarily admitted to having used/been using illegal substances will not in the first instance, and subject to sub-paragraph 8.3d below, be formally disciplined according to 7.5 above but will be required to agree to the following:

- a. Her parents will be informed.
- b. A contract will be signed between the girl, her parents and the school with an undertaking to discontinue her use of illegal substances.
- c. Regular counselling with a recognised counsellor (to be decided in consultation with the Head, the clinical psychologist, the parents and the girl) until such time as the counsellor deems counselling can be concluded. The cost of this will be borne by the parents.
- d. She undergoes regular follow-up drug tests. Should she test positive for any illegal substances, she will be subjected to normal disciplinary process as in 7.5 above.
- e. A report with a final warning will be added to her file.

## **9 EDUCATION AND PREVENTION**

The school recognises that preventative education is essential in order to reduce or delay the likelihood of experimentation with illegal substances by providing information about the dangers of their use and misuse. An important part of this policy therefore focuses on the school's responsibility in this regard.

The school will ensure that all girls, parents/guardians and staff are regularly educated about the problems of substance abuse and dependency through:

- a. Talks, workshops and other informal activities including special assemblies at the school;
- b. Lessons during appropriate subjects in the school curriculum, ensuring that the girls acquire age- and context-appropriate knowledge and skills, in order for them to adopt and maintain life skills and behaviour that will protect them from substance use, misuse and dependency;
- c. Proactive involvement with other professional and community-based organisations involved in the fight against substance abuse and dependency;
- d. Communicating relevant information to parents and girls. Education and information on substance use, misuse and dependency as well as the school's policy on substance abuse will be made available to all parents/guardians of girls, as well as the girls themselves.

The school will ensure that all staff are aware of the contents of this policy. Training will be provided for all staff on substance use, misuse and dependency management and support. Staff will also be trained to recognise the signs and symptoms of such use.

## **10 RIGHTS and RESPONSIBILITIES**

All girls of the DSG community have the right to an education in a safe and disciplined environment in which there can be the successful delivery of quality education. As such, it is the responsibility of the school to ensure that the use and abuse of illegal substances is not allowed to affect the pursuit of an excellent education by the majority but the discharge of that responsibility is foundational upon the complete support and co-operation of the school community. All members of the School should be able to achieve their full potential in a drug-free environment. Further, it is the right of any girl of DSG to be able to board at the school and enjoy peer interactions in a safe environment without any undue pressure to use illegal substances or observe others doing so.

## **11 GOVERNANCE**

Good governance requires that all documentation pertaining to notes kept by Reporting Officers, Investigations and Disciplinary Hearings and Appeals are confidential and, as such, kept in a secure environment. All findings must be documented and kept in a secure and confidential environment.

## **12 REVIEW OF THIS POLICY**

The policy will be subject to review only by the Pastoral Committee and the Management Committee of the School. The Substance Abuse Policy will be reviewed by such committees as a matter of course every three years.

Recommended and Reviewed by the Pastoral Committee Management Committee

Ratified by the Management Committee on 12.11.2014

## 13 REFERENCES CONSULTED

The Substance Abuse Policies of the following schools were consulted:

- St Alban's College, Pretoria
- St Andrew's College, Grahamstown
- St Andrew's School for Girls, Bedfordview
- Bridge House, Cape Town
- Diocesan College, Rondebosch, Cape Town
- Herzlia, Cape Town
- Rustenburg Girl's High, Cape Town
- St John's College, Johannesburg
- St Stithian's College, Randburg

The following documents were consulted:

- The Department of Education, Western Cape: [www. Westerncape.gov.za](http://www.Westerncape.gov.za)
- Drug use and alcohol consumption among secondary school learners in Gauteng: [www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)
- Drug use is damaging South Africa's youth by Peter Jordan: [www.fannews.co.za](http://www.fannews.co.za)
- The influence of substance abuse on adolescent brain development: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)
- The effects of substance abuse on adolescent development: [www.everydaylife.globalpost.com](http://www.everydaylife.globalpost.com)
- What substance abuse does to the developing brain of a teen: [www.muirwoodteen.com/teen-substance-abuse/effects](http://www.muirwoodteen.com/teen-substance-abuse/effects)

## 14 APPENDIX 1

### THE EFFECT OF DRUG USE ON ADOLESCENTS' BRAINS

Due to the structure of their brain, those teens who do give in to their impulses and dabble in addictive substances might also develop addictions at a rapid pace, when compared to their adult counterparts

During adolescence, the brain undergoes a remarkable transformation. Portions of the brain that govern impulse control seem to go dark, while segments of the brain dealing with reward and motivation become yet more sensitive and powerful. These changes may explain why adolescents are more vulnerable to exploring drugs and alcohol, according to an article produced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. An adolescent brain is

designed to send out deep cravings for action when something desirable is at play, and the portions of the brain that might reign in those impulses aren't active yet. Similarly, the spike in sex hormones in teens might make teens more impulsive, liable to act on any suggestion that comes along, rather than thinking about the consequences in advance

Since their brains are attenuated to signals of reward, drugs just might be more enjoyable for them, and since the drugs are rewarding and impulse control levels are low, teens might take drugs repeatedly, as they have no way to combat cravings. Escalating from use to abuse is remarkably easy for teens as a result, and those who take in very high doses of drugs may do almost irreparable damage to their very fragile brain cells.

### **Disrupted Growth**

Drugs are chemicals, and they tend to cause spikes or decreases in reciprocal chemicals in the mind of a teen. Teens who tinker with chemistry may face some of the same symptoms seen in adults who use drugs.

Depression, for example, might result from the chronic use of drugs.

These drugs can cause a spike in the release of chemicals the brain releases in response to pleasure. In response, the brain begins to react with decreasing frequency to any source of pleasure, meaning that people with addictions may only feel happy when they're high. The chemical amendments in the brain are to blame, and they're common in people who abuse drugs.

These changes might seem interesting only to scientists, as parents might not notice that the brains of their teens are smaller or wired differently. But since the brain has a deep impact on the way people think and behave, structural changes could bring about intense symptoms that might be hard to control. ***Teens like this might not perform well on tests involving memory or recall, and they might struggle to keep their emotions in check.*** They might find it hard to set aside current pleasure for future gain, and they might not be able to really plan for the future at all. The wiring differences could have a deep impact on the way the teen lives life.

### **Long-Term Changes**

While these structural changes are certainly serious, there are other dangers of drug use in terms of adolescent growth. For example, according to the SAMA Foundation, exposing brain cells to drugs during adolescence can disrupt perception. Healthy adults might use the frontal lobes of the brain to solve a problem and make a decision. Teens, however, might use the more primitive areas of the brain to make the same choices, including those parts of the brain that emphasize emotion and fear. Teens who abuse drugs may freeze their brain cells in this stage of development, and they might grow into adults who are emotionally defensive and irritable, unable to see the logic in a situation and think past the kneejerk demands of their emotions.

The brain remembers things that are rewarding, and those cells call out for familiar solutions in times of pain. It's a shortcut, and normally, it's an effective procedure. But those who use drugs and alcohol early in life might train their brain cells to call out for drugs, over and over again. They may not really want them or like them, but the drugs have become a habit for

the brain, and it might seem like a habit that's so old and so entrenched that it's difficult to break. Since adolescents are much more malleable than adults, those who don't heal during adolescence may set down hardwiring rules regarding use that are difficult to amend once adulthood sets in.