

# THE SOCIAL NORMS APPROACH INTRODUCTION

## REFLECTION GUIDE



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Social norms are the unwritten rules of how things work around here — they're the socially acceptable behaviors. Teens are hyper-aware and sensitive to fitting in, almost at any cost.

Research shows that teens always overestimate the percentage of their peers who engage in substance use, and they extrapolate their misperception to assume that substance use is a social norm. In other words, they falsely assume that 'everybody's doing it.' When their desire to fit in overrides their caution or personal values, they can make life-altering decisions with substances without realizing what they're doing.

We can intervene and educate them so they're able to see clearly and make wiser choices. We can help them understand what's normally acceptable behavior and balance their predisposition to exaggerate negative behavior with positive choices.

Studies have shown that when teens realize that not as many of their peers engage in substance use as they thought, fewer of them will use substances. When they realize the truth and discover that the real social norm is to make healthy choices, they fall in line.

We recommend you watch the videos, engage in the reflection exercises, and follow along our guided activities. You may watch the lessons all at once, or come back later to finish. The entire series takes about 30 minutes to watch.



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