

THE ADDERALL DILEMMA

Truth About Prescription Stimulant Abuse

Script

Narrator: The National Council on Patient Information and Education tells us the following: by a student's sophomore year in college about half of their classmates will have been offered the opportunity to abuse a prescription drug; 90% of college students who used Adderall non-medically in the past year also reported as binge drinkers, and these students were also five times as likely to have abused a prescription painkiller in that time; and more than half (54%) of undergraduates who are taking stimulant medications under the direction of their doctor have been asked to sell, trade or give away their medication in the past year.

So, we seem to have an "Adderall Dilemma" on our campuses. Many students may feel that using these types of medications without a legitimate prescription is OK; in fact some may view the non-medical use of drugs like Adderall to study or party as being safe and legal. Let's think about this by considering two short skits followed by discussions with our audience aimed at dispelling these myths.

Scene 1: Pharming to get by?

Narrator: In her article entitled "The Prescription of a New Generation," author Meika Loe writes that "U.S. college students today are among the first to be raised in a society where prescription drugs are an everyday commodity – socially branded and advertised directly to consumers – not unlike cars and blue jeans." She suggests that this phenomenon may contribute to the misuse of common prescription stimulants among college students who are "pharming to get by," meaning "they believe that with the help of prescription stimulants they can block out distractions to concentrate on academic performance and become smart and studious on demand."

So we ask the question – are students pharming to get by? And if so, what else do they need to know about the potential dangers of this behavior.

It's Monday night. Taylor, a college sophomore, is in the dorm working on homework and listening to music. Taylor is interrupted by Jamie, a friend who is a first-year student.

Jamie: Hey, Taylor!

Taylor: Hey, what's up?

Jamie: Not too much, just studying for two awful exams tomorrow.

Taylor: You have two exams tomorrow? Bummer!

Jamie: Tell me about it – AND, they're in my two hardest classes, AND they're both in the morning!

Taylor: Whoa – I am not jealous.

Jamie: Yeah, right? So listen, speaking of all this... remember how the other day we were at dinner and you mentioned something about having ADHD?

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Taylor: Oh, yeah. Why?

Jamie: So, like... do you take any medicine for that?

Taylor: Well... yeah. I take Adderall.

Jamie: Oh man, that's good. So listen, I need to ask for a huge favor. Tomorrow is going to be so awful, and I have so much left to study – could you give me just a couple of them?

Taylor: Oh, wow. I don't know, I mean, I've never actually let anyone else take one before.

Jamie: Don't worry; it's not a big deal. I mean, you probably don't remember to take it every day, right? So you probably have a few left over?

Taylor: I guess...

Jamie: See, you won't even miss them.

Taylor: Well, it isn't just that. Why didn't you just start studying sooner?

Jamie: I mean, I was studying earlier; but then Emily wanted to go get dinner, and then we ran into Dan and Cory, so we hung out with them for a bit – I mean, I just had other things to do. Plus, I'm really tired, and I haven't been feeling good ever since that party last weekend... I just need a boost, ya know? Taylor, please?

Taylor: Listen, I want to help you - it's just that Adderall is legit. I have to get a new prescription for it every month, and the pharmacist where I pick it up is always reminding me of all of these side effects it has...

Jamie: Taylor, I don't think it's really that big of a deal. Lots of the kids at my high school used it all the time. I have friends here now who do it, and obviously they're surviving – one of them even told me they'd never study without it again. I don't even think any of them have had any of these, so called, "side effects" at all.

Taylor: Yeah, but what if YOU did have side effects? I even do sometimes! And Jamie, do your friends really use it all the time? Now that I think about it, I'm pretty sure the reason I have to get a new prescription every month is because it can be abused...

Jamie: Abused? Like a drug? Seriously? I've never heard of anyone really being addicted to Adderall. Besides, I'm just taking it this one time, Taylor. And think about it, YOU take it every day, right? If you can take it, why can't I?

Taylor: Because I actually have ADHD, Jamie!

Jamie: I mean, I think I do, too. I'm always getting distracted, which is why I hate studying so much. Taylor, I'm not arguing with you, I just don't want you to think it's such a big deal. I promise I'll be fine, and honestly, without it I don't know if I'll even pass these exams. Please Taylor? C'mon, please?

Scene 2: Uppers, downers, and on-the-grounders

Narrator: It's Friday night. Casey and Alex, both college juniors, are at a house party near campus. They've just arrived and the two are leaning against a wall while party music plays and their peers drink and chat around them.

Casey: This party isn't too bad, right?

Alex: I don't know, I guess it's ok. Who do you even know here?

Casey: Actually, not too many people – it's my friend's friend's place.

Alex: For real? Well then I guess we're just gonna have to jump in. Go introduce yourself to those two over there.

Casey: No way, you go first.

Alex: It's YOUR "friend's" party.

Casey: So then YOU owe me for bringing you here!

Alex: Ok, whatever – let's go grab some drinks. A few beers in, and neither of us will care who talks first, or what we say.

Casey: OK sweet – but first, check this out, I can't believe I just remembered this. Remember Jamie, from my English class? Turns out Jamie has a friend with ADHD who is willing to share Adderall to study – but yesterday, there were a couple extra, so I bought them! I figured we could use them tonight!

Alex: Wait – Adderall? I mean, isn't that, like, a controlled substance?

Casey: I don't even know what that means. It's just an Adderall. And you're welcome?!

Alex: Well thanks, I guess, but, like, if it's controlled, isn't that super illegal?

Casey: Whoa, easy there – I'm not trying to give you crack – it's just an Adderall! I use them to study sometimes, and one of my friends parties with them all the time. They're like uppers, but they're a medicine, so they're safer. Here (tries to hand a pill to Alex).

Alex: (steps back, not taking it) Are you sure about that? I mean, do you even know if we can take them with alcohol?

Casey: I don't know, I guess – that's what my friend does. I think alcohol's a downer, so I guess they balance out.

Alex: That doesn't really sound right.

Casey: Well then have it with a soda, geez. Just trust me, I promise I'm not trying to kill you! I'm just trying to have some fun!

Alex: I know, Casey, but this whole thing just feels shady to me. You know I'm trying to get into med school – I don't want to wake up tomorrow in the police station.

Casey: Are you kidding me? It is JUST an Adderall, Alex, don't be such a buzzkill! Everyone takes pills like this nowadays, we're not the first! Just loosen up, it'll be fun, I promise! Here (offers the pill to Alex again).