

Youth Substance Abuse is a Challenge in Our Communities

By Melinda Oliphant

10 January 2025

It's heartbreaking to see the devastating impact of substance abuse on individuals, families, and even communities.

Walking down the streets of Bronville, where I am from, standing at the street corner where adolescent boys and girls are sitting under a tree and doing drugs. This scene made me think about the place that I come from. This is a common problem.

A lot of young people are struggling to get out of substance abuse, it is not easy for the youth of Bronville who are faced with other problems. Almost 90 percent of the youth is in substance abuse here, and it hurts because some of them do not want to be helped. But it is clear that they need help.

Not so long ago, New Bronville started a support group to help people who are addicted to drug use to get help to be themselves again. Only a few young people were willing to get help, and I am happy to say that the support group is growing slowly but surely.

Substance abuse is a painful reality that affects us all, either directly or indirectly and it is time we come together to find working solutions. Addiction can have a deep impact on family affecting their emotional well-being and overall quality of life. Hosting events such as walks or festivals to raise awareness can also help the youth know that substances are dangerous.

In trying to understand the problem of drug use in Bronville, Karibu spoke to community members. Clayton Wadrif (44) from the South African National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence said, "By having an honest and open conversations with your children about substance abuse and as a parent you need to monitor your child for warning signs of substance abuse, such as changes in behaviour or appearance."

"Substance abuse is always bound to hurt a young person's life. It can move their focus, shifting from having goals and purpose to neglecting their future. They can ruin their futures in a way that they can stop attending school," according to Morgan Bingwa (26) who works with tattoos in the area. Bingwa argues that drug-dependent youth begin to steal and just become menaces to their families and society.

For an addicted person's recovery to go well, family members need to be a little less judgmental and offer emotional support to the (young) person and help them build their confidence back.

And just to reveal something, I am a proud recovering drug addict and want to say that those who start the journey to recovery should always remember not to give up.

This article is an opinion piece submitted on 07 January 2025. The views expressed by the author do not necessarily reflect those of Karibu! Online or Khanya College. You may republish this article, so long as you credit the authors and Karibu! Online (www.Karibu.org.za), and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the

original article.