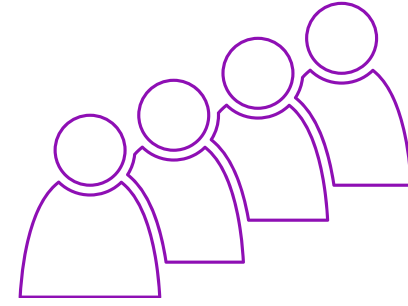


# Caregiver High Risk Substance Use and Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

An estimated **21% of Canadians**, about 6 million people, will meet the criteria for addiction in their lifetime.



**1 in 4** students are exposed to higher risk substance use in the home.



Caregivers with higher risk substance use come from diverse backgrounds with varying academic, social & emotional strengths.



## Supporting children who have a caregiver with SUD

- 1 Use person-centered language
- 2 Use a trauma-informed lens
- 3 Understand the stigma associated with SUDs

For more information, check out our **Stigma** and **Trauma-Informed Practices (TIPs)** infographics

## Schools are a protective factor

- Provide **stability** and **structure** for youth in chaotic home environments.
- Increase youth's **protective factors** such as enhancing their communication skills, building on their strengths, learning positive coping skills, and developing a feeling of self-worth and autonomy
- Strive for a **compassionate, trusting, and safe** environment
- Can increase access to internal **resources** like the school counselor and educational programs, and may be able to **connect families and students** to supports outside of the school

**Teachers can...**  
Offer support and connect children with the resources they need

School-level interventions can nurture teacher-student relationships and provide routines.

### Four Take-Home Messages

**Addiction is a disease**

**It's not your fault**

**You are not alone**

**It's OK to talk**



For examples and common Q&A's that students may have about caregivers drinking alcohol, [click this link!](#)

# Caregiver Substance Use Can Impact Families

- Caregivers who use substances may have challenges in caring for their children.
- Caregiver substance use is not the sole indicator of inadequate parenting but may contribute to an increased risk of child abuse or neglect.
- Substance use is different for everyone, with varying benefits and harms.

It's important to approach this topic delicately due to the secrecy, shame, guilt, and fear often associated with substance use.

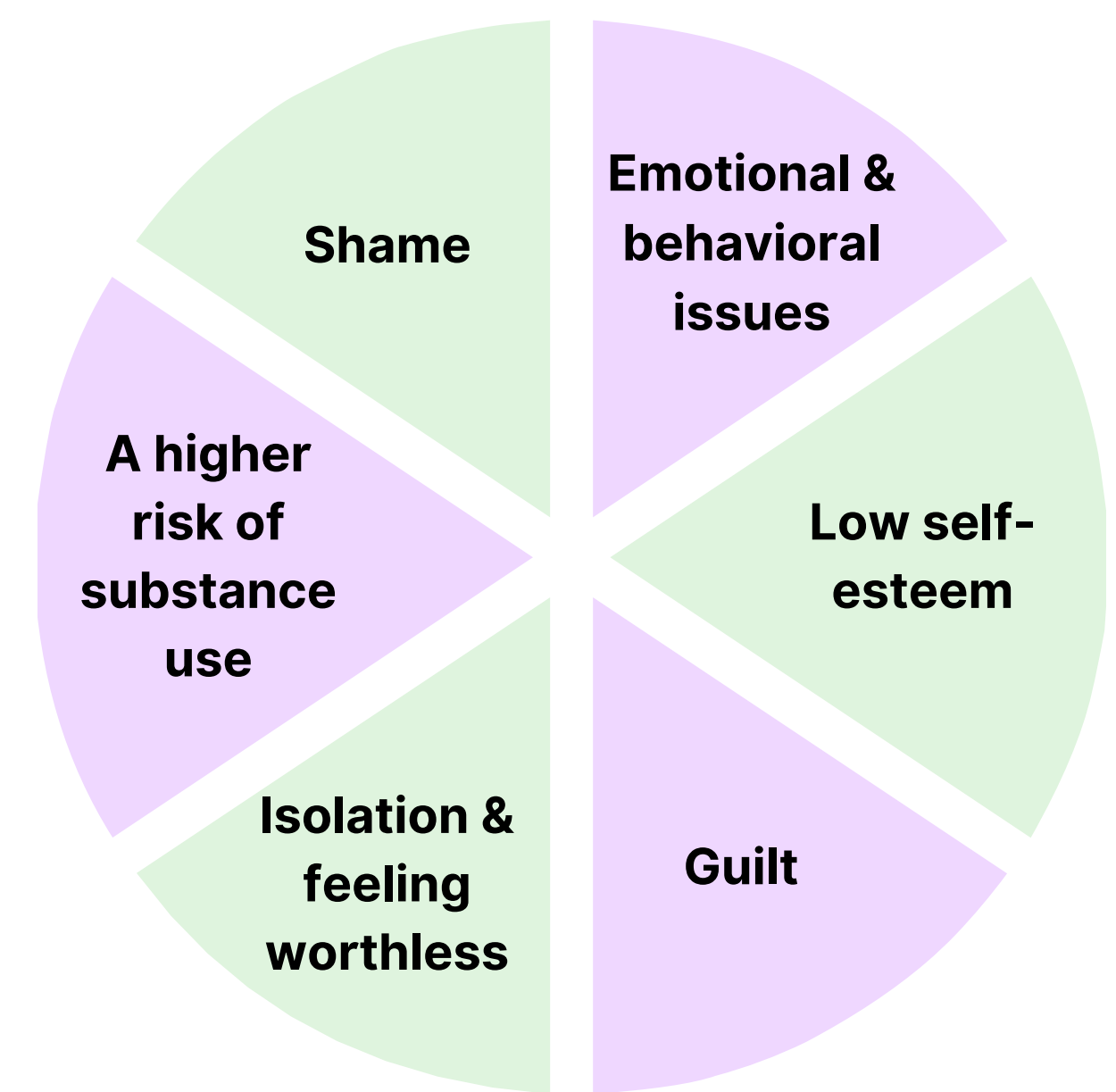


Substance use can be seen on a spectrum. People can move back and forth along the spectrum in their lifetime.

Caregivers with SUDs are highly **stigmatized** by multiple systems (e.g., healthcare, education, legal, social). As a result, they are more likely to experience **discrimination** and **health inequities**.

Children of caregivers with SUDs frequently experience **stigma** and **challenges** by association.

## Challenges for children



For more information visit us at: [www.decyde.ca](http://www.decyde.ca)

## Tips for Teachers: Approaching Conversations in a Supportive and Caring Manner

- Create a Safe and Non-Judgmental Environment** → Classroom = a safe space where students feel comfortable sharing
- Listen Actively** → Listen attentively and empathetically
- Use Age-Appropriate Language** → Tailor your language to the child's age and comprehension level
- Validate Their Feelings** → Acknowledge their emotions; it's okay to feel a certain way
- Avoid Making Assumptions** → Allow the child to share what they are comfortable sharing
- Reinforce Their Strengths and Coping Skills** → Highlight the child's strengths and resilience
- Offer Resources and Support** → Ensure that they understand where to seek help if needed
- Foster a Sense of Normalcy** → This can provide stability in their life during turbulent times
- Maintain Privacy and Confidentiality** → Assure the child you will only share information with professionals
- Involve additional internal or external supports** → If needed, involve school counselors/social workers

While educators have a responsibility to maintain confidentiality, students should know that there is a **duty to report** any signs of abuse or neglect. In these cases, others may be made aware of the student's situation. To report a concern of suspected child abuse and/or neglect, call toll-free 1-833-552-2368

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