



High School Lesson 3

Learning Activity 4: Stigma

Myth
vs.
Fact

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Myth vs. Fact

Statements

Myth

**People use substances as an excuse for bad
behaviour.**

Fact

Substance use and addiction are health issues, not excuses. People are responsible for their actions, but recovery and harm-reduction approaches, not judgment, lead to positive change.

Myth

People who use substances are weak.

Fact

Using substances or developing an addiction is not a sign of weakness. Seeking help and working toward recovery shows strength and resilience.

Myth

People who use substances are dangerous or out of control.

Fact

Most people who use substances are not dangerous. Substance use exists on a spectrum, from no use to low-risk use to dependency, and everyone's experience is different.

Myth

People who use drugs can't be trusted.

Fact

Stigma, not truth, often creates mistrust. With support and understanding, people can rebuild relationships and live healthy, productive lives.

Myth

**People who use substances should be
ashamed.**

Fact

Shame prevents people from asking for help. Addiction is a health condition, not a moral failure. Compassion helps recovery; judgment makes things worse.

Myth

People who use substances can't recover.

Fact

Recovery is possible. Many people make positive changes through counselling, community support, and harm-reduction strategies.

Myth

**You can tell if someone uses substances
just by looking at them.**

Fact

**Substance use is often invisible. You can't know what someone is going through based on appearance.
Everyone deserves kindness and empathy.**

Myth

**Talking about substance use encourages
people to use.**

Fact

Open, honest conversations about substance use help people make safer, more informed decisions. Silence and fear only make things worse.

Myth

People who use substances can't have normal relationships or contribute to society.

Fact

Many people who use substances or are in recovery are students, parents, workers, and community leaders. Support and connection help them thrive, not stigma.

Myth

People who use substances can never or get better.

Fact

Recovery is possible for everyone. Many people reduce or stop their use, rebuild their lives, and thrive with the right supports, such as counselling, community programs, or harm-reduction strategies.