

Neurodiversity, Stress & Addiction Activity Guide Grade 6-12



Know Your Neuro

Quiz Questions

1) Neurodiverse youth don't have to worry about addiction because?

- A. They are risk averse (don't go near risky things)
- B. Avoid social situations
- C. Prefer routine and predictability
- D. This is a myth. They are at higher risk for addiction.

2) Hypofrontality happens when there is reduced activity in the _____ arresting development of vital _____.

- A. Frontal Lobe; Executive functioning skills
- B. Right brain; Left brain
- C. Limbic system; Brain Stem
- D. Amygdala; Medulla Oblongata

3) Neurodivergent youth are at greater risk for:

- A. Gaming addiction
- B. Gambling
- C. Technology overuse
- D. All of the above

4) What neurotransmitter is commonly disrupted in neurodiversity and in addiction?

- A. Adrenaline
- B. Melatonin
- C. Dopamine
- D. Brownie bites

5) What is an example of an avoidant and an active coping skill?

- A. Exercising; Shutting down
- B. Escaping with a screen; Sharing emotions
- C. Talking with a friend; Using cannabis
- D. Getting a good night's rest; Doom scrolling

6) We should practice our active coping skills because of the brain's rule which says what?

- A. Be lazy because it will all work out
- B. Do too much and stress yourself out
- C. Use the skills or we may lose them
- D. Be squishy like a brain

Classroom Activities

Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

In a small groups or share pairs, ask students to discuss which scenario they relate to the most and what coping skills would be helpful:

- A youth with Autism feels isolated and alone. They think that if they use marijuana with a group of teens, they will be accepted and have friends.
- A youth with ADHD gets behind on their homework, misses assignments, has difficulty staying organized, and has parents who are not happy with them.
- A young person with learning difficulties tries to mask their differences so that no one will know they learn in different ways.
- A person with alexithymia is bullied by their classmates. They have so many feelings but do not know how to label them and talk about them.
- A neurodiverse individual feels sad and depressed and needs help.

Obstacles to Being Me

Ask students if they experience any of the obstacles listed below. Ask them to discuss how these obstacles show up in real life and get in the way of being themselves or feeling comfortable with who they are.

Masking: Hiding natural behaviors or tendencies to fit in socially but may lead to exhaustion or stress.

Sensory Overload: When the brain receives more sensory information than it can efficiently process leading to feeling stress, trouble focusing, and difficulty remaining calm.

Alexithymia: Difficulty experiencing, identifying, describing, and understanding emotions leading to overwhelming feelings, dysregulation, and difficulty working through emotions.

Self-Management Challenges: Trouble getting started, planning, organizing, or prioritizing which can be seen as being lazy.

Active vs. Avoidant

Active coping means facing problems head-on. **Avoidant coping** is escaping from problems. In pairs, have students ask each other the following questions:

- What are your favorite active coping mechanisms? What are your favorite avoidant coping mechanisms?
- What are the pros and cons of your active and avoidant coping mechanisms?
- How difficult or easy is it to choose the healthiest coping mechanism? Why?
- What could help you make the healthiest active coping choice?
- How would you protect your brain and yourself if someone wanted you to use substances with them?
- How long is too long to play your video games? When does your video game play become a problem?
- How could you balance your active and avoidant coping mechanisms?