

A DOCUMENTARY BY KYLE SANTORO

# FENTANYL HIGH

## THE STUDY GUIDE

DEVELOPED FOR FAMILIES, SCHOOLS,  
HEALTH PRACTITIONERS, AND NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATIONS WORKING WITH TEENS







# A NOTE FROM KYLE SANTORO

Thank you for this opportunity to share my FENTANYL HIGH documentary film and this study guide with your class. Shot and edited over 14 months, the film digs behind the social media facades to reveal what high school teens honestly think deep down about the fentanyl epidemic, how teens today are dealing with their emotional pain in school and at home, why they are self-medicating and what can be done to prevent these tragedies, as well the first-hand experiences of paramedics, government officials, doctors, and parents whose teens have died from fentanyl poisoning.

The first screening of FENTANYL HIGH was on May 16, 2023 at the Los Gatos High School Theater to a sold-out audience of more than 400 people. Following the screening of the film, there was a panel discussion, with members of the cast, experts on fentanyl poisoning, parents of teens who have died from fentanyl poisoning, school administrators and members of the community. Following the screening, on our website, many members of the audience submitted critical feedback about the film's content, structure, style, and emotional impact.

I listened to the audience feedback and had conversations with many high school students to finalize the film into a full-length, 75 minutes feature documentary which then premiered on December 6, 2023 at the CineLux Los Gatos Theatre in downtown Los Gatos to a sold-out audience with a 240+ waiting list. The film then screened in theatres throughout the Bay Area, including SFJAZZ in San Francisco and it is now



## KYLE SANTORO OWNER OF LC2 PRODUCTIONS & DIRECTOR OF FENTANYL HIGH

LC2 Productions started in the summer of 2022 as a film production company specializing in telling impactful, inspiring stories through the art of film. Through films like FENTANYL HIGH, Kyle strives to tell the next generation of stories that will change society. He is currently a freshman at The Ohio State University where he is studying English and anthropology.

screening throughout the country in theatres, schools, and health facilities. I hope that this can be the beginning of real conversations with more teens coming together to design real solutions.

*Kyle Santoro*



## A NOTE FROM DR. ZICHERMAN

I have been honored to work with Kyle and introduce the FENTANYL HIGH documentary film during theater screenings and participate in several panel discussions. This companion study guide is so thorough and offers incredible insight from the perspective of how high school teens process the fentanyl epidemic. Students, parents, educators, and communities at large can gain a deeper understanding of fentanyl's risks and explore actionable steps to create awareness, support harm reduction efforts, and advocate for systemic change within their communities.

*Brad Zicherman, MD*

## A NOTE FROM AMY RAMSAY, MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

FENTANYL HIGH provided a sobering and insightful look into the devastating impact of the opioid crisis on individuals, families, and communities. This documentary is a wake-up call for society to confront the realities of this crisis and work towards solutions that save lives. As an educator and mother, it reinforced



**DR. BRADLEY ZICHERMAN**  
**CLINICAL ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR**  
**OF CHILD & ADOLESCENT**  
**PSYCHIATRY AND CHILD**  
**DEVELOPMENT AT STANFORD**  
**UNIVERSITY**

Dr. Zicherman has led on-stage panel discussions following the Bay Area screenings of FENTANYL HIGH. He has also contributed to this Study Guide.

the importance of education, prevention, and compassionate support for those affected by substance abuse. This is a must-watch for all middle and high school students, staff, and parents.

*Amy Ramsay*



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# WELCOME

This is the companion study guide to FENTANYL HIGH, a film made by high school teens for high school and middle school teens and their parents.

**FENTANYL HIGH IS  
NOW SCREENING  
ALL OVER THE USA**

**OUR GOAL IS TO  
REACH AS MANY  
TEENS & PARENTS  
AS POSSIBLE**



Director of FENTANYL HIGH, Kyle Santoro, and LC2 Productions have created a new strategic approach to social change called a SOCIAL HACK that utilizes the documentary film as a catalyst for communities to bring their collective resources together to design real strategies to combat this fentanyl epidemic.

In 2022, the *San Jose Mercury News* wrote, “Los Gatos High School junior Kyle Santoro is on a mission to make sure teens and parents talk not just about the dangers of fentanyl but why kids are reaching for drugs in the first place.” Thus far, FENTANYL HIGH has been covered by all the major press outlets, including over 20 print publications, as well as NBC Bay Area News, ABC News, and KTSF Channel 26, the largest Bay Area Chinese news TV station.

Whether you are a teacher, parent, healthcare professional, or teen, please watch the film and use the resources in this FENTANYL HIGH Study Guide to become more aware about this epidemic. We know it can be overwhelming to organize community events, but together we can make a difference.





# OUR VISION IS MUCH MORE THAN A FILM

Through this FENTANYL HIGH Study Guide, we aim to spread awareness about the fentanyl epidemic that is hitting this generation of youth. Our goal is to prevent more tragedies of accidental fentanyl poisonings and deaths, which has already killed too many teens across the country just this year. Join us as we use our platform to spark national discussions about fentanyl poisoning and save teen lives!



 Kyle Santoro and Supervisor Simitian at Los Gatos, CA screening



# HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

## FOR DESIGNING EFFECTIVE FENTANYL SOCIAL HACKS



## ENGAGE YOUR TEENS IN A TESTED MODEL FOR COMMUNITIES WANTING TO HACK THIS GROWING TEEN FENTANYL EPIDEMIC

This Study Guide has been designed to work directly with the topics discussed in the FENTANYL HIGH film. You can choose to use this study guide in a variety of ways, including:

- (1) to educate yourself about fentanyl poisoning
- (2) to facilitate conversations with small groups of teens in the classroom or at home
- (3) to start a SOCIAL HACK in your school or community





# PLANNING A SOCIAL HACK

It is not as simple as watching a documentary film to change teen behavior.



**TEACHERS, NONPROFIT LEADERS, AND PARENTS NEED  
TO JOIN FORCES AND INVEST IN OUR TEENS**



# FENTANYL HIGH







The FENTANYL HIGH SOCIAL HACK is a multi-faceted approach for engaging teens, their parents, and the whole community to facilitate new conversations about teen fentanyl poisoning in order to save real lives. Discussions are not enough. This study guide provides six essential steps, as well as resources for designing an effective strategy to reach teens that we have been using in communities throughout the country.

## 1. LEARN THE FACTS

Talking about drugs and addiction in schools and family rooms is often taboo. Because it seems tough to have these conversations, it is difficult to know what is really part of the drug landscape that is affecting our teens. Knowing what is fact or fiction about fentanyl poisoning is now literally a matter of life and death. We have been working with Dr. Bradley Zicherman to provide the most recent and accurate facts about fentanyl, substance abuse, overdoses, as well as harm reduction strategies for teens suffering from mental health or addiction.

Because social media so heavily influences what teens understand as myth or fact, this study guide helps to dispell untruths related to the potency of fentanyl, fentanyl addiction, how to handle an overdose, the application of Narcan, and harm reduction efficacy. It is critical that students and their parents are made aware of the real dangers of fentanyl poisoning and where to get help or to get free Narcan.

**WE PROVIDE ALL THE  
NECESSARY MATERIALS  
AND RESOURCES TO  
GALVANIZE YOUR  
COMMUNITY TO INSPIRE  
REAL CHANGE THAT CAN  
ACTUALLY SAVE LIVES**





## 2. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The second step is building partnerships with community partners like town council members, county officials, local police and fire departments, healthcare professionals, nonprofit leaders, and families directly impacted by fentanyl poisoning. Building alliances helps to create a complete story of how this fentanyl epidemic is impacting your community, which can then be used to build out networks for distributing important lifeline resources to teens and their families.

## 3. SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Distributing your story widely is key. We provide PSA materials for your social media campaigns to promote the date and location of your screening and panel discussion.

**ORGANIZE A SOCIAL  
HACK IN YOUR  
COMMUNITY TODAY!**

## 4. COMMUNITY FILM SCREENING

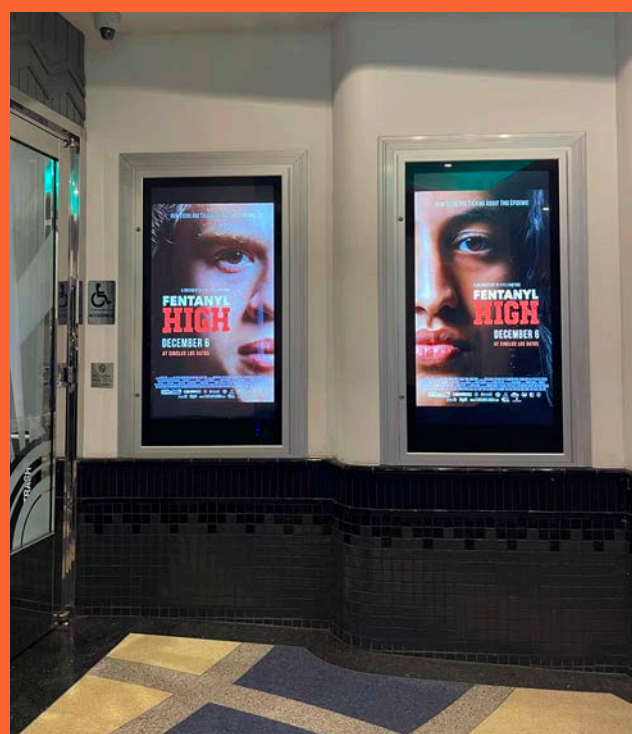
Screening FENTANYL HIGH pulls on the heart strings of your community, but in order to fill all of the seats of a theater, it takes dedicated planning and follow-through to coordinate the screening with all of your partners. Create a committee to manage and promote the event.

## 5. HARM REDUCTION RESOURCES

On the day of a screening, invite speakers from local harm reduction organizations to join a panel to share their experiences with fentanyl. Also encourage them to setup tables in the lobby of the theater with resources like Narcan and mental health services that are available to students before and after the screening.

## 6. OPEN DISCUSSION SESSIONS

Parents, school counselors, physical education teachers, school wellness directors, nonprofit leaders, and local law enforcement officers can use the facts, statistics, and stories in this study guide to conduct classroom Q&As and focused small group discussion circles before and after a film screening.





# AN INTRODUCTION TO FENTANYL

## Let's learn the basic facts!

- What exactly is fentanyl?
- Why is fentanyl so dangerous?
- How do people take fentanyl?
- How are teens getting fentanyl?
- How to handle a fentanyl overdose?



On a typical Friday night, there are so many parents who let their kids go to parties, while telling them to make “smart” decisions, knowing that teens could potentially die from drug overdose, get raped, get arrested, get charged with underage drinking or possession of drugs, or incur accidental death from alcohol poisoning. This is already like sending your kids into a fire and saying, “be smart and don’t get burned,” or saying, “it won’t be my kid... not mine.”

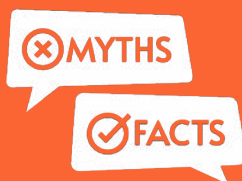
What exactly is fentanyl? What is this drug and how are kids getting it at parties and at home? What is fentanyl poisoning? Do you really die within minutes? If parents knew more about the dangers of fentanyl, they would probably rethink how to talk with their kids about it. So, let’s take a deeper look at the facts about fentanyl and why it is so dangerous to our teens.



# WHAT EXACTLY IS FENTANYL?

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid created in labs in the 1960s for pain relief. The use of opioids started about two centuries ago. First, people created opium from poppy plants. From there in the early 1800s, scientists isolated the main opium ingredient, which is morphine. In 1898, scientists took morphine and created heroin, which is 2 to 3 times more potent than morphine. In the 1960s, Janssen Pharmaceuticals, originally a Belgian company, created fentanyl, which is 50 times more potent than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine, and has been used effectively for pain management in surgeries for decades. <sup>1</sup> In “The Facts About Fentanyl,” the California

## FENTANYL IS PRESENT IN WEED



NOT TRUE. Fentanyl burns and becomes inactive at high temperatures when in sustained direct contact with a flame. While it is possible for weed to be laced with opioids, it would be an inefficient delivery system for the drug despite this persistent myth. Fentanyl contamination primarily occurs in powders and pressed pills. <sup>a</sup>



# 79%

## Fentanyl is in 79% of Gen Z drug deaths

In the illegal drug market, chemicals are way more profitable raw materials than plants. That's why fentanyl is used to press fake prescription pills, sold deceptively as Xanax, Percocet, Oxycodone, and more. It is also found in cocaine, ecstasy, heroin and meth. Drug users are frequently unaware that their drug contains fentanyl, which puts them at extremely high risk of accidental poisoning. That's why fentanyl is involved in 79% of Gen Z drugs deaths, higher than any other age group.” <sup>b</sup>

Department of Public Health (CDPH) Substance and Addiction Prevention Branch states that “fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. It is a major contributor to fatal and nonfatal overdoses in California and the United States. There are two types of fentanyl: pharmaceutical fentanyl and illicitly manufactured fentanyl (illicit fentanyl). Both are synthetic opioids. Pharmaceutical fentanyl is prescribed by doctors to treat severe pain, such as while in the hospital for and after surgery or for advanced-stage cancer. Illicit fentanyl is made illegally and distributed through illegal drug markets for its heroin-like effect.” <sup>2</sup> To learn more facts about fentanyl, download “The Facts about Fentanyl” PDF fact sheet from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <sup>3</sup>



⊗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

## FENTANYL OVERDOSE CAN HAPPEN THROUGH TOUCHING OR BEING NEAR FENTANYL

NOT TRUE. Fentanyl will not absorb through the skin from accidental exposure, and it is not strong enough to cause an overdose from airborne exposure. News articles about first responders overdosing from airborne fentanyl exposure is often the result of a panic attack. <sup>c</sup>



⊗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

## FENTANYL IS EVERYWHERE, AND EVERY PILL IS LACED, EVEN CANNABIS

NOT TRUE. We also haven't seen anything yet in vaping. It would be really hard to vape fentanyl because the boiling point to get it into vaporizing is about 875 degrees, and most of the vape pens heat to about 400 or 425 degrees, maximum. Your lungs would be severely damaged at those temperatures. As for cannabis, there's no marketing advantage with some of these prevalence myths. <sup>d</sup>

⊗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

## FENTANYL IS IN EVERYTHING

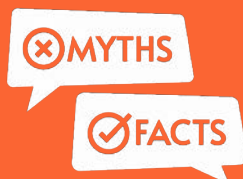
NOT TRUE. According to the *International Journal of Drug Policy*, many people who inject drugs are unknowingly using fentanyl, which may increase their risk for overdose and potentially their tolerance to fentanyl if it is used over time. Current data and trends point to the threat of fentanyl being primarily contained to illicit opioids, pharmaceutical drugs (like oxycodone or benzodiazapines), methamphetamine, and intermittently, cocaine, in the Americas. <sup>e</sup>

# WHY IS FENTANYL SO DANGEROUS?

Fentanyl is “extremely potent.” It is 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine. Illicit fentanyl has been added to other drugs to make them cheap, powerful and addictive, including counterfeit pills, methamphetamine, heroin and cocaine. Illicit fentanyl mixed with any drugs increases the chance of a fatal overdose. Illicit fentanyl is sold by itself or combined with other drugs.

Most are made to look like pharmaceutical medications like Adderall, Xanax, Percocet, or OxyContin. What this means is that “the only safe medications are ones prescribed by a trusted medical professional and dispensed by a licensed pharmacist.” <sup>4</sup>

## IT IS EASY TO TELL IF A DRUG HAS FENTANYL



NOT TRUE. Fentanyl is often undetectable when mixed with other substances as it has no distinct color, smell or taste that can be easily identified. This makes it incredibly risky as people may unknowingly consume fentanyl, leading to accidental overdoses. Given the inability to visually detect fentanyl, harm reduction strategies involve the use of fentanyl test strips. <sup>f</sup>

# 84%

## 84% of fatal overdoses had fentanyl

Fentanyl on its own is the key culprit in adolescent overdoses. The number of Americans ages 10-19 who have died from a drug overdose that involves fentanyl is growing. While in 2019, only 253 of these deaths were recorded, there were 884 in 2021. <sup>9</sup>



The United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) found that 40% of all fake pills sold contain a lethal dose of fentanyl. Also, it is almost impossible to tell if drugs are laced with fentanyl because you cannot see, smell or taste the difference. Even fentanyl test strips cannot be 100% accurate. Naloxone [Narcan®] is the only antidote that reverses the effects of an opioid overdose. <sup>5</sup>

More and more young people are mistakenly taking pills containing fentanyl, not knowing that the street drugs supply has been contaminated and thinking that they are taking the actual stimulants or opioids like Adderall, Xanax, Percocet, or OxyContin they they paid for online. Prescription drugs are legal and are issued by doctors to treat a medical illness or medical condition. They are to be taken only by the individual for whom it is prescribed.

⊗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

## FENTANYL PATCHES ARE NOT ABUSABLE OR DANGEROUS

NOT TRUE. The patches are intended to provide prolonged pain relief by releasing fentanyl through the skin steadily, but any alteration or misuse can lead to potentially life-threatening consequences... It's crucial for individuals who are prescribed fentanyl patches to use them precisely as directed by their healthcare provider and to store them securely to prevent theft or unintended use by others. Disposing of used or unneeded patches properly is also essential to avoid potential misuse or accidental exposure. <sup>h</sup>

⊗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

## ONLY ADDICTS DIE FROM FENTANYL OVERDOSES

NOT TRUE. Fentanyl overdoses can occur in anyone, regardless of whether they have a substance use disorder or are using it as prescribed for pain management. The high potency of fentanyl makes it extremely dangerous, and even a small amount can be lethal... Many overdoses occur because people unknowingly consume illicit fentanyl, often mixed with other illegal drugs to increase potency. Individuals may be unaware of the presence of fentanyl in these substances, leading to accidental overdoses due to its strength. <sup>i</sup>



⊗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

## FENTANYL IS SIMILAR TO OTHER PAIN RELIEVERS

NOT TRUE. Fentanyl's unique properties and potency make its medical use and abuse distinct from other opioids. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), fentanyl is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine and about 50 times more potent than heroin. Given this high potency, fentanyl is typically reserved for severe pain management, such as cancer patients or post-operative cases where other pain relievers are ineffective. <sup>j</sup>



# HOW DO PEOPLE TAKE FENTANYL?

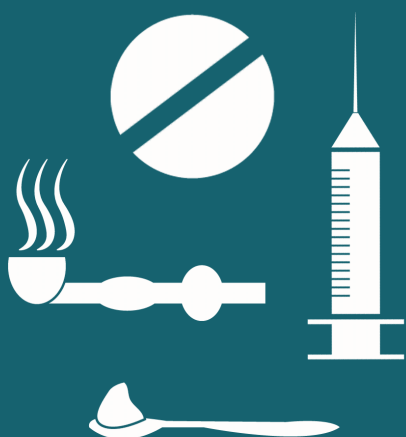
Americans, with so much availability of pharmaceutical drugs prescribed by a medical professional and over the counter medications sold in drug stores, have become desensitized to the danger that is in every drug. Self-medicating without professional supervision has become the norm. Teens are taking this social norm a step further by taking other people's medications or self-medicating without a prescription from a licensed healthcare provider. However, without professional or parental supervision, teens naively trust peer networks without caring about the dangers of an unlicensed supply chain or drug manufacturer. Many are unaware of the dangers from taking counterfeit pills by purchasing them through social media or an online pharmacy instead of getting

**I ONLY NEED TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT FENTANYL IF I AM USING CERTAIN DRUGS LIKE HEROIN**

✗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

**NOT TRUE.** Fentanyl has been found in not just heroin, but cocaine, methamphetamine, counterfeit pills, and other street drugs. Testing every time before you use may not be enough, and some drugs like weed don't need to be tested at all. <sup>k</sup>



# 10%

## 10% of teens had treatment history

Only 1 in 10 teens and tweens who died from a drug overdose had a history of treatment for a substance use problem, and only 1 in 7 had ever experienced a prior nonfatal overdose. More than 4 in 10 adolescents who died from an overdose had a history of mental health conditions. <sup>l</sup>

them through their doctors. Buying and taking pills from an unknown source today can be deadly. In fact, the majority of fentanyl related deaths in the U.S. were purely accidental. The teens and young adults never knew what they were really taking. They trusted their friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, or drug dealers too naively. They did not realize that the drug supply chain was already contaminated with illicit fake pills masquerading as legit brand names like Adderall, Percocet, Xanax or Oxycodone. According to Codi Peterson, a doctor of pharmacy at the Children's Hospital of Orange County in California, "The biggest risk for teens misusing fentanyl is the poor quality standards these fentanyl pills are made in; poor quality control in manufacturing leads to variable amounts of fentanyl in each pill. This variability can mean that while one pill may be taken (usually snorted or smoked, but sometimes taken orally) with very little consequence, the next pill could have much more fentanyl and could even be deadly." <sup>6</sup>

⊗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

## CONSUMING ALCOHOL WITH FENTANYL IS SAFE AS LONG AS IT IS PRESCRIBED BY A DOCTOR

NOT TRUE. Consuming alcohol while taking fentanyl is hazardous. Alcohol and fentanyl each have substantial sedative effects. Both substances depress the central nervous system, and their combined effects can slow or stop breathing, leading to a lack of oxygen to the brain, which can result in a coma, permanent brain damage, or death. <sup>m</sup>



⊗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

## FENTANYL ADDICTION IS RARE

NOT TRUE. Given its high potency, even individuals using fentanyl as a legitimate pain management solution under medical supervision can develop dependence and, potentially, addiction. Furthermore, individuals using fentanyl illicitly are also at risk of developing an addiction due to its powerful opioid effects. Fentanyl addiction can have severe and life-altering consequences, including deteriorating physical and mental health, strained interpersonal relationships, financial hardship, and increased risk of overdose and death. <sup>n</sup>

⊗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

## PEOPLE WHO TAKE FENTANYL KNOW THE RISKS

NOT TRUE. Often, users do not know the purity of the drugs they're taking. Many of them are unaware they are using fentanyl at all. Fentanyl is tainting the opioid supply, and the stimulant supply. It is being found in illegal supplies of heroin, cocaine, and even in pressed pills. These pills look real but were actually illegally manufactured. People who use these substances are often not aware of the risk. This is resulting in a tragic loss of life. <sup>o</sup>



# HOW ARE TEENS GETTING FENTANYL?

According to Dr. Codi Peterson of Children’s Hospital of Orange County in California, “Young people may unknowingly buy drugs they believe to be something else, but often these other substances are being mixed with fentanyl, which can be deadly.”<sup>7</sup> Young people are getting fentanyl, fentanyl-laced or fentanyl-substituted drugs from Ecommerce websites and social media platforms like Snapchat or from their friends. Advanced technology on smartphones and computer devices have made it

easy for teens and children to purchase substances online without supervision, making them easily scammed by unlicensed or illicit sellers. “The greater accessibility to purchase illegal drugs online and through social media combined with the increasing presence of fentanyl in street

## FENTANYL TEST STRIPS DON’T WORK

✗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

NOT TRUE. Fentanyl test strips are one tool to have in a harm reduction toolbox, and using them is one way to get a person thinking about safer drug use. However, not all strips are the same, and user error and false positives can occur with the test strips.<sup>P</sup>

# 339M

## 339 million deadly doses of fentanyl

In 2024, the DEA (the US government’s Drug Enforcement Agency) seized about 51,100,000 pills of fentanyl and about 7,181 pounds of fentanyl powder. The 2024 fentanyl seizures represent over 339 million deadly doses of fentanyl.<sup>Q</sup>



drugs has led to more children and teens misusing fentanyl-laced substances,” says Dr. Peterson. “Add in the increase of mental health issues in children and teens in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, substance use and overdose rates in children and teens are rising.”<sup>8</sup> According to Robert Valuck, Ph.D., RPh a Clinical Pharmacy Professor at the University of Colorado, Anschutz Medical Campus, illegal lab operators like cartels have created fentanyl from a few precursor molecules they can get from China, Pakistan or India. They have begun to substitute or mix fentanyl into counterfeit prescription drugs, such as fake Oxycodone tablets, fake Xanax tablets, and cocaine. They sell these fake pills substituted with lactose and fentanyl on the black market and social media channels like TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram and call it whatever the buyer wants. In addition, fentanyl shipments are easy to smuggle because they are so tiny compared to heroin and can be quickly sent through different carrier services.<sup>9</sup>





⊗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

### FENTANYL CAN'T BE DETECTED IN DRUG TESTS

NOT TRUE. Fentanyl can indeed be detected through specific drug tests. Standard opioids tests may not always detect fentanyl due to its synthetic nature. Specialized fentanyl tests, often utilizing urine or blood samples, are needed to identify the drug accurately. Standard opioids tests typically detect natural opiates like morphine and codeine and semi-synthetic opioids like heroin. <sup>r</sup>

⊗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

### FENTANYL IS SAFE WHEN PRESCRIBED BY A DOCTOR

NOT TRUE. Despite being safer when used as prescribed, fentanyl is still a powerful narcotic with a high potential for misuse, overdose, dependence and addiction...It's essential for patients to strictly adhere to their doctor's instructions when using fentanyl due to the narrow margin between therapeutic dose and a lethal dose. Misuse (such as taking a higher dose or using it more frequently than prescribed) can result in overdose and death. <sup>s</sup>

⊗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

### FENTANYL IS ALWAYS PRESCRIBED LEGALLY

NOT TRUE. While fentanyl can be prescribed legally, a considerable amount of fentanyl found today is illicitly manufactured and distributed, often leading to unintentional overdoses. Illicitly manufactured fentanyl is often created in clandestine laboratories and can be mixed with other illicit drug products, like heroin, cocaine or methamphetamine, without the consumer's knowledge. The unpredictable potency of illicitly manufactured fentanyl increases the likelihood of overdose. <sup>t</sup>



# WHAT IS NALOXONE AND NARCAN?

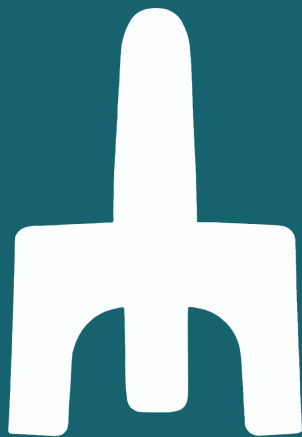
To reduce opioid overdoses, parents and teens are encouraged to buy and carry Naloxone in the car, the purse, or backpack at all times. It's like having a fire extinguisher in the kitchen or an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) in public places for heart attacks or cardiac arrest. You could end up saving a life. Not enough young people have access to Naloxone, which could save a life. "The fact that young people may not have access to Naloxone is mind-boggling. It should be as common as a first aid kit in their education place," [Theo] Krzywicki (founder and CEO of End Overdose said. "The reality is that people are doing drugs right now. The data is showing teen use is skyrocketing, and so being able to have peers carry it is really, really important because then they're going to talk about it. If you're not making it available to students, to their peer groups, you are missing out." <sup>10</sup>

## MIXING OPIOIDS WITH STIMULANTS CAN PREVENT OVERDOSES

✗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

NOT TRUE. Stimulants cannot reverse opioid overdoses. In some cases, using meth or coke, especially at higher doses, can lead to another type of overdose called "overamping". <sup>u</sup>



# 67%

## 67% of overdoses have a bystander

In 67 percent of adolescent overdose deaths, a bystander was present who could have intervened. Naloxone was administered in less than half of cases where a bystander was present. <sup>v</sup>

Prescription opioids, when prescribed by a doctor for pain relief, can be highly addictive and misused. Their harmful effects include sleepiness, confusion, nausea and constipation. Misusing prescription opioids can lead to slowed breathing, which can lead to hypoxia, which can result in coma, brain damage or overdose death.<sup>11</sup> Prescription stimulants can also be highly addictive and misused. Chronic high-dose use is associated with agitation, aggression, panic, suicidal or homicidal tendencies, and other negative health consequences. Prescription stimulant misuse can lead to psychosis, paranoia, heart, nerve or stomach problems or overdose. Remember, the only safe medications are those prescribed by a trusted medical professional and handed out by a licensed pharmacist. If you need to take multiple prescription medications, you need to be supervised by a doctor.<sup>12</sup>

⊗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

## I WILL GET HURT TRYING TO RENDER AID IN AN OVERDOSE SITUATION.

NOT TRUE. Naloxone is very effective and can save a life. Don't let the presence of fentanyl keep you from helping a friend, family member or stranger with an overdose. We can't afford that. We had over 2,000 people in Colorado die last year from drug overdoses. More than half of them involved fentanyl. We can't afford to have people be afraid to render aid for a reason that is unwarranted. <sup>w</sup>



⊗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

## FENTANYL (OR AN ANALOG) IS RESISTANT TO NALOXONE

NOT TRUE. High doses of the synthetic opioid fentanyl cause rapid and sustained vocal cord closure (VCC) leading to airway obstruction that prevents overdose victims from breathing. This airway effect is not caused by morphine-derived opiates (e.g. heroin), is distinct from respiratory depression, resistant to naloxone, and can be lethal. Fentanyl can induce chest wall rigidity, or wooden chest syndrome (WCS). Fentanyl induced skeletal muscle rigidity can cause ventilator failure. <sup>x</sup>

⊗ MYTHS

✓ FACTS

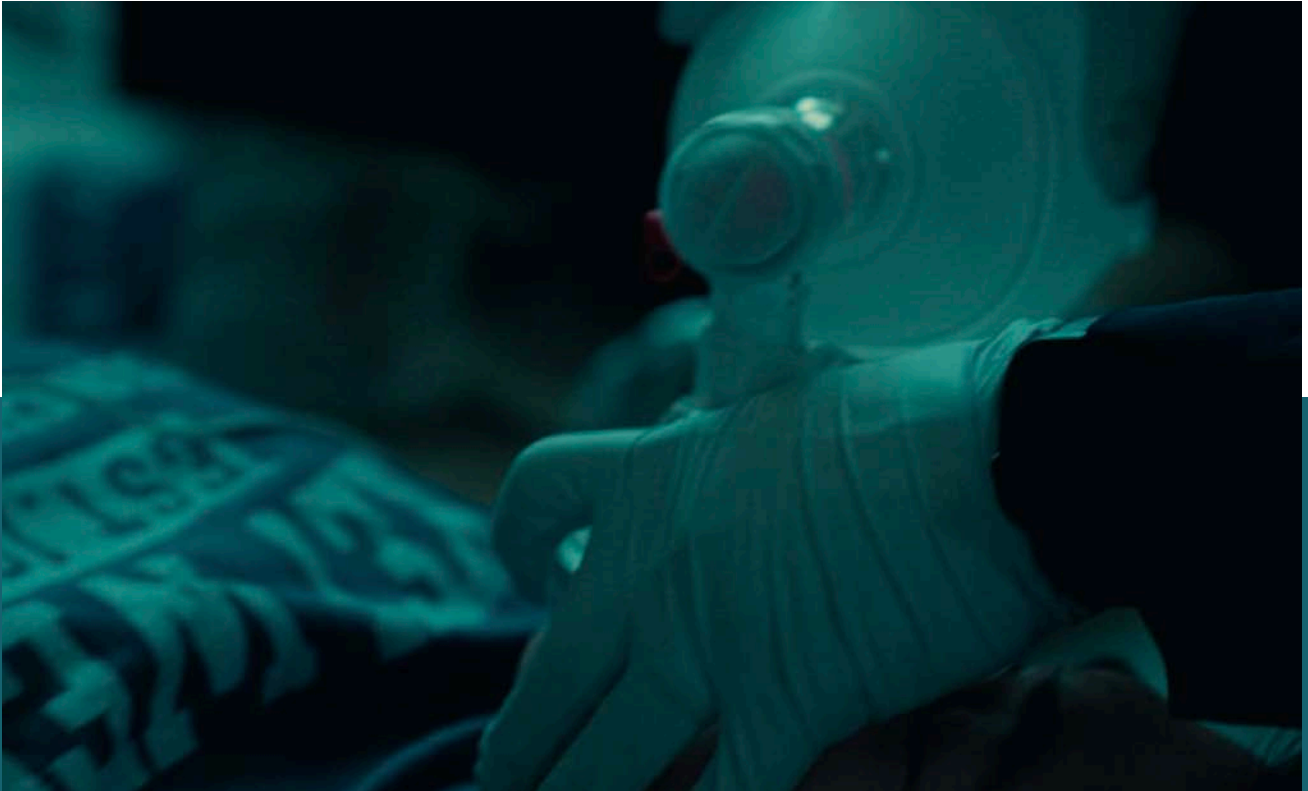
## NALOXONE CANNOT REVERSE FENTANYL OVERDOSES

NOT TRUE. Naloxone, also known by the brand name Narcan, is a life-saving medication that can reverse opioid overdoses, including those caused by fentanyl. It works by binding to the same receptors in the brain that opioids bind to, effectively displacing the opioids and reversing the effects. It's available in different forms, including nasal sprays and auto-injectors, making it accessible for use by both emergency responders and bystanders in emergencies. Symptoms of an overdose include shallow or stopped breathing, blue lips and fingernails, and unresponsiveness. <sup>y</sup>





# SUBSTANCES & OVERDOSES



## THE MANY PATHS TO SUBSTANCE USE

With the right conditions, substance use and abuse can happen to anybody, no matter their age or background. It's like accidentally falling into a hole on the street. If you don't know that a hole is there, you may fall into it. Learning about the fentanyl epidemic is one way to help teens avoid the preventable tragic deaths that have happened to so many young people across the USA.

## HOW OUR SOCIETY IS FAILING OUR TEENS

Today is a culture and generation obsessed with social media. Teens are born into instant access and immediate gratification through technological devices and virtual reality, with little tangible

understanding of how to form healthy social human bonds and connections. Today's consumer culture and new apps offer instant access to buy anything without having to wait.

As a result, this new generation does not know the value of natural highs and lows. This generation does not know how to listen to the message of pain and work through suffering to achieve a goal. In addition, the ubiquitous messaging of pharma companies trying to sell their drugs on TV and social media has created millions of clients who are desensitized to the harmful side effects of prescription medications. We are over stimulated by social media 24/7. We cannot sleep right at night. We cannot shut off the mind. This social norm makes it easy for people to self-medicate without thinking about the consequences of their choices, and in the case of the fentanyl epidemic - to tragic consequences.

## THE FACTORS PRESSURING TEENS TOWARDS SELF-MEDICATION

There are many stressful factors “upstream” that may erode a teen’s self-esteem and self-care and influence them into deciding to take a pill “downstream” for relief or enjoyment. These include:

### INDIVIDUAL

Physical Puberty  
Sports Injuries  
Insomnia  
Chronic Fatigue  
Academic Stress  
Mental Health Issues  
Emotional Pain  
Trauma PTSD

### FAMILY

Divorced Parents  
Family relational conflicts or abuse  
Parents who use prescription medication heavily  
Parents who drink, smoke, or use illicit drugs  
Family economic hardships

### PEER

Social Media  
Drinking Alcohol  
Smoking  
Vaping  
Using Marijuana  
Experimentation with drugs  
Peers who sell drugs

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Any combination of these stressors can result in the taking of one pill, which could result in fentanyl poisoning or a cycle of addiction to drugs such as stimulants, opioids, hallucinogens, or depressants. In most cases, it is impossible to stop without professional help such as medical intervention and in depth psychological healing, learning new skills, and having the support of a trusted, reliable community.

# WHAT IS A DRUG OVERDOSE?

An overdose occurs when a person takes too much of a substance or a combination of substances, whether that is a prescription medication, over-the-counter medication, illicit street drugs, or alcohol, which then overwhelms the body, often leading to medical complications, including death. Most drug overdose deaths involve illicit opioids, illicit stimulants, or a combination of both. Illicit fentanyl (an opioid) is the leading cause of opioid-related drug overdose deaths, and has been found in drugs including heroin, methamphetamine, counterfeit pills and cocaine. Fentanyl, which cannot be seen, smelled or tasted, when mixed with any drugs, increases the odds of a fatal overdose.<sup>13</sup>

## SIGNS OF AN OPIOID OVERDOSE

The main sign of an opioid-related overdose is severe difficulty breathing or not breathing at all: the person is unresponsive and unconscious.

### SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Small, constricted “pinpoint pupils”
- Falling asleep or losing consciousness
- Slow, weak, or no breathing
- Choking or gurgling sounds
- Limp body
- Cold and/or clammy skin
- Discolored skin (especially in lips and nails)

## SIGNS OF A STIMULANT OVERDOSE

The main sign of stimulant-related overdose, also called overamping, is dangerous overheating: the person remains conscious.

### SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Dilated pupils
- Dizziness
- Tremor
- Irritability
- Confusion
- Mood swings
- Nausea or vomiting
- Rapid breathing, fast heart rate or arrhythmia
- Overheating or excessive sweating
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Hallucination
- Psychosis



# HOW TO RESPOND TO AN OVERDOSE

In the “How to Stop the Fentanyl Poison and Drug Epidemic: A Prevention Manual for Advocates” published by the Global Recovery Movement, it states that when it comes to accidental fentanyl poisoning, “You have under 8 minutes to save a teen.”<sup>14</sup>

According to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), you can reverse the overdose with naloxone: “Naloxone is a life-saving medication used to reverse an opioid overdose, including heroin, fentanyl, and prescription opioid medications. Naloxone has very few negative effects, and has no effect if opioids are not in a person’s system. Naloxone will not work to reduce the effects of a stimulant or non-opioid sedatives like xylazine. There is no similar antidote for non-opioid drugs. However, always give naloxone because the person may have unintentionally taken fentanyl.”<sup>15</sup>

In March 2023, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) voted to approve naloxone nasal spray to be available over the counter. Many lives could be saved if people have this medication on hand. The most common brand name of naloxone is NARCAN®, an over-the-counter naloxone nasal spray available in all 50 states, Washington DC and Puerto Rico without a prescription at most nationwide pharmacies, including CVS Pharmacy.<sup>16</sup> Narcan is also available for free through mail order at <https://nextdistro.org/naloxone>, from your county, your public libraries and many harm reduction organizations throughout the U.S.<sup>17</sup>

According to a UC Davis Health Blog, “Even people who don’t use drugs or opioids should have naloxone on hand. You never know when you’ll encounter someone in need of this life-saving medication. Keep it in your purse or your car for when you might need it. Parents with teenagers are encouraged to keep naloxone in their homes. Parents can also give it to their teens to take to school or sporting events – and make sure to educate them on what to do. Having more of this life-saving drug in the community is important. You could end up saving a friend or neighbor in need.”<sup>18</sup>



# WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SAVE A LIFE

It may not be easy to tell if someone is experiencing an overdose. If you are not sure, treat it like an overdose - you could save a life! <sup>36</sup> Here are steps for treating an opioid or stimulant overdose:

## FOR AN OPIOID OVERDOSE

Give naloxone (Narcan), which starts working in 2 to 3 minutes and can last 60 to 90 minutes. Call 911.

Keep the person awake and breathing.

Lay the person on side to prevent choking.

Stay with the person until 911 responders arrive.

With a fentanyl overdose, two or more doses of naloxone may need to be given, so give naloxone every 2 or 3 minutes until the person responds or 911 responders arrive.

## FOR A STIMULANT OVERDOSE

Keep the person hydrated by giving water, a sports drink, or non-caffeinated drink.

Place a cool wet cloth under the armpits, on the back of the knees, and/or on the forehead.

If the person is having a seizure, move anything away from them that could do harm, and do not restrain the person or put anything in the mouth.

If the person has lost consciousness and you notice that breathing has stopped, begin CPR if you are trained.

# GOOD SAMARITAN LAWS FOR FATAL OVERDOSE PREVENTION

The chance of someone surviving an overdose depends on how quickly they get medical help. However, more than 60% of bystanders or witnesses to overdose victims fail to call for 911 or law enforcement, fearing arrest for drug possession or other charges.<sup>19</sup> However, there are Good Samaritan laws that protect those who step in to help. For example, California's Good Samaritan law protects those giving emergency medical care at the scene of a medical emergency, including giving naloxone.<sup>20</sup>

According to the Legislative Analysis and Public Policy Association's most recent publication, *Good Samaritan Fatal Overdose Prevention and Drug-Induced Homicide: Summary of State Laws*, "The purpose of these laws is to prioritize the overdose victim's safety over arresting drug users by granting limited protection from criminal liability to people seeking medical assistance and, in most cases, to the overdose victim. New Mexico enacted the first Good Samaritan fatal overdose prevention law in 2007...As of May 2024, 48 states and the District of Columbia have Good Samaritan fatal overdose prevention laws. Only Kansas and Wyoming do not have such laws."<sup>21</sup>

# LET'S DISCUSS FENTANYL HIGH

We will use real-life discussion questions that cover key topics in the film



**IN THE CLASSROOM OR AT HOME, IT IS IMPORTANT FOR YOUR  
TEENS TO MUTUALLY LISTEN AND TALK ABOUT WHAT THEY THINK**





# WHY IS FENTANYL HIGH SO IMPORTANT TO WATCH?



## A FILM AS A CATALYST FOR DISCUSSION

There were 15 high school students, 9 in interviews and 5 as silent actors in the film, representing teens from many different backgrounds – including the high school athlete, the academically focused student, the artistically inclined student, the student who used drugs, the LGBTQ+ student, and many others. This section focuses on the 9 student interviews and their insights from real life experiences. We provide in-depth discussion questions for teachers and parents to talk with their teens about their insights into the many social, family, and individual pressures with which they struggle with the hopes that they will feel inspired to share like the teens in the film.

The film FENTANYL HIGH covers multiple perspectives about the fentanyl crisis in Santa Clara County, reflecting a snapshot of what is happening similarly in nearly every town and city across the U.S. as of 2023. The film captures honest, raw feelings in a 360-degrees fashion – from paramedics and doctors to county officials and counselors, from the parents of teens who have died, and most importantly, from the high school teens themselves.

Because the film includes the perspectives of teens, parents, teachers, health practitioners, mental health counselors, government officials, paramedics, nonprofit leaders, and school administrators, we can all learn something new about the growing epidemic of fentanyl poisoning of teens. Our hope is that while teens watch FENTANYL HIGH in class, a theater, a multipurpose room, or at home, that they genuinely feel that they want to learn how to become more literate about fentanyl poisoning.



# THE TALENTED CAST OF FENTANYL HIGH



## EXPERTS, EDUCATORS, STUDENTS, AND TEACHERS IN FENTANYL HIGH TALK FROM THE HEART

FENTANYL HIGH was researched and directed by Kyle A. Santoro, an entrepreneurial filmmaker and a former Los Gatos High School student committed to telling the truth to his peers and their families about fentanyl poisoning and the opioids epidemic. The film features real stories by **parents who have lost teens to fentanyl poisoning**, including Jan Blom, Rhonda Manning, Brennan Mullin, Melissa Shimmin, and Teodora Urbina, **interviews** with Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian, Los Gatos High School Principal Kevin Buchanan, Los Gatos High School Counselor Traci Smith, Santa Clara County Fire Department First Responder & Fire Captain Tristen Hensley, Santa Clara County Opioid Overdose Prevention Project Coalition Lead Mira Parwiz, Family Medicine & Addiction Medicine physician at Stanford University Rachel Sussman M.D., Santa Clara Valley Medical Center Pediatrics Specialist Lee Abby Trope, M.D., community educator John Tostado-Delgado, CASSY Executive Director Marico Sayoc, **Los Gatos High School students** Tanya Goel, Raha Hajiseyedjavadi, Landon Heard, Braxton Jorgensen-Cabral, Kaylee Margone, Chance Sjöbeck, Anna Stubstad, Jack Temple, and Phina Tostado, as well as a full **acting cast of Los Gatos High School students** Allison Dandurand, Matt Gladney, Ryan Lin, Joe Lonergan, and Ashton Ross, and **supporting parent actors** Renne Dandurand, Kevin Ross, and Kiyoko Whiteside, **supporting actors firefighter/paramedic/EMTs** Juan Ortiz and Ashton Ocampo and **supporting high school actors** Arman Alasvandian, Ishaan Allen, Leo Cocchiglia, Victor Dalesio, Julian Fathi, Kevin Gan, Taylor Hansen, Katy Hawk, Alexander Hodgson, Sean Iversen, Ryan Jiang, Adèle LeBlanc, Kaylee Morgane, Ethan Okamura, Dallas Pina, and James Xu.







## **ANNA STUBSTAD**

Anna Stubstad was a student at Branham High School. She often speaks about fentanyl poisoning on behalf of Valentino.



## **BRAXTON JORGENSEN-CABRAL**

Braxton Jorgensen-Cabral was a student at Los Gatos High School. He talks about peer pressure and drugs.



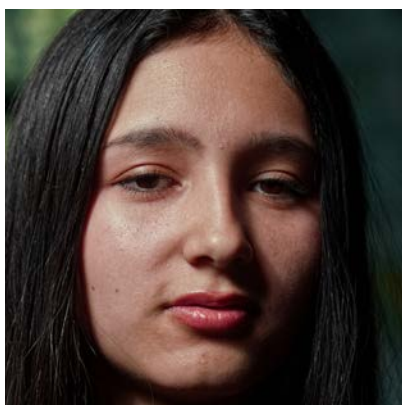
## **CHANCE SJÖBECK**

Chance Sjöbeck was a student at Los Gatos High School. In the film he talks about the importance of open communication.



## **JACK TEMPLE**

Jack Temple was a student at Los Gatos High School and currently attends the University of Michigan. He plays the guitar and sings.



## **PHINA TOSTADO**

Phina Tostado was a student at Los Gatos High School. She enjoyed being involved in the filming of FENTANYL HIGH and sharing her story.



## **KAYLEE MARGONE**

Kaylee Margone was a student at Los Gatos High School. She likes hanging out with friends and family and going to the beach.



## **BEHIND THE SCENES: THE INTERVIEWS**

Most of the interviews for Fentanyl High were shot at Los Gatos High School in the San Francisco Bay Area.





## **TANYA GOEL**

Tanya Goel was a student at Los Gatos High School. Her main interests include singing, coding, and often spending time with friends.



## **LANDON HEARD**

Landon Heard was a student at Los Gatos High School. He played basketball and football during high school. He is at Purdue University.



## **RAHA HAJISEYEDJAVADI**

Raha Hajiseyedjavadi was a student at Los Gatos High School. She loves outdoor activities with her friends.



## **MIRA PARWIZ**

Mira Parwiz is the Coalition Lead for the Santa Clara County Opioid Overdose Prevention Project, working for teen fentanyl awareness.



## **MELISSA SHIMMIN**

Melissa Shimmin is the mother of Valentino, who passed away from fentanyl poisoning in 2022 at the age of 17 years old.



## **JOHN TOSTADO-DELGADO**

John Tostado-Delgado is a LEAD Advisory Member, an activist, and a substance dependency survivor.

## **BEHIND THE SCENES: THE EXPERTS**

The experts with whom we collaborated contributed their insights of working with teens to Fentanyl High.





## **BRENNAN MULLIN**

Brennan Mullin is the father of Aidan, who passed away from fentanyl poisoning in November of 2020 at the age of 18 years old.



## **KEVIN BUCHANAN**

Principal of Los Gatos High School from 2021-24, Kevin Buchanan is originally from Cheshire, England, with a 25-year career in education.



## **DR. RACHEL SUSSMAN**

A Board Certified Family Doctor, Dr. Rachel Sussman is a core faculty at the Stanford O'Connor Medicine Residency.



## **SUPERVISOR JOE SIMITIAN**

Supervisor Simitian serves on the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors for District 5.



## **TRISTEN HENSLEY**

Tristen Hensley is a Fire Captain for Santa Clara County. He is an experienced firefighter, engineer, and paramedic.



## **TEODORA URBINA**

Teodora Urbina is a mother whose daughter survived fentanyl poisoning. She works throughout Santa Clara County as an activist.



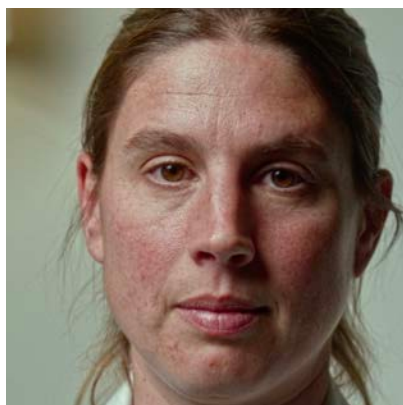
## **BEHIND THE SCENES: THE INSPIRATION**

The inspiration for the film started after a conversation with Los Gatos High School principal, Kevin Buchanan.



## **RHONDA MANNING**

Rhonda Manning is the mother of Major D'Marcus Manning, who died of fentanyl poisoning in 2023 at 17 years old.



## **DR. LEE ABBY TROPE**

Dr. Lee Trope is a pediatrician in Palo Alto, California and is affiliated with multiple hospitals in the area. She aids substance abuse teens.



## **TRACI SMITH**

Traci Smith is a wellness center counselor at Los Gatos High School, as well as a licensed marriage and family therapist.



## **MARICO SAYOC**

Marico Sayoc is currently the Executive Director of CASSY Bay Area, a nonprofit supporting students' social and emotional well-being.



## **JAN BLOM**

Jan Blom is the father of high school student, Linus, who passed away from fentanyl poisoning in July of 2020 at 17 years old.



## **KEVIN ROSS**

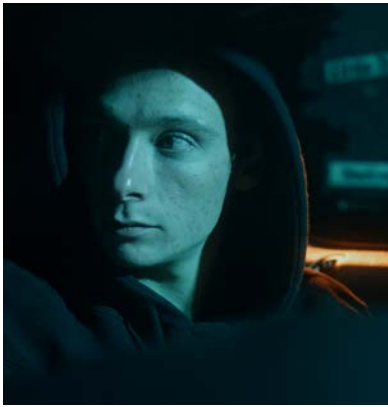
Kevin Ross lives in Los Gatos. He enjoyed acting for the first time in several scenes of FENTANYL HIGH with his son, Ashton Ross.

## **BEHIND THE SCENES: THE ACTORS**

In addition to several parents, the actors in Fentanyl High were high school students at the time of shooting.







## JOE LONERGAN

Joe Lonergan was a student at Los Gatos High School. He is currently attending Oregon University where he is studying business.



## ASHTON ROSS

Ashton Ross was a student at Los Gatos High School. He enjoys acting and hopes to have other opportunities to get in front of the camera.



## ALLISON DANDURAND

Allison Dandurand was a student at Los Gatos High School. She has participated in several panel discussions throughout the Bay Area.



## RYAN LIN

Ryan Lin is a senior at Los Gatos High School. He enjoys playing the violin with youth orchestras in the Bay Area.



## MATT GLADNEY

Matt Gladney was a student at Los Gatos High School. He is currently attending UC Berkeley where he runs track and field.



## KATY HAWK

Katy Hawk is was a student at Los Gatos High School. She swims competitively and is currently attending UC Santa Cruz.



## BEHIND THE SCENES: STAGING THE SCENE

The emergency scene in Fentanyll High featured real firefighters from Santa Clara Coutny Fire Department.

# WHAT ARE THE MAIN POINTS THE TEENS ARE MAKING?



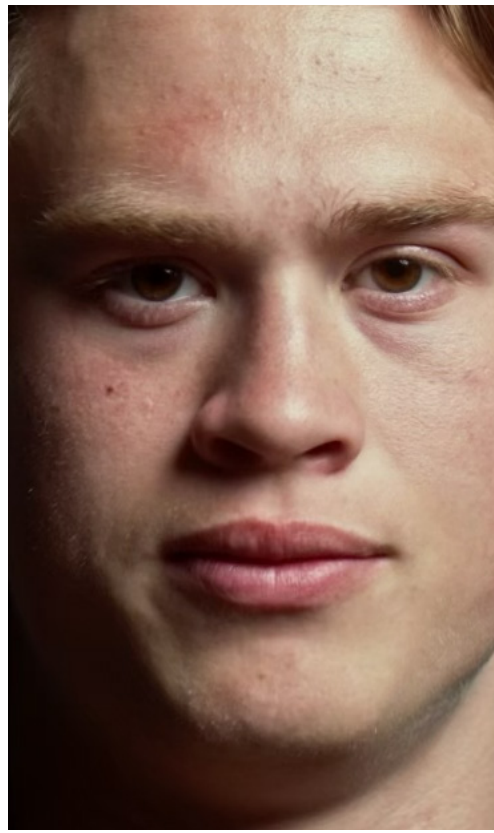
## REALTALK QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Use the following questions for discussions about the teen points in the REALTALK section:

- How are teens searching for their own identity in high school?
- What are a few reasons why teens experiment with drugs?
- What do teens need in their relationship with their parent(s)?
- What are the reasons a teen may give in to peer pressure?
- What did Raha, the teen who talked about social media, say?
- What did Braxton, Chance or Phina say influenced them to use drugs?
- What did Phina, the teen who felt distant from her parents, say?
- What did Landon, the teen who played sports, say about drugs at parties?
- What did Anna, the teen whose boyfriend died of an overdose, say?

**9 TEENAGERS SHARE  
THEIR STORIES ABOUT  
HOW THEY DEAL WITH  
MENTAL HEALTH, PEER  
PRESSURE, PARENTAL  
RELATIONSHIPS, &  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE.**

# REALTALK



## SEARCHING FOR THEIR OWN IDENTITIES

### BRAXTON

a high school student, says high school is a time when most students are not grown up yet, and everyone is trying to figure out their own identities. In the meantime, until they figure that out, they are just going to try and blend in with others.

### CHANCE

a high school student, says that high school is a big bubble where we are all seeking validation from our friends and peers.

### ANNA

a high school student, says that people can be cruel to teenage girls and teens in general. People label you and those labels can be so strong that you start assuming those labels yourself, such as the party girl, the depressed girl, the tired girl, the girl who was always a mess. But the truth is you don't need to be defined by one label. You have so much more life to live.





## REASONS FOR EXPERIMENTING WITH DRUGS

**ANNA**

says that teens experiment with drugs because (1) they grew up around it (2) they see their family members do it (3) they get peer pressured into it (4) they are curious (5) they are struggling mentally (6) they are not satisfied with their life or physical body.



**CHANCE**

says that he took drugs to escape from everything all at once, coming out of quarantine, going into high school, being home alone for a year and a half took a mental toll on him.

**ANNA**

says that she was not happy with her home life or her friends, had depression, and started using drugs to escape from her life and her emotions.

**PHINA**

a high school student, says she uses drugs to numb herself, to fill a hole, because she feels distant from her parents.

**BRAXTON**

says that kids use drugs to numb a certain feeling, pain or trauma they have.

**ANNA**

says she started experimenting with drugs at age 13 because she was curious, wanted to feel mature and to have fun. She started with weed and alcohol and then progressed to pills, some of which were laced with fentanyl.



## CHANCE

says not having a conversational relationship with his parents made him want to go out and party and do drugs with his friends.

## PHINA

felt distant from her parents, and as a result, felt it was OK to go do drugs with her friends, as an outlet.



## BRAXTON

used drugs to escape from his family conflicts. Because his parents are divorced, he was always between households and different rules and expectations. Also, his dad was a drug addict and alcoholic who was never there for him. He did not feel like he had a dad.

## PHINA

says she started experimenting with drugs because of the social pressure - she saw everyone around her doing it, and so felt like it was the right thing to do.

## RAHA

a high school student, says there are two main reasons why kids self-medicate, drink or use drugs. The first reason is not having somebody to trust or talk to at home or school. The second is falling into peer pressure on social media, where people portray themselves in unrealistic ways.

## JACK

a high school student, says that people can take a pill at a party or when alone, because they feel lonely, and that the only way to get through this fentanyl crisis together is to be fully transparent and communicate with each other.



## PEER PRESSURE & PARENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

**KAYLEE**

a high school student, says that peer pressure is everywhere and that certain friends keep offering her to try certain things or do certain things. Trying to be part of a group, you don't want to be the lame one or the odd one out when everyone is trying to fit in. It can be a really dangerous environment because it's really hard to say no.



**BRAXTON**

says that peer pressure in high school is a very big thing because you want to fit in, have friends, be popular, do all the cool stuff. But a lot of people he knows say that they regret it or they don't know why they are there, that they actually don't want to do this. But they feel they've gone so far they cannot change or find new friends.

**CHANCE**

says that to him, a parent is someone who is going to keep you safe, look out for you, accept you and listen to you. A lot of people have hard relationships with their parents or lack communication with them. The parents see their kids as more of a responsibility than an actual figure.

**KAYLEE**

says that parents should be the person your child can trust, be the person your child wants to turn to. Don't make your child afraid of you. That is going to go nowhere. She was afraid of her dad. But he showed her that she can trust him, that if she tells him things and trust him with information, he will not use it against her or get her in trouble for it.

**TANYA**

a high school student, explains how teens make a lot of their decisions based on what is cool or acceptable, even if they feel uncomfortable doing it, just to fit in with the majority.





## THE DANGERS OF FENTANYL & OTHER DRUGS

### ANNA

says that getting high on drugs felt positive and amazing at first, but then the come downs got worse and turned into anxiety, paranoia and mood swings. She would feel guilty, constantly tired, really depleted. She stopped taking care of herself.

### LANDON

says that at a party, no one is a medical professional, and any pill being handed out, there's a chance of fentanyl being in it, because every pill can be different in a batch. There can be one pill, or a part of a pill with fentanyl in it. This topic hits very close home with him because he just had two friends at Ohio State who overdosed because of fentanyl poisoning. One was without a pulse in minutes, while the other was presumed brain dead overnight.

### CHANCE

says that schools trying to decrease drug use by disciplinary actions or flyers in the bathrooms are ineffective. This will just make kids be more sneaky. Everyone will still get away with it.



# WHAT ARE THE MAIN POINTS THE PARENTS ARE MAKING?



## REALTALK QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Use the following questions for discussions about the points of the parents in the REALTALK section:

- Why do teens experiment with drugs today?
- What is the one thing all these fentanyl deaths have in common?
- What was not communicated between the parent and their teen who died?
- What did the parents not know or not realize until it was too late?
- How did the parents miss their teens' access to drugs?
- What did each parent wish that they could say to their teen who died?
- How can your parents communicate better or build trust with you?
- Do your parents really listen to you? How do they listen or not listen to you?
- How do you think your parents would feel if they found you with fentanyl poisoning?

**PARENTS OF AIDAN,  
AMY, LINUS, MAJOR, &  
VALENTINO SHARE THEIR  
STORIES ABOUT HOW  
FENTANYL POISONING  
OF THEIR CHILDREN  
CHANGED THEIR LIVES.**



# REALTALK



## EXPERIMENTING WITH DRUGS

### BRENNAN

parent of Aidan, says that experimenting with drugs used to be not lethal, but nowadays, the same kind of experimentation with drugs can be lethal.

### TEODORA

parent of Amy, says that she was feeling like a failure as a parent. She was really disappointed that her telling her kids to not use drugs did not stop them, because the influence around them was too strong.

### JAN

parent of Linus, says being a teen is a difficult age, because of peer pressure to try drugs at parties or at school, not just doing well at school. But you don't always have to go by what your friends are asking you to do. Being able to resist peer pressure is key.





**RHONDA** parent of Major, says that many teens have suffered some kind of depression and anxiety, especially with Covid and not being able to see their friends.

**BRENNAN** says that there are forces on kids' lives today that lead to experimentation, such as anxiety and especially the pressure to succeed.



**MELISSA** parent of Valentino, says that her son Valentino started off resisting peer pressure, but eventually gave in to it and started using weed, then hallucinogens, then what he believed was Xanax. He said yes because he was self-medicating.

**BRENNAN** says feeling excluded, shamed, feeling isolated, alone, or less than, and social media and the pressure that can put on a teen can all lead to experimentation to try to numb it and escape it.

## WHAT TEEN FENTANYL DEATHS HAVE IN COMMON

**MELISSA** says that street fentanyl is super accessible. Kids get it via Snapchat or Telegram. Drug dealers will deliver it to their door. Her son Valentino did not even need to leave the house to access street drugs.





- BRENNAN** says that his son, Aidan, passed away when he was 18. He had taken what he thought was a Percocet, but instead, it was fentanyl, which took his life immediately.
- JAN** says that his son had found a dealer on Snapchat who sold him what he thought was a Percocet pill. Linus actually took the pill at home but by the time he found Linus, it was too late, so he had lost him. It was a huge shock to the whole family, but Linus had been sold a pill which was something else than Percocet, so he died of fentanyl poisoning.
- RHONDA** says that her son Major and his friend had decided to try a Percocet pill, but his pill was laced with fentanyl, and so he passed away because of it. He had only been 17 for five days.
- MELISSA** says that Valentino's death left a huge hole in her family and in her heart. He was her only child. As a mother, she does not know who she is as a parent anymore. It is the worst to lose a child.
- RHONDA** says her life's mission is to educate other parents about the fentanyl epidemic. She started a nonprofit for her son, called a Major Movement, fighting fentanyl in a Major way – because she believes her son would have wanted to save another kid's life, that's just who he is.





## PARENTS NEED TO TALK HONESTLY ABOUT DRUGS

### TEODORA

says that most Mexican parents don't speak English and are not aware of what is going on around them, and because they work all day, it is not easy to look at a problem or see a problem until it is too late. She also says that she used to work long hours, so her kids had to be alone and learn to be self-sufficient when they were very young.

### BRENNAN

says that if he could talk to Aidan again, he would have tried to break through to try and understand what was going on in his life to make him want to experiment with drugs. There are so many things he would like to say, but most of all, that he loves him and will always love him, that whatever pursuit he chose, he will be a hundred percent behind him. But most of all, he would say how much they love him.

### JAN

says that if he can talk to his son one more time, he would emphasize how much he loves him, and he wishes he could go back and do a better job at conveying his feelings and conveying his love to his son.



Rhonda Manning during interview



# WHAT ARE THE MAIN POINTS THE EXPERTS ARE MAKING?



## REALTALK QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Use the following questions for discussions about the points of the experts in the REALTALK section:

- Name a few reasons why fentanyl can be so deadly.
- Name a few personal reasons why teens say that they try drugs.
- Name a few environmental factors that lead teens to try drugs.
- Name some positive responses by teens to the fentanyl epidemic.
- Name a few ways that parents can create a trusting relationship with their teen.
- What did the government official say?  
What do you think or feel about that?
- What did the paramedic say about teens?  
What do you think or feel about that?
- What did the former drug addict say?  
What do you think or feel about that?
- What did the school counselor say?  
What do you think or feel about that?

**THE MANY EXPERTS  
TALK ABOUT TEENAGE  
MENTAL HEALTH, SELF  
MEDICATION, OPEN  
COMMUNICATION AT  
HOME, & WHAT TO DO  
DURING AN OVERDOSE.**



# REALTALK



## REASONS WHY FENTANYL CAN BE DEADLY

### DR. SUSSMAN

a Stanford University addiction medicine physician and faculty member, says that just two milligrams of fentanyl is enough to kill you, depending on your size and whether you've used opioids in the past.

### TRISTEN

a Santa Clara County Fire Department fire captain and paramedic, says that fentanyl is the most dangerous street drug. Fentanyl is what is killing people these days. Fentanyl is put into almost everything. People don't know they are using it.

### SUPERVISOR SIMITIAN

a member of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, says that 10 years ago we rarely hear about fentanyl in Santa Clara County, but other parts of the country were already dealing with the challenge. 5 years ago you could say something is happening. Today, we are looking at 500% increase just over the last 4 or 5 years.



**DR. SUSSMAN** states that the fastest growing group of people dying from using fentanyl are teens ages 15 to 16.

**DR. TROPE** a Santa Clara Valley Medical Center pediatrician, says that most of the kids she sees get their pills from social media like Snapshot or Instagram. Drug dealers send them emojis letting them know who is selling. Most kids think they are buying pharmacy grade Percocet or M30 pills, but they are surprised to learn that most of them are buying counterfeit pills.



**MIRA** a Santa Clara County Opioid Prevention Project Coalition lead, says that often there is a stigma associated with drug use, which can cause people to not share their drug use with their doctors or police officers out of fear and shame.

**TRISTEN** says that Narcan removes opiates from what you have already got in your body and keeps more opiates from attaching to your body's receptors as long as it is in your blood. When someone is not breathing, EMTs or police can give a Narcan nasal spray, or give an IM injection into the arm or leg, or give an IV, which works best. But because fentanyl is so long acting and Narcan wears off very quickly, you want to call for medical help as soon as possible.

**DR. TROPE** says that if your friend become unresponsive, it is OK to give Narcan, even if it has nothing to do with an overdose. If you give Narcan and someone wakes up, still call 911 for help because the person may go back into overdose 15 minutes later, since Narcan wears off so quickly. Sometimes one dose of Narcan is not enough, so if you give Narcan and the person does not wake up in a few minutes, give another dose while calling for help.



**TRISTEN**

says he knew an individual whom they brought back to life about four times. He knew they were taking fentanyl, even though they claimed to be smoking Percocet, because it took so much Narcan to bring them back to life... the fifth time this person died, because fentanyl killed them.



## INTERNAL REASONS WHY TEENS TRY DRUGS

**TRACI**

a therapist at the Wellness Center of Los Gatos High School, says when teens are exploring their identity and experiencing mental health issues, using drugs can be a form of unhealthy coping. If parents, friends or counselors do not see the root causes of this, they often miss these signs that lead to addiction. Early intervention is key.

**JOHN**

a community educator and activist, grew up seeing his father do drugs. He started using drugs to escape from his feelings as a teen, going from cigarettes, to sniffing glue, marijuana, cocaine, crank and crystal meth. He was bullied and traumatized by others for being gay. He says that he got addicted to drugs to escape from his reality and the whole experience of growing up. He wanted to go numb so he did not have to feel anything and ignore whatever was bothering him.



## EXTERNAL REASONS WHY TEENS TRY DRUGS

**DR. TROPE**

says that first generation immigrant teens often face stress and trauma, especially when their parents are out working all the time and never home.



**MIRA**

says that kids left alone for long periods of time often feel isolated and look for help and support elsewhere, which can lead to drugs or alcohol.

**JOHN**

says that parents put high expectations on their children to succeed but their children are buckling under these pressures and looking to drugs like Adderall or Coke or meth to try to keep up their grades, do the sports, etc. to make their parents happy. It's not working and we are losing our children.

**MIRA**

says that excessive partying, staying out from home are all signs that a teen is not happy at home and wants to be away to mask their pain and get away, and then lean towards drug use or alcohol as a result of it.

**MIRA**

says that if one has a happy healthy family, the kids do not run away and are intact at home, rely on their parents for the support and guidance they need. But if that family structure is not there or is broken, then those kids look outside for help or guidance and run away from the pains they are feeling.

**MIRA**

says this is more than just say no to drugs. In fact, family stress, school pressures, and peer pressures can all contribute to making kids more vulnerable to reaching out for drugs. They would often say, "I'm just going to use Xanax", but they don't really know if it is laced with fentanyl.



## EXTERNAL REASONS WHY TEENS TRY DRUGS

### SUPERVISOR SIMITIAN

says that we need to find things we can say yes to, something that excites you, something you are passionate about. Find something you want to put your time and energy into, that makes you feel good about yourself and what you are doing. That will be the thing that gives you the courage to get past a tough time in your life. If you give yourself that chance and avoid the risks of drugs, you will arrive to a better place.



### MARICO

the Executive Director of Counseling and Support Services for Youth (CASSY), says that most teens are not turning to drugs or alcohol. Most teens are seeking more positive coping mechanisms and sharing that with their peers in pain.

### PRINCIPAL BUCHANAN

the Los Gatos High School principal, says it's really about using education to make students aware and empower them to make good choices. He tries to make sure that students understand the choices they make on or off campus can have long lasting and very negative effects on them and their families. He works with local organizations and the county to make resources available to students and their parents.

### JOHN

says that the only acceptance you need is your own. You don't need anybody else's acceptance. You don't need anybody else's approval. It's none of your business what other people think of you. That's their hangup. You stay strong, stay safe, stay sane. Everything else will fall in line. Find your tribe. Find the people who mean the most to you, and stay with them. They will guide you and you will guide them.







## HOW PARENTS CAN CREATE MORE OPENNESS AT HOME WITH THEIR TEENS

### MARICO

says that constant communication, normalizing that seeking mental health support is a positive thing, talking about the dangers of any drug consumption, allowing a child to express their fears and giving them opportunities to share what emotions they are going through without judgment is the most vital way that a family can assist their students during these formative years.

### DR. TROPE

says that the drug supply is really different in 2023 than years ago. The best thing to do is to talk to your teen in a nonjudgmental way and let them know that if they are struggling and looking to drugs for help with mental illness, they can come to you.

### DR. TROPE

says to find out what resources there are in your community and get your teen help. Know that the process may be long, but there is hope.



## JOHN

says that his message to parents is to create an open line of communication. Create a safe environment for your child to come to you before they go to anywhere else. Have them seek your knowledge before they go to somewhere else. Be honest with your kids about everything, even your drug use. Let them know your life experience. Don't hide behind it.

## DR. TROPE

says that for teens who have opioid use disorder or opioid addiction, there is hope. There is treatment that works and saves lives. The process is not always linear. A lot of kids will start and then relapse, then start recovery and then relapse. And we expect that - that's part of this disease. It's not a moral failing. It's a public health crisis.

## MIRA

says that parents need to be more aware and have an honest talk with their kids at home about what they are experiencing or seeing, how they are involved, and if they open up and say, "I am struggling with drug addiction," then be supportive. They should not be screaming, yelling, "What are you doing?!" [Instead] say, "That's fine, let's just go get you help now and reach out to get the appropriate level of care." That's the time a parent needs to be more supportive than any other time.





# HARM REDUCTION RESOURCES



01

## ASPIRE QUEST INTENSIVE OUTPATIENT PROGRAM

This program offers life management skills to adolescents ages 13-18 that are still in high school and have an identified substance use disorder.

02

## SANTA CLARA COUNTY OPIOID OVERDOSE PREVENTION PROJECT

The Santa Clara County Opioid Overdose Prevention Project (SCCOOPP)'s aim is to promote opioid safety throughout Santa Clara County for all residents.





FENTANYL HIGH  
A FILM BY  
KYLE SANTORO  
WEDNESDAY

Tea Ferni





## AGENCIES THAT PROVIDE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE RESOURCES FOR TEENS



03

### Q CORNER LGBTQ+ INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

The Q Corner is a peer-driven, Behavioral Health Services Department dedicated to supporting the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and their friends, families, and allies.

04

### COUNSELING AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR YOUTH (CASSY)

CASSY's mission is to destigmatize mental health services and make supporting students' social and emotional well-being the norm in schools.



# FENTANYL HIGH SCREENING

Stream the film into your classroom, health center, nonprofit, or home



## 1 ENTER STREAMING PORTAL 2 PICK A PLAN 3 REGISTER TO WATCH

Goto [www.fentanylhighl.com](http://www.fentanylhighl.com) and find a plan that works best for you and your needs. We offer plans for families, schools, healthcare facilities, and nonprofit organizations. Once you sign up and pay the license fee, you will be sent a link and password to the HACK PACK PORTAL where you can stream the film, download the FENTANYL HIGH Study Guide, and get access to additional resources. If you would like further information, please email us at [team@lc2productions.com](mailto:team@lc2productions.com).





# ABOUT LC2 PRODUCTIONS

THE PRODUCER OF FENTANYL HIGH



**WWW.LC2PRODUCTIONS.COM**

Launched in 2022 by filmmaker, Kyle Santoro, LC2 Productions is a film production and distribution company, specializing in telling impactful, inspiring stories through the art of film. We strive to tell the next generation of stories that will change society. FENTANYL HIGH is our first feature documentary.



# OUR PARTNERS

## PRODUCER OF FENTANYL HIGH



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*The Leader In Addiction Treatment*



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from the Thomas and Donna Whitney Education Foundation.

## JOIN OUR EFFORTS TO EDUCATE

We are grateful for all of our partners and funders who have made FENTANYL HIGH possible!

Contact us at [team@lc2productions.com](mailto:team@lc2productions.com) to sponsor, screen, or help spread the word  
in your community!



# Promoting Emotional Wellness:

## ASPIRE's Comprehensive After-School Programs for Youth Mental Health Support

The After-School Program Interventions and Resiliency Education® (ASPIRE) program helps children, teens and young adults with anxiety, depression or other symptoms related to a mental health condition.



To learn about our services,  
call 650-988-8468 or  
[visit the website.](#)



Program locations in  
Mountain View and Los Gatos  
[elcaminohealth.org/aspire](http://elcaminohealth.org/aspire)



# FOOTNOTES

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## FACTS & STATISTICS

a. Fentanyl is present in weed.  
<https://nextdistro.org/testingdrugs>

b. Song for Charlie website home page.  
<https://www.songforcharlie.org>

c. Fentanyl overdose can happen through touching or being near fentanyl.  
<https://nextdistro.org/testingdrugs>

d. Fentanyl is everywhere, and every pill is laced, even cannabis.  
<https://news.cuanschutz.edu/news-stories/fentanyl-and-counterfeit-prescription-drugs-facts-and-myths>

e. Fentanyl is in everything.  
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f. It's easy to tell if fentanyl is present in a drug.  
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h. Fentanyl patches are not abusable or dangerous.  
<https://futuresrecoveryhealthcare.com/blog/fentanyl-myth>

i. Only addicts die from fentanyl overdoses.  
<https://futuresrecoveryhealthcare.com/blog/fentanyl-myth>

j. Fentanyl is similar to other prescription pain relievers.  
<https://futuresrecoveryhealthcare.com/blog/fentanyl-myth>



k. I only need to be concerned about fentanyl if I am using certain drugs like heroin.

<https://nextdistro.org/testingdrugs>

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m. Consuming alcohol with fentanyl is safe as long as prescribed.

<https://futuresrecoveryhealthcare.com/blog/fentanyl-myth>

n. Fentanyl addiction is rare.

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o. People who take fentanyl know the risks.

<https://www.shatterproof.org/blog/3-common-myths-surrounding-fentanyl>

p. Fentanyl Test Strips Don't Work.

<https://nextdistro.org/fentanyl-myths-and-facts>

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<https://dea.gov/onepill>

r. Fentanyl can't be detected in drug tests.

<https://futuresrecoveryhealthcare.com/blog/fentanyl-myth>

s. Fentanyl is safe when prescribed by a doctor.

<https://futuresrecoveryhealthcare.com/blog/fentanyl-myth>

t. Fentanyl is always prescribed legally.

<https://futuresrecoveryhealthcare.com/blog/fentanyl-myth>

u. Mixing Opioids with Stims can prevent ODs.

<https://nextdistro.org/testingdrugs>

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<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/how-dozens-of-u-s-adolescents-are-dying-of-drug-overdoses-each-month-shown-in-3-charts>

w. I will get hurt trying to render aid in an overdose situation.

<https://news.cuanschutz.edu/news-stories/fentanyl-and-counterfeit-prescription-drugs-facts-and-myths>

x. Fentanyl (or an analog) is resistant to Naloxone.

<https://nextdistro.org/fentanyl-myths-and-facts>

y. Naloxone cannot reverse fentanyl overdoses.

<https://futuresrecoveryhealthcare.com/blog/fentanyl-myth>







A DOCUMENTARY BY KYLE SANTORO

# FENTANYL HIGH

[www.fentanylhigh.com](http://www.fentanylhigh.com)

*The information provided in this study guide is for general knowledge and informational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. It is essential to consult with a qualified healthcare professional for any health concerns or before making any decisions related to your mental health, physical health, or treatment.*

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