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CONTACT: Dr. Sharon Harris 516- 676-2008

safeglencove@yahoo.com

### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition- 3 Myths About Quitting Nicotine and Mental Health in Youth**

According to a recent news article that discusses research from the CDC Foundation and Truth Initiative, at the crossroads of nicotine addiction and mental health are two demographics that are highly affected: teens and young adults. Research shows several connections between nicotine addiction and increased symptoms of anxiety and depression, and while many people misinterpret nicotine as a stress reliever, it may be making their symptoms worse.

Today's teens face high levels of anxiety and depression, as reported in the 2021 Surgeon General's report. While current teen e-cigarette use decreased from 2.13 million users in 2023 to 1.63 million in 2024, young adults ages 18-24 now have the highest prevalence of e-cigarette use, and this age group is also reporting high rates of anxiety and depression – with one study finding that young adults report twice the rates of anxiety and depression as teens.

For people struggling with mental health, quitting nicotine can help. Nicotine use can harm the developing brain and intensify anxiety symptoms and feelings of depression, and can also lead to trouble sleeping. For these reasons and more, 90% of people in a Truth Initiative study said they felt less stressed, anxious, or depressed after quitting vaping.

#### **Myth #1: E-Cigarette Users with Mental Health Conditions Don't Want to Quit.**

**Fact: People with mental health conditions who vape nicotine want to quit just as much as people without mental health conditions.**

A 2020 study of intentions to quit vaping nicotine among U.S. teens ages 12-17 showed similar motivation to quit among teens with and without anxiety and depression symptoms. The study, which analyzed data from a text message quit vaping platform now part of EX Program, an on-line go-to guide to quitting, also found that the number of quit attempts was largely consistent across users with past-year depression and anxiety symptoms and those without.

Why does this myth prevail? Decades of targeted messaging by the tobacco industry has given rise to the idea that tobacco products are “relaxing” and “stress relieving.” In addition, the tobacco industry has funded research that aims to link tobacco use with mental health benefits. The truth is, nicotine use is linked with amplified anxiety and depressive symptoms.

## **Myth #2: E-Cigarette Users with Mental Health Conditions Can't Quit.**

**Fact: With the right resources and support, people with mental health conditions who vape nicotine can quit.**

A 2021 study of the effectiveness of a text message quit vaping platform for quitting vaping among young adults demonstrated no significant differences in quit outcomes among young adults with a range of mental health presentations, and those who reported no mental health issues.

Why does this myth prevail? Many people with mental health conditions have other life challenges that may make it harder to quit vaping nicotine. These may include: more proximity to other people who use tobacco, fewer quitting resources available, and stronger dependence on nicotine. While additional challenges may exist for people with mental health conditions, they can quit with the right support and treatment.

## **Myth #3: Quitting Nicotine Can Make Mental Health Condition Symptoms Worse.**

**Fact: for people who experience depression, anxiety, or stress, quitting nicotine can make you feel better.**

According to peer-reviewed research gathered in a Truth Initiative report, vaping nicotine can intensify symptoms of depression and anxiety and increase stress levels. For many people, quitting nicotine can help alleviate these symptoms and lead to an improvement in mental health.

Why does this myth prevail? When people who use nicotine try to quit, they often experience withdrawal symptoms including irritability, restlessness, trouble sleeping, or feelings of anxiety or depression. These symptoms are temporary, but they are sometimes misunderstood as worsening symptoms of mental health conditions.

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention, and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its Coalition is concerned with all combustible and electronic products with tobacco. The Agency employs environmental strategies to educate and update the community regarding the negative consequences of smoking and vaping. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow [www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](https://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or to learn more about electronic products visit the Youth and Tobacco Use and Vaping Facts and Myths Pages of SAFE's website to learn more about how vaping is detrimental to your health at [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org).

The Truth Initiative is the nation's largest nonprofit public health organization dedicated to preventing youth and young adult nicotine addiction and empowering quitting. Research is conducted through the Truth Initiative Schroeder Institute that produces independent research to provide evidence for policy change and leadership in cessation research. For more information, please visit [www.truthinitiative.org](http://www.truthinitiative.org).

EX Program by Truth Initiative has collaborated with the Mayo Clinic Nicotine Dependence Center to bring proven evidence-based quitting approaches and the most established online quit community. For more information please visit [www.exprogram.com](http://www.exprogram.com)