

You are receiving this message because you are a registered family of the Mercer Island School District. The MI Healthy Youth Initiative (HYI), a program within Mercer Island Youth and Family Services, will periodically send communication regarding programs and services that support Mercer Island youth, parents and families. If you would like to opt out of receiving these types of messages, click on the unsubscribe link at the bottom of this message. To learn more about HYI, visit www.MIHealthyYouth.com.



Dear MIHS Families,

The MI Healthy Youth Initiative (a program of Mercer Island Youth and Family Services) and the MIHS S.A.F.E. (*Super Awesome Fun Events*) Club recently launched a new social marketing campaign called **Island Space** at Mercer Island High School.

The **Island Space** campaign is focused on:

- Improving student mental health,
- Decreasing substance use as a coping mechanism and
- Providing teens information about healthy ways to deal with stress and the pressure to succeed.

The MI Healthy Youth Initiative (HYI) used a variety of data sources, interviews, focus groups and survey results to better understand the experiences of Mercer Island youth and to determine the root causes of youth alcohol and drug behaviors.

Looking at the data, it is clear that **high expectations and pressure to achieve are connected with mental health challenges, as well as substance use among MIHS students.**

The good news is that most Mercer Island youth do not use alcohol or other substances; however, the MIHS 2022 Healthy Youth Survey results indicate that Mercer Island students who do choose to use alcohol, are more likely than most Washington youth to binge drink (defined as consuming five or more alcoholic drinks in one setting).

Based on the findings, the Island Space campaign is focused on improving student mental health and decreasing substance use.

The campaign messages include four specific elements:

1. Understanding the impacts of alcohol and other drugs on teens;
2. Increasing healthy skills to address the pressure around perfection and performance;
3. Encouraging peer-to-peer conversations and interventions around alcohol and other drug use; and
4. Evolving the definition of success.

The Island Space kick-off event at MIHS included music, give-aways and information about the [Island Space](#) campaign. Students can learn more about Island Space via a poster series displayed in the MIHS halls and by visiting the [Island Space website](#).

[Island Space](#) encourages students to talk with their peers and trusted adults about how they cope with the pressure and expectations in our community and to ultimately **grow skills to help them make healthy choices when coping with stress.**

Our incredible MIHS counseling team and Mercer Island Youth and Family Services counselors are always available to support students around these topics. We have also compiled a list of resources below that can be helpful in supporting students.

Did you know that [parents are the #1 influence](#) when it comes to alcohol and substance use? We invite you to start a conversation with your teen around the topics shared on the [Island Space website](#).

Tambi Cork

Tambi Cork, MIYFS Administrator

Youth Mental Health Support & Substance Abuse Prevention Resources

- Mercer Island Youth and Services Confidential Intake Line (206) 275-7657
- MIYFS School-Based Counselor at MIHS:
Chris Harnish - (206) 236-3363, Chris.Harnish@mercerislandschools.org
Caleb Visser - (206) 236-3290, Caleb.Visser@mercerislandschools.org
- MI Healthy Youth Initiative, Michelle Ritter - Michelle.Ritter@mercerisland.gov
- "Take Five" Online Tool - TakeFiveMI.org
An anonymous online tool for high school students which provides personalized tips and strategies to deal with stress based on the individual's reflection on how they are feeling and how they tend to cope.
- UW Forefront Suicide Prevention "LEARN" Skills - <https://inthe forefront.org/learn-saves-lives/>
- MI Healthy Youth Initiative "Prevention Basics" - <https://www.mihealthyyouth.com/preventionbasics>