

3rd Millennium CLASSROOMS

BUSTING "STUDY DRUG" MYTHS

Some students turn to unconventional methods in the hopes of gaining an extra edge. Pressures such as a persistent desire to **succeed academically**, poor sleep habits due to **large workloads**, and the persistence of underlying **social and financial demands** may place students at an **increased risk** for misuse of various drugs, including prescription drugs to enhance focus and cognition. But before considering going down that path, let's take a closer look at the myths surrounding this practice and separate fact from fiction:



What is Non-Prescription Stimulant Use?

Nearly **1 million young adults ages 18–25 misused prescription stimulants** in the past year (SAMHSA, 2026). Stimulants such as Adderall and Ritalin are often prescribed to individuals with conditions like ADHD, and have proven to be effective; however, the results can be different for individuals who take them without a prescription.

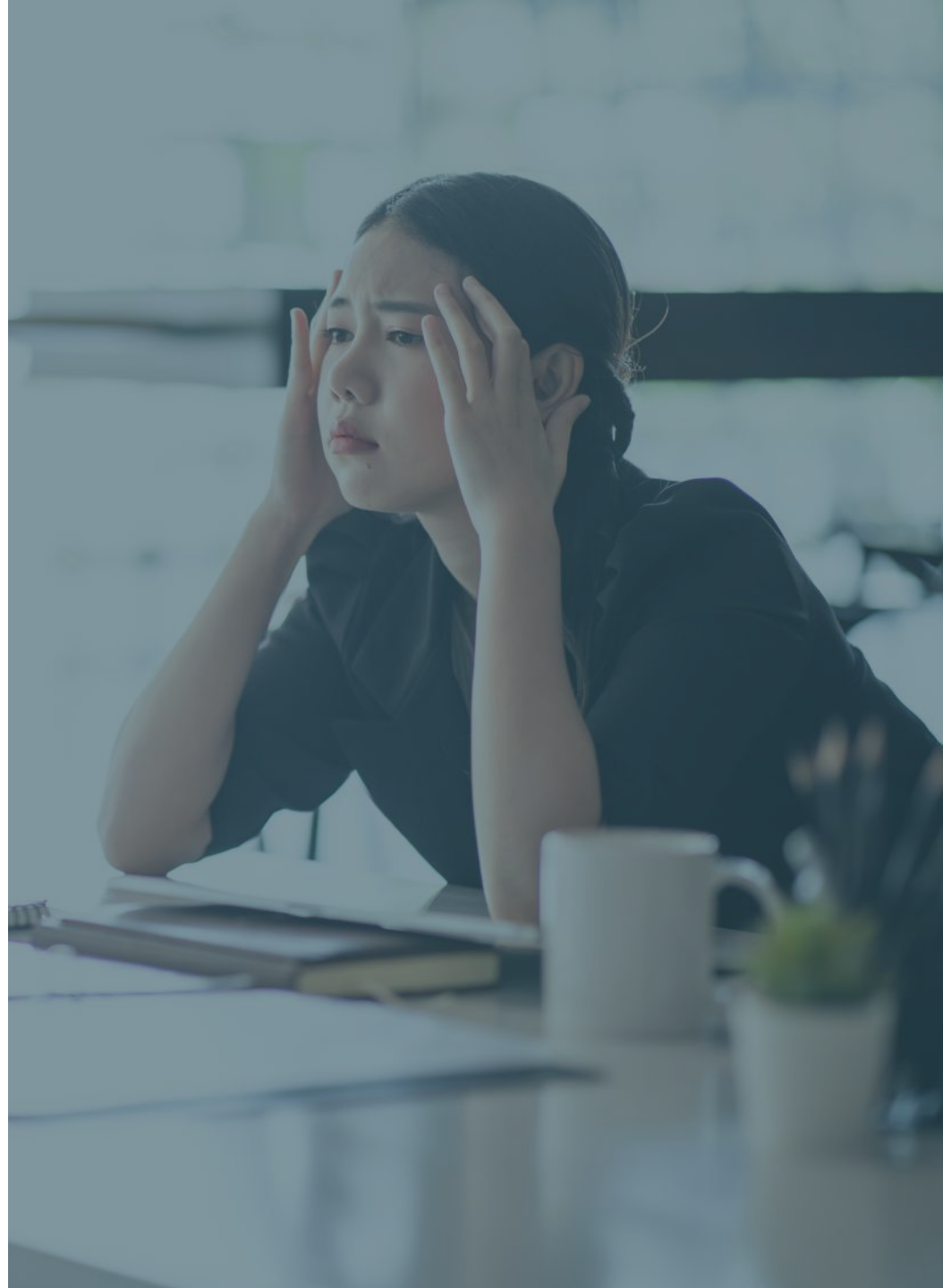
Nonmedical prescription stimulant use falls into two main categories: **not following prescribed dosage** OR **using without a prescription**. While prescription stimulants might help students focus, they may not actually improve academic performance. It's clear that the misuse of prescription drugs can lead to ***dangerous effects, risks and other consequences.***

Myth #1: Prescription Drugs Guarantee Enhanced Memory and Retention

Contrary to the common belief among college students, research does not show that prescription stimulants reliably improve cognitive performance in individuals without ADHD (Vasko et al., 2026).

Sure, non-prescription stimulants can provide a **temporary boost** in focus and concentration. However, the benefits of misusing prescription stimulants are **short-lived** and often accompanied by **negative side effects**. These include increased heart rate, elevated blood pressure, nervousness, and even potential addiction.

The FDA warns that nonmedical stimulant use can cause anxiety, nervousness, loss of appetite, and sleep deprivation—all of which can interfere with studying and performance on exams (FDA, 2023). Is a temporary boost in focus worth the potential impact on your health and academic performance?





Myth #2: Using Prescription Drugs Will Save My GPA

While stimulants have proven to be effective for those diagnosed with ADHD, that is **not the case for students without ADHD**. In fact, research has found that students who misuse prescription stimulants do not see improved academic outcomes and may have lower GPAs on average (Rabiner et al., 2009).

Students who misuse stimulant drugs as study aids tend to **procrastinate**, then use drugs like Adderall to stay awake and cram (Yale University, 2018). However, wakefulness for one night **cannot** make up for weeks or months of failing to study and prepare.

Myth #3: Misusing Prescription Stimulants Doesn't Lead to Other Drug Use

Even though many begin using stimulants nonmedically with the intention of studying or concentrating, nonmedical prescription stimulant use **has been associated with the use of other substances** (McCabe et al., 2023).

Nonmedical prescription stimulant use may be a warning sign for later substance use. Among college students who reported both prescription stimulant misuse and illicit drug use, **32% reported misusing prescription stimulants first** (Butler et al., 2021), while a recent national study found that **nonmedical prescription stimulant use during adolescence was associated with cocaine use** later in young adulthood (McCabe et al., 2023).





What Are Some Healthy Alternatives to Using "Study Drugs"?

- Schedule your study sessions for a time in the day when you are the **most mentally sharp**
- Prioritize what to study based on when your exams are and what topics you are having the **most difficulty with**
- Put your phone on "do not disturb" to **limit distractions**
- **Take breaks** when you reach milestones in your assignments. Go for a walk, watch a show, or spend time with a friend
- Make sure you are **getting enough sleep** to improve your memory, alertness, mood, and motivation

COURSE HIGHLIGHT: OTHER DRUGS

Other Drugs is a comprehensive course offered by 3rd Millennium Classrooms, designed specifically for individuals with current or past experiences with illicit drugs and/or prescription drug misuse. It can be used as an intervention resource for those who have a prescription or illicit drug violation, or as a preventative measure, especially for younger populations who may be facing peer pressure or other factors that increase the risk of drug misuse.

An effective prevention or intervention tool, Other Drugs focuses on the effects, risks, and consequences of drug misuse, with an emphasis on prescription drug misuse involving depressants, opiates, stimulants, and hallucinogens. The course highlights the impact of drug misuse in a motivational interviewing style. Other Drugs is designed to help individuals recognize and reflect upon their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors – and their influence on an individual's decision to use or misuse drugs.

An online, on-demand program, Other Drugs provides personalized feedback throughout the duration of the course as well as a confidential summary report upon course completion. In a counseling or coaching setting, this report can be used as a conversation starter to ignite discussion around the topic of drug misuse. **Other Drugs is a completely confidential resource that can be paired with other courses for participants who may have multiple violations.**

Interested in using Other Drugs with your referrals?
Visit 3rdmil.com or call us today for more information.

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