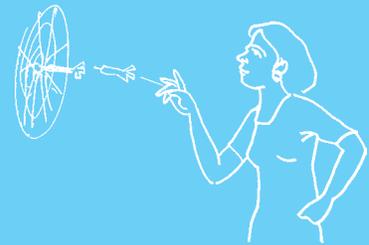


SKILL SHARPENING TOOLS

Guidelines for the Family



How Can We Protect Our Children?

- Evaluate your own use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. If you have a drink or two or light up a cigarette every time you get tense, remember you are conveying to your child inappropriate methods to cope with life and its stresses.
- Teach your child to cope with frustration and stress. When your child is upset, help him or her learn ways to feel better — like talking about it, taking a walk, or relaxation techniques.
- Make time for each child and let them know you care. Help them in their studies, share their happy moments and be with them when they are troubled and need your support.
- Let children know you love them. Everyone enjoys a gentle pat or a warm smile or a word of appreciation. If you're angry with your child, distinguish between the behavior you disapprove of and his or her essential worth.
- Expose your children to activities like sports, art, music, reading, or drama, so that they develop other interests. Introducing children to a variety of activities gives them wholesome things to turn to when they have time on their hands. When kids are bored, they are more likely to experiment.
- Foster strong family bonds to help counter powerful peer influences. Make your child feel your participation in her activities. Go to school functions with your child whenever you can. Establish or renew family traditions such as celebrating festivals, visiting places of worship, visiting relatives or eating together. If kids have a sense of belonging within their own families, they will be less likely to seek it elsewhere.
- Get to know your children's friends. Open communication keeps you in touch with who your children are close to. Know where your children are spending time. Ask them to inform you about where they are and to get home on time. Rules and consequences, limits and freedom teach children to be responsible.
- Let your kids know they can talk to you about anything, without harsh judgment or lectures. And be on the lookout for 'teachable moments', like when your child raises the subject of alcohol and tobacco (during farewell parties, 'culturals' in colleges and schools).
- Set clear expectations for behavior. Many youngsters who choose not to drink do so mainly because their parents will be upset and they do not want to hurt them.
- Teach your child to be assertive whenever appropriate. Encourage your kids to make informed decisions, so that when faced with offers of drugs or alcohol, they can assert themselves and resist pressure.