



Living without drugs

Information for parents



DRUGS
are not
child's play

Start by building a good parent-child relationship. Show them that you care and that you are interested in what they do. Talk with your children, not at them, and keep the lines of communication open. Pay attention to what they are saying. You may not always have the answers. Do not talk down to them—it might surprise you how much they know about life and about drugs.

Communicate, communicate, communicate

Be alert. Pay attention to body language. A relaxed child smiles, will meet your eyes when talking to you and does not show obvious signs of nervousness. These signs may include shaking or tapping of feet, drumming fingers and hanging the head when speaking. Talk to the school guidance officer if you sense there is a problem.

Make children feel responsible

Children are never too young to learn responsibility. Give kids tasks at home and increase the degree of responsibility as they get older. Set them a good example by not using illegal drugs. Children lose respect for adults whose behaviour suggests, "Do as I say, not as I do".

Do not abuse medication or illegal drugs

Do you suffer from stress, nervous tension and constant headaches? Do you rush to get relief from over-the-counter and prescription medicines? It is easy to become dependent on medication or alcohol and you can become addicted. Illegal drugs are not the answer either.

Make healthy choices. Remember, if you resort to alcohol, tranquillisers or illegal drugs when you are stressed out, you are setting a bad example for your children. Maintain a balanced diet and be active. Sport is a healthy activity that will help you feel better both physically and mentally.

Be informed

Know which drugs and their derivatives are illegal—cocaine, crack, marijuana, opium, heroin and amphetamines. Learn about the dangers of drugs and what they do to people. You can then help your children make informed choices. Make sure children realize that taking them is illegal. If they get caught, that would mean facing the police, law courts, possible jail sentences and public embarrassment.

Help children outsmart drug pushers

Help children recognize drug pushers and the places where they operate. Pushers may tell children that drugs help them to study better and pass exams. They may encourage them to try drugs "just this once", saying that you cannot get hooked after



one try. Make sure your children know that they should ignore such advice because drugs affect different people in different ways. Help children to practise saying no to drugs. Encourage them to take up sports or hobbies and teach them to make creative use of their leisure time.

Look out for signs of drug abuse

Although there are certain emotional and physical symptoms of substance abuse, do not immediately assume that your child is on drugs—there could be other reasons why your child behaves unusually.

Emotional and social signs

- Moodiness, excitement, anger, hostility, depression
- Constant lying and stealing
- Refusing to admit to the harmful effects of drugs
- Avoiding old friends or people who could confront them about behaviour changes

- Being secretive about phone calls
- Having friends they do not want you to meet or talk about
- Being evasive about their whereabouts
- Loss of motivation
- No interest in everyday life
- Playing truant from school

Physical signs

- Drowsiness
- Trembling
- Red eyes, dilated pupils
- Lack of interest in personal hygiene and appearance
- Slurred speech
- Loss of, or increase in appetite
- Uncoordinated movements
- Circles under the eyes
- Irregular sleeping habits
- Frequent colds and coughs
- Weight loss