Keeping Youth Drug Free

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Table of Contents

Introduction 5

If You Love a Child, You Need To Know This 7

Establish and Maintain Good Communication With Your Child.....12

Get Involved in Your Child's Life 20

Make Clear Rules and Enforce Them
With Consistency and Appropriate Consequences 26

Be a Positive Role Model 30

Teach Your Child To Choose Friends Wisely 36

Monitor Your Child's Activities 43

Summary/Recap 47

Resources 48

Keeping Youth Drug Free

Introduction

If you could do one thing that would help your child succeed in school, live a healthier life, and develop to his or her* fullest potential, would you do it?

If you answered "yes," then talk with your child about alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs. Find out what he knows. Explain to him that using these substances can interfere with studying and can cause grades to suffer by affecting memory and learning skills. Describe the harmful health effects of substances. Let him know how these substances can cause problems in relationships and among friends and can tear families apart. Study after study has found that parents make a difference in the choices their children make.

By the time they enter preschool, most children have seen adults smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol either in real life or in the media, or both. Children today are exposed to illegal drugs as early as elementary school, so it's never too early to talk with your child about drugs.

This guide will help you do just that. It is designed for parents and caregivers of children ages 7 to 13. It focuses on six key things you can do to help your child grow up drug free:

1. Establish and maintain good communication with your child.
2. Get involved in your child's life.
3. Make clear rules and enforce them with consistency and appropriate consequences.
4. Be a positive role model.
5. Teach your child to choose friends wisely.
6. Monitor your child's activities.

The suggestions in this guide are just that—suggestions. You may want to translate this information into your own words and use your own style to communicate it.

**In this document, we refer to a child as "him" in some places and "her" in others. We do this for easier reading. Every point in this guide is the same for girls and boys alike, unless otherwise specified.*

Keeping Youth Drug Free

If You Love a Child, You Need To Know This

As you read this guide, you may wonder how useful the information is to you and your child. Some parents aren't aware of how common alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs are in their child's life. The facts may surprise you. However, they shouldn't discourage you. Parents have an incredible influence on their child's decision whether or not to use drugs. The following facts emphasize just how much your children need your support and guidance when it comes to making positive decisions about alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.

Drugs Are Everywhere

> "Every child in America is at risk of using drugs, regardless of race, ethnicity, or economic status."
>
> *—National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse II.*

Youth drug use cuts across all ethnic, geographic, and socioeconomic lines. Youth experience pressure to use alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs at increasingly early ages. In fact, in one survey, adolescents ages 12 to 17 named drugs—along with social and academic pressures—as the most important problem they face.[1] The *2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)* states that:

- Among surveyed youths, ages 12 to 17, more than 1 in 9 (11.6 percent) reported current use of illegal drugs in the 30 days before the study.
- Marijuana is the major illegal drug used by this group; 8.2 percent of youths were current users of marijuana in 2002.
- Among 12- and 13-year-olds surveyed, 4.2 percent reported current illegal drug use. The primary drugs used by 12- and 13-year-olds were marijuana, nonmedical use of prescription pain relievers, and inhalants.

Statistics show that, fortunately, the majority of youth do not use drugs. However, some parents still underestimate how often their kids are exposed to drugs. According to the Partnership for a Drug-Free America (an organization that conducts attitude surveys of youth and parents):

- Eighteen percent of parents think their child has tried marijuana versus 40 percent of teens who say they have tried marijuana.

- Thirty-one percent of parents believe their teen has been offered drugs versus 52 percent of teens who say they have been offered drugs.
- Four percent of parents think their child has abused inhalants versus 19 percent of teens who say they have abused inhalants.

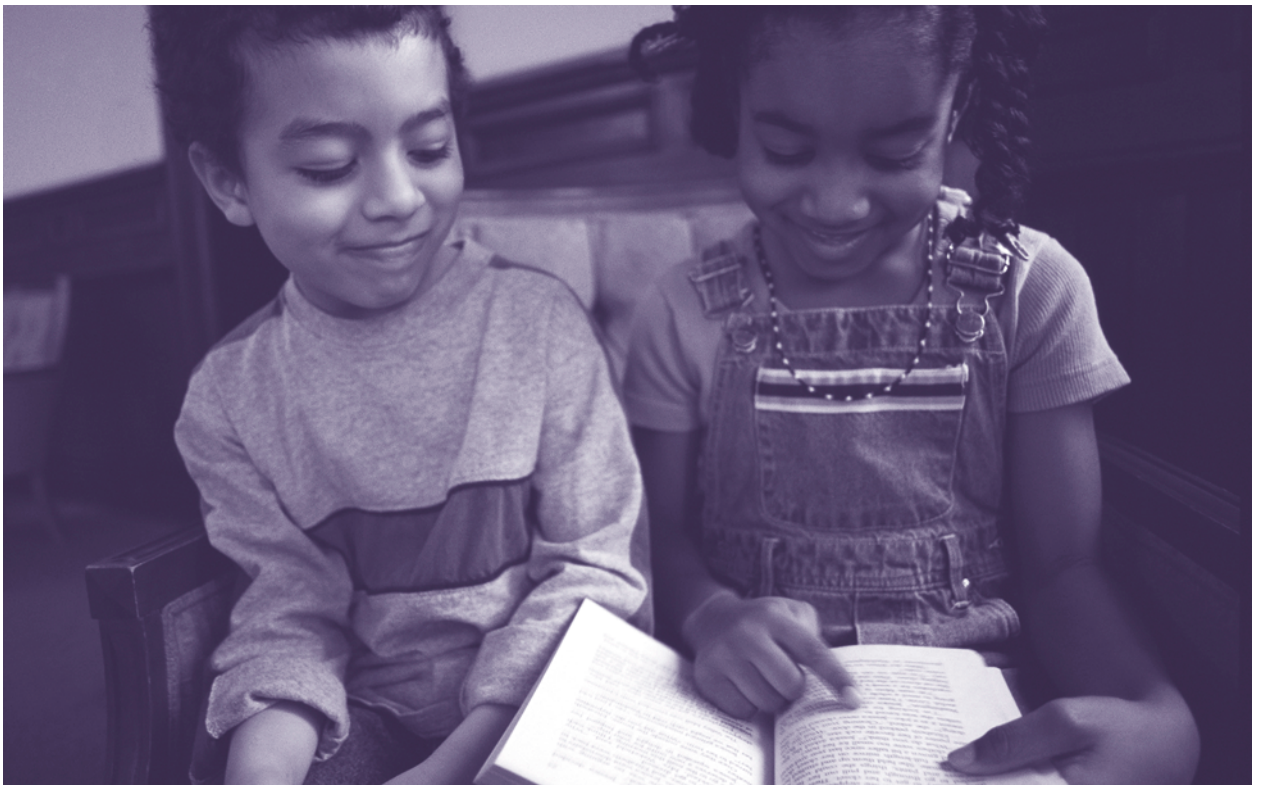
If your child uses drugs, what other risks might he face? According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA):

- Youth, ages 12 to 17, who smoke cigarettes are over 8 times more likely to use illegal drugs and over 17 times more likely to drink heavily than nonsmoking youth.
- Youth, ages 12 to 17, who use marijuana weekly are nine times more likely than nonusers to experiment with illegal drugs or alcohol, six times more likely to run away from home, five times more likely to steal, nearly four times more likely to engage in violence, and three times more likely to have thoughts about committing suicide.[2]

The Good News Is...

Research shows that parental influence is a primary reason that youth don't use drugs. Most teens who do not use alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs credit their parents as a major factor in that decision.

- Teens who learn a lot about the risks of drugs from their parents are up to 54 percent less likely to try drugs.[3]
- 30.2 percent of adolescents report using marijuana in the past month when their parents do not strongly disapprove of drug use. In contrast, only 5.5 percent of teens report using marijuana in the past month when their parents strongly oppose drug use.



The Differences Between Boys and Girls

There's no denying that boys and girls are different.

Differences between the sexes become more obvious with the onset of puberty, as do boys' and girls' needs when it comes to resisting alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drug use. Boys and girls experience adolescence differently because of various social, cultural, physiological, and psychological challenges. For example, among boys, puberty tends to increase aggressive behavior, while among girls, puberty tends to bring a higher incidence of depression.

Studies show that girls may lose self-confidence and self-worth during this pivotal time, become less physically active, perform less well in school, and neglect their own interests and aspirations. During these years, girls are more vulnerable to negative outside influences and to mixed messages about risky behaviors. Girls are also at higher risk than boys for sexual abuse, which has been associated with substance abuse.

Puberty generally occurs a year or two later in boys than it does in girls. The physical changes boys go through can cause a lack of coordination that may lead to injury. Boys tend to experience mood swings and can have feelings of anxiety during puberty. During these years, boys crave exploration of things associated with being grown up, including

sexual behavior or experimentation with alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs.

But boys and girls also have a lot in common. They need the same kinds of guidance, information, and nuture from their parents to help them grow into healthy, well-informed adolescents and adults.

Both boys and girls are less likely to smoke, drink, or use illegal drugs if they have:

- A positive attitude, an ability to adapt to changing circumstances, and a belief in their ability to "handle things."
- A warm, close-knit family and parental supervision with consistent discipline.
- Close friends, an extended family that provides support, community resources, and family and community attitudes that do not tolerate substance abuse.

Quick Quiz

How well do you know your child?

1. What is your child's favorite color?

   _____

2. Who is your child's best friend?

   _____

3. What are the names of your child's teachers? Who is your child's favorite teacher? Do you know why?

   _____

4. Who are some of your child's role models? What does he admire about those individuals?

   _____

5. What would your child wish for if she saw a falling star?

   _____

6. What is your child's favorite food?

   _____

7. What is your child's favorite movie or TV show?

   _____

8. What three words would your child use to describe himself? To describe you?

   _____

9. What are your child's hobbies?

   _____

10. What are your child's future goals?

    _____

Check with your child to see how well you did on the quiz.

1 Establish and Maintain Good Communication With Your Child

Get into the habit of talking with your child every day. Your child is an individual with hopes, fears, likes, dislikes, and special talents. The more you know about your child, the easier it will be to guide her toward more positive activities and friendships. As a result, your child will be less likely to experiment with alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs. Establishing a close relationship with your child now will make it easier for her to come to you when she has a problem.

> "I try to remind myself what's important here. Is it more important that he knocked over the milk or that he told me and helped me clean it up?"
>
> *—Dan, father of 7-year-old Matthew.*

It's important not to be critical. Positive reinforcement and constructive support are more effective in influencing children's behavior than criticism.

Action Steps to Good Communication

1. **Take the Quick Quiz on the previous page**. Ask your child what the answers are and let him lead you into a longer conversation. You can talk about one question a day or one a week. Think of other questions you can ask one another. Consider making the questions and conversations part of your daily routine.

2. **Set aside a few minutes a day**. Talk about problems or challenges that might have come up during the day and discuss how you handled them. You can ask your child for his ideas on simple matters to help him build problem-solving skills. These skills can help him resist peer pressure to use alcohol and drugs to solve problems.

Decisionmaking skills are important

Children learn how to make decisions. You can guide them with a key set of questions to ask when faced with a choice:

- What am I trying to decide and what do I know about it?
- How do I know my information is accurate? Who gave me the information?
- What more do I need to know before going ahead?
- Who has the added information I need?

And once the decision is made, ask these questions:

- What are the good effects of this decision?
- What are the bad effects?

After this, you can ask your child to reconsider a decision and take responsibility for the consequences.

3. **Validate your child's feelings**. Sometimes, children react to situations in ways we think are inappropriate, silly, or overdramatic. That's because children don't have the benefit of our adult experience. What is minor to us may be very important to them. For example, if your child says, "Mrs. Smith doesn't like me. She gives me too much homework," don't dismiss your child by saying, "That's ridiculous. Everyone gets the same amount of homework." Instead, validate your child's feelings, investigate the situation, and guide her toward a better understanding of the situation. "Oh, I wouldn't like it if I felt my teacher didn't like me. But does everybody get the same homework assignment?" If you're not sure you have all the facts regarding a situation, assure your child you will take action, such as talking to Mrs. Smith. This lets your child know that you respect her feelings and are willing to help her work through difficult situations.

4. **Practice active listening**. When you show interest in what your child has to say, she will open up. One technique to show you're listening and understanding is to paraphrase what your child tells you. Try doing this the next time you have a conversation. For example, your child says, "I like playing soccer, but practice is the same time as my favorite show on TV." You might say, "Wow, that's a tough choice. On one hand, you really like playing soccer; on the other hand, you don't want to miss your favorite show."

5. **Ask questions**. Children have a lot to share when they think their opinions matter. Ask for your child's input about family decisions. These decisions may range from what to have for dinner to where to go for a family outing. Showing your interest in her opinion will make your child feel more comfortable about opening up to you.

If you are successful in establishing open lines of communication with your child about day-to-day events, he will be more likely to seek your input on more serious issues as well. Many of the skills you use in daily conversations may prove useful when discussing tougher issues. Here's just one example:

Example

Your 11-year-old tells you a friend offered him some marijuana (or other substance). You can begin your conversation by asking for more information.

Q: "What do you know about marijuana (or other substance)?"

A: [Chances are your child will have some information on marijuana (or other substance), but not all of the information may be accurate. If your child doesn't know about the harms of marijuana (or other substance), you can do the following things together to find out more:]

- See the drug information starting on page 17 of this guide.
- Contact SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) toll free at 1-800-729-6686.
- Look at the following Web site—*www.samhsa.gov*—for other substances.

Ask more questions to continue the conversation.

Q: "Do you know what happens if you use marijuana (or other substances)?"

A: [Listen to your child's response. Does he mention any of the consequences listed below? If not, you should mention them. We have used marijuana as the example here.]

- Smoking marijuana is illegal and could result in getting suspended or kicked out of school, being sent to jail or juvenile detention, and having a criminal record. All of these things could affect the rest of his life.
- Smoking marijuana sets a bad example for younger siblings.
- Smoking marijuana will hurt his lungs and cause him to perform poorly in sports.
- Smoking marijuana will hurt his brain and could result in memory loss, bad grades, and a loss of motivation.
- Smoking marijuana would affect his relationship with you and others he cares about.
- Smoking marijuana would affect the whole family greatly. State what the resulting consequences would be in your family.

Express Thoughts and Feelings

Being able to express thoughts and feelings with someone we feel comfortable around—whether it is a spouse, a coworker, or a friend—can make all the difference in how we feel about ourselves and in how we interact with the world around us.

Similarly, young people need opportunities to express their thoughts and new feelings. When we try to limit the thoughts and feelings of our children, we take a great deal away from them. When we deny that their feelings are real, we are denying that children are individuals with their own perceptions. Young people who are taught to express themselves have an easier time dealing with peer pressure and resisting other temptations.

Other important messages you can share with your child when talking about marijuana or other substances include:

- While some people smoke marijuana and use drugs, most young people do not.
- Drugs can get in the way of achievement in areas that are really important, such as sports, singing, dancing, music, auto repair, acting, or art. Youth is a time for learning new things—finding friends and building support networks. A young person who uses drugs often can get caught up in the drug culture and miss out on the fun and rewarding opportunities available to her.
- Academic performance can be affected by drug use. Using drugs takes time away from studying and can have a negative impact on the brain, inhibiting learning abilities. A young person with hopes of going to college may find that drugs interfere with attaining academic goals.
- Children need to know that drug use doesn't just affect them. It also can have a negative effect on their relationships with others. A friend may get angry if the child starts to steal money or things to trade for her drugs. A brother or sister might feel hurt because of changes in behavior that make the child seem distant or moody.
- Negative behaviors like these can turn into a bad cycle. A young person may think that a teacher or friend or grandparent doesn't like her anymore because the child does not realize her behavior (drug use) has changed the relationship. A child, without being able to see this, just says, "Forget it. Nobody likes me anyway." This attitude can begin to spread to other relationships and then serves as a primary defense for using illegal drugs—"Nobody cares about me, so why shouldn't I smoke marijuana?"

Susan and Samantha's Story

Susan has made constant adjustments to her work schedule to reflect her changing needs and those of her family. Recently, she cut down the number of hours she works. Both Susan and her husband thought it was important to slow down the hectic pace they had been living since Samantha was born 8 years ago. Now there's more time to relax, play, and just talk to each other.

"Good communication is not just listening when she talks, but asking her about what's happening in her life. And when she seems troubled, I ask her about it. Sometimes I do have to coax a little, but I think she likes knowing that I care and she can come to me when she has a problem. I also talk a lot about our family's values. Open communication shouldn't be a special thing; it should be a daily thing.

"Sam is very inquisitive and curious. Right now, she comes to me with a lot of her questions, but I know that, as she gets older, she'll be looking to her friends for information more and more. I figure if I build this foundation of trust and communication now, when it gets tough—the teenage years—she'll still feel comfortable coming to me with her questions. Having this type of relationship with Sam makes me feel rejuvenated. It also gives me the chance to guide her point of view so that she can make better choices now and when she's older."

Communication Is Important Because...

Some Kids Use Drugs To Satisfy Curiosity

Children are very curious about alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs. They are exposed to drug messages on TV, in the movies and videos, in newspapers and magazines, at school, on the Internet, and in conversations with friends and family. Even if we have done an outstanding job of educating and nurturing the children in our care, some children will remain curious about alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs. Their sources of drug information may not always be accurate or have their best interests at heart. But you do. That's why it's important for you to know about the drugs your child may be exposed to and for you to **communicate** the consequences associated with them.

Drug Facts You Need To Know

When you talk with your child about alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs, it's best to know as much background information as you can. The following descriptions are by no means comprehensive, but they give you a broad overview of the substances your child may be exposed to or ask you about.

Narcotics

Product names: Heroin, morphine, codeine, Dilaudid, Demerol, Percodan, Methadone, Talwin.

Street names: Heroin—Smack, Junk, Horse, H, Tar. Morphine—Mojo, Mud, Mary, Murphy, M, Miss Emma, Mister Black. Codeine—Schoolboy, Cody, Captain Cody. Methadone—Dollies, Fizzies.

Symptoms of use: Lethargy, drowsiness, euphoria, nausea, constipation, constricted pupils, slowed breathing.

Potential consequences: HIV infection, heart or respiratory problems, mood swings, chronic constipation, tremors, toxic psychosis, high potential for addiction.

Routes of administration: Injected and ingested.

Medical use: For pain relief (except heroin and methadone).

Legal status: Illegal except by prescription.

Hallucinogens

Product names: LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), PCP (phencyclidine), DMT (dimethyltryptamine), Mescaline, MDA (methylenedioxyamphetamine), STP (dimethoxymethamphetamine), psilocybin, Rohypnol, GHB (gammahydroxybutyric acid), MDMA (methylenedioxymethamphetamine).

Street names: LSD—A, Acid, Blotter, Microdots, Windowpane. PCP—Angel Dust, Angel Mist, Animal Tranquilizer. Psilocybin—Mushrooms, Magic Mushrooms, Shrooms. MDMA—Ecstasy, E, X, XTC. Rohypnol—R-2, Roofies, Roaches, "The Date Rape Drug." GHB—Liquid Ecstasy, Liquid X, Georgia Home Brew, Georgia Home Boyz.

Symptoms of use: Trance-like state, excitation, euphoria, increased pulse rate, insomnia, hallucinations.

Potential consequences: Impaired judgment and coordination can result in greater risk for injury, self-inflicted injury, violent behavior, paranoia, depression or anxiety, unpredictable flashbacks.

Route of administration: Ingested.

Medical use: None, except oxycontin.

Legal status: Illegal.

Alcohol

Product names: Beer, gin, vodka, bourbon, whiskey, tequila, liqueurs, wine, brandy, champagne, rum, sherry, port, coolers, "lab punch."

Street names: Booze, Sauce, Brews, Brewskis, Hard Stuff, Juice.

Symptoms of use: Slurred speech, impaired judgment and motor skills, incoordination, confusion, tremors, drowsiness, agitation, nausea and vomiting, respiratory ailments, depression.

Potential consequences: Impaired judgment can result in inappropriate sexual behavior, sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV/AIDS), injuries, and auto crashes. Habitual use can lead to an inability to control drinking, high tolerance level, blackouts and memory loss, interference with personal relationships, cirrhosis of the liver, vitamin deficiencies, damage to heart and central nervous system, sexual impotence, weight gain.

Route of administration: Ingested.

Medical uses: For appetite stimulation and mild sedation.

Legal status: Illegal under 21.

Depressants

Product names: Sleeping pills and tranquilizers (Seconal, Nembutal, Smytal, Quaalude, Miltown, Norcet, Placidyl, Valium, Librium, Tauxene, Ativan, Xanax, Serax).

Street names: Downers, Ludes, Vs, Blues, Goofball, Red Devil, Blue Devil, Yellow Jackets, Yellow Bullets, Pink Ladies, Christmas Trees, Phennies, Peanuts.

Symptoms of use: Drowsiness, confusion, incoordination, tremors, slurred speech, depressed pulse rate, shallow respiration, dilated pupils.

Potential consequences: Anxiety, depression, restlessness, psychotic episodes, chronic fatigue, insomnia, changes in eyesight, irregular menstruation, stopped breathing, suicide, dependence requiring more of the drug to get the same effect, severe withdrawal symptoms.

Route of administration: Ingested.

Medical uses: For tranquilization, sedation, and sleep.

Legal status: Prescription only.

Cocaine/Crack Cocaine

Product names: Cocaine, crack cocaine.

Street names: Cocaine—Coke, Snow, Blow, Toot, Nose Candy, Flake, Dust, Sneeze. Crack Cocaine—Crack, Rock, Base, Sugar Block, Rox/Roxanne.

Symptoms of use: Excitability, euphoria, talkativeness, anxiety, increased pulse rate, dilated pupils, paranoia, agitation, hallucinations.

Potential consequences: High risk for addiction, violent or erratic behavior, hallucinations, cocaine psychosis, eating or sleeping disorders, impaired sexual performance, ongoing respiratory problems, ulceration of the mucous membrane of the nose, collapse of the nasal septum, death from cardiac arrest or respiratory arrest.

Routes of administration: Sniffed and smoked.

Medical use: None.

Legal status: Illegal.

Inhalants

Product names: Organic solvents, nitrous oxide, nitrites, aerosols, airplane glue, nail polish remover, lighter fluid, gasoline, paints, hair spray.

Street names: Glue, Kick, Bang, Sniff, Huff, Poppers, Whippets, Texas Shoeshine.

Symptoms of use: Slurred speech, incoordination, nausea, vomiting, slowed breathing.

Potential consequences: Brain damage; pains in chest, muscles, and joints; heart trouble; severe depression; toxic psychosis; nerve damage; fatigue; loss of appetite; bronchial tube spasm; sores on nose or mouth; nosebleeds; diarrhea; nausea; bizarre or reckless behavior; sudden death; suffocation.

Route of administration: Sniffed.

Medical use: Nitrous oxide only, for anesthesia.

Legal status: Most products available in retail stores.

Cannabis (Marijuana)

Product names: Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol, Cannabis sativa, marijuana, hashish, hashish oil.

Street names: Weed, Pot, Grass, Reefer, Mary Jane, Joint, Roach, Nail, Blunt. (Blunt refers to a cigar into which marijuana is rolled.)

Symptoms of use: Mood swings, euphoria, slow thinking and reflexes, dilated pupils, increased appetite, dryness of mouth, increased pulse rate, delusions, hallucinations.

Potential consequences: Amotivational syndrome, memory impairment, weight gain, increased risk for cancer, lower sperm counts and lower testosterone levels for men, increased risk of infertility for women, psychological dependence requiring more of the drug to get the same effect. Marijuana serves as a barrier against self-awareness, and users may not be able to learn key developmental skills.

Routes of administration: Ingested and smoked.

Medical use: None.

Legal status: Illegal.

Stimulants

Product names: Amphetamine, Methamphetamine, Biphetamine, Dexedrine, Desoxyn, Tenuate, Ionamin, Tepanil, Methcathinone.

Street names: Methamphetamine—Speed, Crystal, Meth, Ice, Glass, Crank, Go. Methcathinone—Cat, Jeff, Goob, Stat, Star. Amphetamine—Bennies, Benz, Uppers. Dexedrine—Dexies, Brownies.

Symptoms of use: Excitability, tremors, insomnia, sweating, dry mouth and lips, bad breath, dilated pupils, weight loss, paranoia, hallucinations.

Potential consequences: Weight loss, nutritional deficiency, chronic sleep problems, high blood pressure, paranoia, anxiety or nervousness, decreased emotional control, severe depression, violent behavior, death from heart failure or suicide.

Route of administration: Ingested.

Medical uses: For narcolepsy, obesity, hyperkinesis.

Legal status: Prescription only.

Tobacco

Product names: Cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco.

Street names: Cancer Sticks, Sticks, Bidis (flavored, hand-rolled cigarettes), Cloves (60% tobacco/40% cloves), Chew, Smoke, Bone, Butt, Coffin Nail.

Symptoms of use: Smelly hair, clothes, and breath; yellowing of teeth; coughs; increased asthma attacks; shortness of breath and poorer athletic performance. After only a few weeks, users of spit tobacco can develop cracked lips, white spots, sores, and bleeding in the mouth.

Potential consequences: Addiction; respiratory problems such as emphysema and chronic bronchitis; heart and cardiovascular disease; cancer of the lung, larynx, esophagus, bladder, pancreas, kidney, and mouth.

Routes of administration: Smoked or ingested orally (chew or spit tobacco).

Medical use: None.

Legal status: Illegal for youth under 19 in Alabama, Alaska, and Utah. Illegal for youth under 18 in all remaining States.

Drug Facts for the New Millennium

The effects on both the body and brain of marijuana and other drugs are potentially more intense now than in the past because some of the drugs are more potent. For example, because of new growing and harvesting techniques, marijuana is about 275 percent more potent than it was just 10 years ago. It also often is laced with other drugs such as PCP or crack cocaine, sometimes without the users' knowledge. The environment of the drug culture also is more dangerous today. Studies show that youth who use alcohol or illegal drugs are more likely to be perpetrators or victims of violent crimes.

If you would like information about illegal drugs and alcohol written for young people, check out the *Tips for Teens* series available online at *www.samhsa.gov*, or order the series by calling SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 1-800-729-6686 (TDD 1-800-487-4889).

2 Get Involved in Your Child's Life

Young people are much less likely to use drugs when they have positive activities to do and when caring adults are involved in their lives. Get involved in your child's life by participating in his activities (e.g., bring a snack for the soccer team, volunteer in your child's classroom, attend his recital or play, help with his science project) and praising his accomplishments. Your participation and encouragement tell your child that these activities are worthwhile and may help him identify and pursue other positive activities as he gets older.

Action Steps To Get Involved

1. **Spend at least 15 minutes a day in a "child-directed" activity (doing something your child wants to do)**. Experts say that doing something with your child for at least 15 minutes a day is essential to building a strong parent-child relationship. Examples of child-directed activities include:

   - Reading a book your child chooses.
   - Letting your child choose the menu and then cooking a meal together.
   - Playing a game of your child's choice (she can even make up her own rules!).
   - Working on a craft project your child chooses.

   It also may be as simple as talking with your child about a topic in which she is interested. Remember, 15 minutes is a suggested minimum. The more time you are able to devote to your child doing these kinds of activities, the better. (For more information, log on to *www.samhsa.gov/centers/cmhs/cmhs.html* and search for the 15+ Make Time To Listen—Take Time To Talk Initiative.)

2. **Identify at least one opportunity each week for you and your child to do something special together**. Some possibilities include:

   - Visiting the library.
   - Going for a walk.
   - Playing cards, board games, or video games.
   - Searching on the Internet to learn about each other's interests.
   - Going on a special outing, such as the park, playground, or ice cream stand.

   The important thing is that you spend time together and interact (just watching a TV show and not discussing the program doesn't count!). You may be surprised at how much these special activities can mean to your child.

3. **Support your child's activities**. For example, if your child plays sports, plan to attend as many practices and games as you can and model appropriate participant behavior! Praise your child's physical efforts and dedication to the sport.

4. **Recognize good behavior consistently and immediately**. Make the extra effort to "catch" your child "being good"; for example, doing the dishes or cleaning her room without being asked. Praise her for things you might ordinarily take for granted, such as getting up on time, helping to set the table, or finishing her homework without being asked. No one is ever too old to hear encouraging words or to get a hug or a "high five" for a job well done. Keep in mind, though, that children usually know when their effort has been less than their best. Choose words that are authentic:

   - Way to go! That's great.
   - I think you have real talent.
   - I can see that you really understand.
   - This is something that you can really be proud of.
   - You've made real progress.
   - Congratulations.
   - I can't wait to show this to....
   - That is a whole new way of thinking about it...good.
   - I like the way you did that.
   - I'm proud of you.
   - You are a natural....
   - I knew you could do it!
   - You are a quick learner.
   - Well done!
   - That part is perfect.
   - That is a good solution.
   - You are really creative.
   - Good job!

5. **Use meal times as opportunities to share news of the day or to discuss current affairs**. In today's fast-paced world, many families find it difficult to come together at meal times. However, if family meals can be arranged, it is a great opportunity for interaction. Be aware, however, that this should be a time for positive discussion. It probably is not appropriate to discuss upsetting issues such as failing grades, bad news in the newspaper, or other upsetting topics. It is definitely not the time to fight with each other. Meal-time discussions can help your child value expression by encouraging passionate, but polite, exchanges. If it is difficult for your family to eat meals together, be creative in finding other times to have conversations with your child, such as during car rides.

Robert and Alia's Story

Most people don't believe 34-year-old Robert when he tells them he is a grandfather. His daughter Alia was born when he was 17. Robert didn't live with his daughter as she grew up, so being involved in her daily life was a challenge.

"It's really hard being a parent, especially if you don't live with your child. I couldn't see my child a lot because her mother and I weren't getting along. If I could do it over again, I would play a more active role in her life even though her mother and I didn't see eye to eye. For parents in that situation, I would tell them to be more concerned about the relationship with your child than what's going on between you and the mother or the father. I would say the most important thing is to try to be there for your child. One thing I realize now is that it didn't always have to be a big thing, like going to the amusement park. We probably would have spent more time together if I didn't always feel like, 'Wow, I've gotta do something special.' Alia remembers the little things—like helping me wash the car. I mean, she counts that as one of her favorite memories."

Being Involved Helps You To Become Aware When Your Child Is Under Stress

Being young doesn't necessarily mean you are never unhappy or anxious. Young people often cite stress as a reason they use alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs. Let's face it; young people today have to deal with issues such as:

- Changing family structures.
- Easy access to alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.
- Lack of adult supervision.

- Lack of safe places to learn, play, and socialize.
- Lack of good role models.
- Peer pressure.
- Pressure to be sexually active.
- Violence and gangs.

Some young people think that alcohol or illegal drugs will cheer them up, make them forget about problems they have, or make them feel part of the group.

Adults and children sometimes develop unhealthy ways of dealing with stress. How many times have we heard people say, "Boy, I could use a drink," as an antidote to stress? How many of us smoke tobacco to reduce stress? How many of us truly know how to deal with stress in healthy ways? Just like some adults, children need to learn how to deal with stress, how to make healthy decisions, and how to relax.

Children also need someone to help them through difficult times—someone to whom they can express their concerns and apprehensions without fear of rejection or recrimination. One of the most important things that can help children choose not to use alcohol and drugs is the love and support of at least one caring adult who helps guide them through the many phases of childhood.

How can you tell if your child is under stress?

Some signs of stress among young people include:

- Low energy
- Short attention span
- Frequent sleepiness
- Extreme hyperactivity
- Inactivity
- Misbehavior
- Anger
- Fighting frequently
- Being frustrated
- Saying bad things about self
- Not doing as told
- Making different voices, grunts, growls, snorts, or reverting to baby talk
- Crying easily
- Sulkiness
- Detachment and unresponsiveness
- Changes in eating habits
- Mood swings
- Defiance/rejection of authority
- Changes in appearance and personal hygiene
- Changes in personality
- Abusiveness to siblings
- Drop in grades
- Backtalk

How can you tell if YOU are under stress?

These symptoms may indicate that you are under stress:

- Unresponsiveness to others
- Frequent illness
- Low energy
- Feeling confused
- Abusiveness to others
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Feeling weary
- Crying easily
- Constant worrying
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Fearfulness
- Changes in eating habits
- Tension headaches
- Desire to be alone more often
- Rejection of advice and assistance
- Mood swings
- Changes in sleeping habits
- Irritability and short temper

Reducing Stress

There are many ways to help reduce stress in a child's life:

- Allow your child to express her feelings and concerns.
- Promote healthy eating, sleep, and exercise patterns during the early years so they become habits for a lifetime.
- Let your child know that you also experience pain, fear, anger, and upset.
- Look at your own coping skills. Are you setting a good example?
- Teach your child relaxation exercises, such as deep breathing and sitting quietly for 10 to 20 minutes as a way to calm down or reduce stress.
- Set goals based on the child's abilities—not on your expectations.
- Teach your child that it's okay to be angry, but it's also important to let the anger go.
- Help your child express anger positively, without resorting to verbal or physical violence.
- Give your child a big hug before or after a stressful situation.
- Establish a special time each day for just the two of you.
- Show confidence in your child's ability to handle problems and tackle new challenges.
- Get your child's input on how a stressful situation can be improved. Discuss his ideas. They may not always be realistic, but this exercise will help him develop problem-solving skills.
- Help your child learn from mistakes.

If you are or your child is experiencing symptoms of stress and you're not sure how to handle the situation, your doctor or a counselor could help. Or call SAMHSA's National Mental Health Information Center at 1-800-789-2647 for resources and referrals near you.

3 Make Clear Rules and Enforce Them With Consistency and Appropriate Consequences

Would it surprise you to learn that parents' permissiveness is a bigger factor in teenage drug use than is peer pressure? If you let your child know up front that you don't approve of using tobacco or illegal drugs, or underage drinking, your child is less likely to use those substances.

Making rules, explaining the need for them, and enforcing them consistently are important. Parents need to establish regularly enforced rules to guide their children in developing daily habits of self-discipline. Research shows that parents who have either very harsh rules or no rules at all are more likely to have children who are at greater risk for drug-taking behavior. Parents who have a warm relationship with their children, while maintaining rules for behavior, can teach children self-discipline.

Action Steps To Make Clear Rules and Enforce Them With Consistency and Appropriate Consequences

1. **Discuss your rules and expectations in advance**. Let your child know the consequences of broken rules or unmet expectations. These rules can apply to schoolwork, chores, behavior at home, and behavior outside of home.

2. **Follow through with the consequences you have established**. If your child breaks the rules, it's important to follow through with the consequences you discussed. If you don't follow through, you send the message that your rules are not really important and that it's okay to break them. Children really do want you to show you care enough to set limits and enforce them.

3. **Acknowledge when they follow the rules**. Catch your child "being good" and praise him for it. Take every opportunity to support your child's decision to follow a rule or to meet or exceed your expectations. Positive reinforcement helps your child develop self-confidence and trust in his own judgment while seeing the benefit of following your rules.

4. **Discuss why using tobacco and illegal drugs and underage drinking are not acceptable**. Let your child know why you don't want her to use drugs: you love her too much to ever want her to get hurt or get into trouble. Talk together about your family values. Remember, when a child decides whether or not to use alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs, a crucial consideration is, "What will my parents think?"

What Is an "Appropriate Consequence"?

Appropriate consequences will vary based on the age of your child, the seriousness of the situation, and your child's personality. Here are a few examples that may help you establish your own guidelines.

Possible rewards for good behavior might be:

- Extra time on the computer
- Extra phone privileges
- One-half hour later bedtime (assuming it doesn't interfere with needed sleep)
- Having a friend over for dinner on a week night
- Having a friend stay overnight on a weekend
- Tickets to a concert or sports event
- More television viewing time

The opposites could be viewed as appropriate consequences for breaking rules:

- Less time on the computer
- Phone privileges taken away
- No later bedtime/earlier bedtime
- No friends over during the week
- No friends over during the weekend
- Tickets to a concert or sports event taken away
- Less time to watch television

Teaching Self-Discipline

Children who learn rules and consequences early in their lives begin to impose their own rules, modeled on yours, on themselves. Teach the child "When-then." "When you set the table, then we eat." "When you finish your homework, then you can watch TV." "When you save $15, then you can get a new video game."

When possible, try to relate the consequence you impose to the behavior they exhibit. For example, if you have established the rule that homework needs to be done before going out to play, a logical consequence of breaking the rule might be no outside play until the homework is finished.

Keith and Seth's Story

Keith loves being a dad but hates being a disciplinarian. He would much rather spend Saturday morning playing catch with his 12-year-old son Seth than monitoring his progress cleaning the basement—a consequence handed out for not getting home on time. On the other hand, Keith knows firsthand what it's like to grow up without limits.

"I was wild. I did just about everything a kid shouldn't do. Smoked, drank, cut school, was disrespectful. I never got called on any of it until I got arrested, and then it was like, 'Whoa. What do you mean, I'm going to jail?' I finally got the message that for every action there's a reaction. I think a lot of why I was so wild is that I was starved for discipline. I wanted some order in my life—some security. Those were lonely times. I don't want Seth to ever think I don't care about him or how he acts. That's why I sit down with him and share my experiences and tell him why I have these rules, why I don't want him to do certain things. He knows that if he makes a bad choice, he needs to be prepared for the consequences."

Rules and Consequences for Breaking Them Are Important Because...

Some Kids Use Drugs To Take Risks and Rebel

Taking risks is part of growing up. Children may take an emotional risk by letting someone know that they don't like what they are doing. They may take a physical risk by testing their balance climbing up a tree. They may take a social risk by introducing themselves to someone they don't know.

To grow, a child must learn skills that, as adults, we may take for granted. For example, we may forget how hard it was to go to our first dance. We had to risk that no one would ask us to dance, that we would not be able to dance very well, or that someone would make fun of us. For a child, these are big risks.

As children approach the teen years, almost everything holds some risk because everything feels so new and unexplored. As risks are overcome, most young people continue to look for other new, challenging opportunities.

Parents can help children take healthy risks. These risks may include trying out for a play, joining a community youth group, or going on a survival skills training course. It's important to do so because youth who don't grow and learn with positive challenging opportunities may look for other risks to take. However, they will be unclear about boundaries and unsure of rules and expectations. So, if they are not clearly guided into making smart and healthy decisions about these risks, they may think it's okay to include using alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs as part of that risk taking they are trying on.

Some youth may think that using these substances will help them prove that "I'm cool. I can handle anything." This desire to feel grown up, combined with media images of people drinking, smoking, and taking drugs, send a message to some young people that it's ok to take this risk.

By stating and enforcing clear rules and expectations about the use of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs, you can help ensure that your child is less likely to view using drugs or alcohol as an acceptable risk.

4 Be a Positive Role Model

Children like to imitate adults. How many times have children imitated the way we speak, tried on our clothes or makeup, had a make-believe tea party or cocktail party, or pretended to "go to work"?

Every child wants to be a grownup. Being "grown up" means freedom. Being grown up means making your own decisions. Being grown up means being able to eat and drink anything you want, wherever you want.

Young people like to "try on" our behaviors along with our adult clothes. Lots of things fit into the grownup category: driving a car, working, drinking alcohol, getting married, smoking cigarettes, having babies, and so forth.

If we ask young people about the messages we send them about drinking alcohol, smoking, or using drugs, what might they say? We might be surprised to find out that we influence their attitudes toward alcohol, tobacco, or any substance when we involve them in our own substance use by asking them to get us a beer from the refrigerator or an ashtray from the cupboard.

A child can understand and accept the differences between what adults may do legally and what is appropriate and legal for children. We should continue to reinforce this understanding by not abusing legal substances like alcohol, or by using illegal drugs. Children are exposed to media messages and images that glamorize the use of substances. We must help them understand these messages are neither glamorous nor healthy.

A parent or caregiver using alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs may increase a child's chances of using and becoming dependent on a substance.

Action Steps To Being a Positive Role Model

1. Do not engage in illegal, unhealthy, or dangerous drug use. Avoid actions that say, "Do as I say, not as I do." Children, even at very early ages, imitate and are influenced by adult behaviors.

2. Don't involve your child in your use of alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs. Such involvement may include asking her to get a beer, light a cigarette, or "taste" your wine.

3. When possible, point out examples of bad behavior linked to substance use or abuse and the consequences. Examples can be found in television shows, movies, music, lyrics, even video games. An important part of your job is to engage your child about these images and behaviors and what they mean.

Dennis's Story

His name is Dennis, but most of the people in his neighborhood just call him "Coach." He and his family (he has a teenage son and a younger daughter) have been involved with the Boys & Girls Club for more than 9 years. Dennis has been an active community volunteer and mentor to youth for even longer. He is a role model not only for neighborhood youth, but also for parents as well.

"I can say a lot of things to the kids that most adults can't get away with. I can tell them to pick up their pop bottles off of the basketball court, and they'll do it, because they know I'll confront them if they don't. They know I really care about them, and I've taken the time to build a rapport and relationship with them. I try to instill in them that there's a lot in life that you can look forward to. There's a whole collage of things to do besides hanging out in the streets. I take the kids out, expose them to different things, like hiking and camping. Doing these things with them puts you on a level where kids look up to you as a role model. They see me. I don't do drugs, I don't drink, but 'Hey,' they think, 'He's still having fun. I can have fun without that stuff, too.' The best part is that other kids will start looking up to them."

If You Use Alcohol, Tobacco, or Other Substances

The fact is, if you use alcohol, tobacco products, or other substances, your children are more likely to use them, too. However, even if you use substances, you can still do a lot to help your children choose not to use them.

If you use alcohol, drink moderately. That means no more than a single drink a day for adult women and two a day for adult men. On special occasions and holidays, find alternative ways to celebrate. Talk about your family rules on the use of alcohol. Deal with stress by exercising, talking with a friend, or deep breathing. The children you care for will learn a lot by imitating these strategies.

By setting a good example, you can help your child define being "grownup," emphasizing responsibilities such as taking care of ourselves, doing well at school or work, and being productive members of our community.

If you use tobacco products and have had difficulty stopping, talk with your children about how addictive nicotine is. Let them know that when you were young, you thought you could stop easily, but you now have grown dependent on nicotine and want very much to quit. If your children are very young, be careful about sharing information about the health problems you may be suffering as a result of your tobacco dependence. A young child may quickly jump to the conclusion that you are dying and may become very frightened.

By the way, it's never too late to quit. See the resources in the back of this guide, or call SAMHSA's NCADI at 1-800-729-6686 for local referrals and information.

If you use illegal drugs, frequently or even occasionally, **or if you are abusing prescription drugs,** you are sending strong negative messages to your children. These messages may include:

- Take a pill if you need help coping.
- It's okay to break the law when it stands in the way of personal needs.
- The best way to cope with stress, strain, or other problems is to use drugs.
- Happiness comes from the temporary high of drug use, not from good relationships with others.
- It's easier to take drugs than to develop good problem-solving and stress management skills.
- Time spent using drugs is better than time spent with you.
- It's easier to take drugs to try and forget problems instead of dealing with them.

If You Used Drugs in the Past...

You may not know whether you should tell your child if you used to use illegal drugs. Past drug use also may make you feel uncomfortable to start a conversation on the topic with your child. But remember—your child needs your guidance. Whether you have used drugs in the past does not change this fact. After all, the conversation is about your child, not you.

Every child is different and each parent-child relationship is unique. Whether you tell your child you have used drugs in the past depends on a variety of factors, such as the child's age, the child's developmental stage, and your relationship with the child. Some children may not want to know or need to know about your past experiences. Other children may benefit from your candor and the lessons you learned firsthand.

If you decide to tell your child about past drug use, be sure to make a distinction between past adolescent or young adult use/experimentation and current adult use. You should say nothing about your current drug use unless directly confronted by your child. You should seek help for the entire family to help manage this situation. (See the resources available in the back of this guide.)

Don't let past drug use stop you from conversing with your child about alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs. The value of face-to-face discussions with your child cannot be overestimated. Remember to:

- **Listen**.
- **Get feedback**.
- **Have a clear message**.

Here are some suggested messages to help you keep the topic of conversation on your child rather than you:

- When I was younger, people didn't know as much about the harmful effects of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drugs. You're lucky to have all of this information. I wish I knew then as much as you do now.

- Marijuana is stronger than it was even 10 years ago. Sometimes it is mixed with other, even more dangerous drugs. There are also a lot of new drugs to worry about today.
- I stopped doing drugs (or smoking cigarettes, or drinking alcohol) because drugs are illegal, not just because they're "not good to do." I'm telling you this now because I don't want you to make the same mistakes I did. (You may want to share a personal story of a negative consequence you experienced because of illegal drug use.)
- The main issue here is you. I definitely do not want you to use alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, or any drugs.
- Drugs don't solve problems. They won't make you popular. They won't help you grow up. And they surely won't help you build a strong body and mind. In fact, just the opposite can happen.
- Tell me some things that you do that make you feel good about yourself. Those things make me proud of you.
- If you used alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs, I would be very upset and hurt. (You may want to discuss with your child the consequences he faces if he decides to use alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs.)

Teachable Moments

You've read through this section and are ready to talk with your child, but you aren't sure where to start. Here are some ways to turn everyday situations into "teachable moments":

Watching TV—Substance use often is shown in television shows and even cartoons. Use these instances to start a conversation. And listen to the answers.

Passing a billboard—Start a conversation the next time you pass a billboard advertising cigarettes or alcohol. What is the ad selling? Does your child believe it? Discuss what the ad may not be telling her. And listen to the answers.

Shopping—Pictures of marijuana leaves often adorn T-shirts, hats, and other accessories. Products made from hemp also use marijuana logos.

Use these images to start a conversation. What does your child know about marijuana? And listen to the answers.

Knowing about relatives or family friends who use substances—If a relative or family friend has a substance abuse problem, it affects all of you. Use the situation as an opportunity to talk with your child about your expectations and hopes for him. It is the ideal time to talk about family values, family history, and the benefits of staying drug free. And listen to the answers.

Making a change—Transition periods are good times to talk with your child about substance use issues. Whether your child is entering a new school, starting a new school year, joining a new club, signing up for a new activity or program, moving to a new neighborhood, or experiencing another kind of change, talk about the challenges, hopes, and fears these changes may bring. Will the likelihood of her being exposed to drugs increase with these changes? Could drug use interfere with a new activity? And, again, listen to the answers.

Jay's Story

"My parents drank and used drugs in front of us. They told us not to do it, but at the same time, they didn't really care. Like if they found a joint in my room, they'd smoke it and not even talk to me about it. I'd come home drunk—this is when I was still in high school—and nobody said anything. That's how they grew up. That's how we grew up. I love my mom and dad, but I don't want my kids to have the same childhood memories that I have. If my kids ever ask me if I did drugs, I think I'd have to be honest with them and say yes. But I'd also tell them that I don't do it anymore and that I regret ever doing it. I'm sober and drug free today. That drugs cause a lot of pain. I would tell them that their using drugs would hurt them and our family. Because I know what can happen, and the thought of them in those situations would really hurt."

Being a Positive Role Model Is Important Because...

Some Kids Use Drugs To Feel Grown Up

We must keep in mind that our children grow up. Some of the ways children behave are part of a natural and healthy separation, which generally starts in the early teen years between ages 11 and 14. While we need to set limits, we also must allow room for growth. But that doesn't mean you should "check out." Know your children, their friends, where they hang out, and what they are doing.

If adults have set the example of responsible behavior, children are much more likely to make positive decisions and choices. Parents are a child's first and best teachers.

5 Teach Your Child To Choose Friends Wisely

As parents, we often worry about how much influence peers have on our child. We've all heard the phrase "peer pressure." However, recent research suggests that most youth don't feel overt pressure from their peers to use alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs. Youth say that the pressure to do drugs, smoke, or drink comes more from wanting to be accepted, wanting to belong, and wanting to be noticed. In other words, youth drug use often has more to do with the need for peer acceptance than an inability to "just say no" to their peers.

Children want others to like them. Sometimes the group they want to join might be drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, chewing tobacco, sniffing inhalants, smoking pot, taking LSD, using methamphetamines, smoking crack, or shooting heroin. Sometimes youth turn to alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs to overcome anxiety, change their personality, or give them courage to talk to other people.

Myth vs. Fact

Our society is flooded with messages that encourage our young people to use alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.

These messages help convince young people that they should join "the crowd." The myth that "everyone is doing it" fuels the perception that drug use is normal. The reality is that young people consistently overestimate the numbers of their peers who use alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs.

Teens are six times more likely to report current use of marijuana when they believe that all or most of the students in their grade use the drug. *(2002 NSDUH).*

Young people often say that they learn more from friends than family when they reach adolescence. But studies have found that these same adolescents would *prefer* to learn about a variety of important topics from their parents and other caring adults. While peer influence increases during the teen years, the influence of caring adults can remain strong if you've established a solid relationship during the earlier years.

Even if you can't always be there to help her make the right choices, you can help your child develop skills to manage her need for peer acceptance in positive and productive ways. You can help your child learn how to:

- Refuse both subtle and direct offers of alcohol and drugs.
- Feel comfortable and act appropriately in social situations.
- Analyze and decipher pro-use messages (become media literate).

Action Steps To Help Your Children Cope With Peer Pressure and the Need for Peer Acceptance

Knowing that you do not approve and would be disappointed in them is the strongest motivation for them to refuse offers to try these substances.

1. **Establish the clear message that you, as a caring adult, do not want them to use alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs**. Parents, grandparents, elders, aunts and uncles, foster parents, guardians, mentors, and others can play a strong role to help young people face pressures to use alcohol and drugs. In fact, the most common reason that young people give for not using alcohol and drugs is not wanting to harm the relationship between themselves and the caring adults in their lives.

2. **Help your child practice resisting peer pressure**. For young people, most peer pressure is just as subtle as it is for most adults. For example, let's say you just started a low-fat diet and you've been at a friend's home for a party. They've been eating chips and

dip, but you've resisted. Now, it's time to leave and, as you drive home with your neighbor, she says, "Hey, let's stop off at the pizza place down the block." You mutter something about being on a diet and she says, "Oh come on, just one piece of pizza won't kill you." This is peer pressure, and it's the same as what a child experiences when a slightly older pal suggests just taking a "little" hit of a marijuana cigarette because he knows the younger friend really doesn't want to do drugs.

This is why practicing peer pressure resistance is important. Finding creative ways to refuse alcohol, tobacco, and drugs requires humor and lots of practice. Children, especially younger children, love to pretend. So set a scene as if you and your child were characters in a story. Roleplay saying no to things that your child knows are harmful or against the rules, such as playing with matches, stealing a cookie, or smoking a cigarette.

This cannot be a one-time session. You might find, for instance, that a 10-year-old has no trouble at all saying no to trying a beer at a neighbor's house. However, 3 years later, when the 17-year-old next door asks him if he wants a beer, you hear him hesitate—not as sure of his convictions at 13 as he was at 10.

How To Say "No."

Children can help develop their own set of "turn down" comments, but it's your job to help them practice so that they are not thrown off balance if the offer is more subtle or more forceful than anticipated.

A lot will depend on the age and personality of your child. The most important thing is to make sure she's comfortable with what she wants to say. Your job is to coach her to use language and phrases of her own.

For instance:

A shy child might want to say, "No, thanks," or "I gotta go," and then walk away quickly.

A more outgoing child might say, "What? Are you talking to me? Forget it," or "No, I don't do drugs."

Children who have difficulty refusing offers from older kids or adults may need special help to practice a forceful, believable reason that clearly lets the other party know that they do not want to use alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.

3. **Help your child feel comfortable in social situations**. A basic course in social skills often helps here. Again, it's a matter of practice. Young people want to be socially accepted. So if being socially accepted means eating with a knife and fork instead of with one's hands, then that's what kids want to learn.

   Practice meeting and greeting people with your child. Find some sentences that help her "break the ice." Teach your child how to ask questions about others and to be a good listener.

   Again, you can get lots of input from your child. Ask her to describe times when she has felt uncomfortable. Tell her about a situation in which you felt awkward. See if she has ideas about how to act in the same situation in the future. Let her know that social situations often are awkward at first and that they are not very easy for most people. Ask her about her experiences.

Let your child know that some people may turn to alcohol and drugs to get them through awkward social moments, and they never learn how to be comfortable in social situations. Let your child know that it's okay to feel awkward at times. We all do!

4. **Teach your child to analyze media messages**. Many of the media messages about alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs present glamorous images, lure with T-shirts and trinkets, and play upon the desire to be popular and physically attractive. These messages often ignore the risks associated with alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drug use. The need for group acceptance and peer approval is high during adolescence, and media images often influence youth's determination of what attitudes, behaviors, and actions are socially "normal" or desirable. Media-literate individuals are better able to make informed choices and form opinions based on facts rather than "hype."

   Help youth think for themselves and resist the many powerful media messages about drugs, tobacco, and alcohol. Help them analyze media messages, understand the intent of the messages, and evaluate how the information in the message is used and communicated in a variety of media—television, movies, videos, radio, and in music. These skills are especially important to young people. After all, they're exposed to an average of 5.5 hours of media each day![4]

Five Steps To Becoming Media Literate

Media literacy can help youth recognize and understand messages—actual or "between the lines"—delivered in music lyrics, promoted on clothing and jewelry, illustrated in advertisements, and portrayed on TV or in movies. Media literacy helps children build resiliency skills, come to understand that all messages are constructed deliberately, and develop the ability to identify and resist messages that support the use of illegal drugs, tobacco, or alcohol.

Five steps can help you and your child identify, analyze, and evaluate media messages. Each step is one of the five basic principles of media education. By answering the questions in each step, you and your child can become critical consumers of information. Ask your child to pick any media message—a cartoon, a movie, a news photograph, a magazine article, a TV or magazine advertisement, a T-shirt, or song lyrics. Using the five steps, ask her about the messages she received.

Step 1 - Reality:

Media messages represent (someone's) reality. What is the message maker's point of view?

Step 2 - Interpretation:

People interpret media messages differently. How does the message make you feel?

Step 3 - Construction:

Each media message is a collection of words, images, and sounds. What special words, images, and sounds are used to create the message?

Step 4 - Purpose:

Each media message has an author and a purpose. Who created the message and why?

Step 5 - Form:

Media messages come in different forms. How is this message delivered (magazines, television, radio, newspapers, etc.)?

Additional Media Literacy Activities:

1. Ask your child some questions the next time you watch a TV commercial or see a billboard: Is that advertisement trying to sell you something? If so, what? Is that product healthy for you? How is the sponsor of that product trying to get you to buy it?

- By making you feel unlovable. ("You won't be liked if you don't try this product.")
- By making you feel left out. ("Everyone is buying it, so don't be left out.")
- By making you feel inadequate. ("If you don't buy this product, you won't be able to do things as well as everyone else.")
- By making you feel less masculine or less feminine. ("If you don't use this product, members of the opposite sex won't find you attractive.")

How do you feel about the product now?

2. The next time your child is watching television, sit down and join him. What does your child like about the program? Talk with your child about whether people in real life look like the people on television or in the movies. What are the differences? How do the people he sees in movies and television make him feel about himself? Does he want to look like the people he sees on TV? Does he want to live the lifestyle he sees represented? Is this realistic?

3. The next time you and your child pass a billboard, see a television commercial, or notice a print ad in a magazine or newspaper, ask her about the advertising message. What is the ad really selling? A product? A feeling? A lifestyle? Does she believe everything the ad says? Can the product actually do what the ad promises? What else might the product or service do that the ad doesn't mention? Is the ad misleading in any way? Who is the ad targeting? Why?

4. Create your own commercials or ads. Ask your child to pick or create a product or service and then create an advertisement for it. Your child could act out a television commercial, write a radio script, or draw a print ad or billboard. Talk about why he used the images and words that he did. You can get into the act and create an ad, too! Talk about the thought process that you went through to create the ads.

Teaching Your Child To Choose Friends Wisely Is Important Because...

Some Kids Use Drugs To Fit In and Belong

Wanting to fit in, to belong, is one of *the* most natural parts of growing up. In fact, if we really listen, we may find that, for some, it is the most important part of growing up. **By teaching your child to choose friends wisely**, you are giving her skills she needs to feel confident in her own judgment. This can help her resist peer influences to use alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs or engage in other dangerous behavior.

Kimberly and Caitlin's Story

"My daughter came running into the house really upset one day. She had just heard that another girl in the neighborhood had started a nasty rumor about her, and she came in to get her sneakers so she could find this girl and fight her. I told her, 'You get her, honey! How dare she talk about you!' Tears in her eyes, my daughter hugged me and then went in her room for her sneakers. She came out and was heading for the door, when I stopped her and told her, 'You aren't going anywhere.' She looked at me with big eyes, 'But mom, you just said…' 'I know what I said. When you came running in here you were hurt and needed a friend. So I said something a friend would say. But now, you're on your way out, getting ready to do something that could get you hurt, and you need your mom. You're not going out that door.' And she didn't. Instead, we had a long talk about the importance of being true to yourself. She didn't need to go and fight this girl. My daughter needed to believe in herself enough to know that her friends and the people she really cared about wouldn't believe the rumor. She needed to know that people can only push your buttons if you let them and that violence is never a good solution. It was a good reminder for both of us."

6 Monitor Your Child's Activities

Monitoring your child's activities is an important deterrent to alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drug use. One study found that latchkey youth who were home alone 2 or more days per week were four times more likely to have gotten drunk in the past month than those youth who had parental supervision five or more times a week.[5] Another study found that children who had the least monitoring initiated drug use at earlier ages. And the earlier a child starts using drugs, the greater the likelihood that a serious problem will develop as a result.

Action Steps To Monitor Your Child's Activities

1. **Establish relationships with your child's friends**. Children are more likely to experiment with drugs if their friends do and if they spend a lot of unsupervised time together. Knowing your child's friends can put you in closer touch with your child's daily life. You'll be better able to recognize trouble spots and guide your child away from risky situations, dangerous behaviors, and negative peer influences. Also, when parental monitoring is high, adolescents are much less likely to choose friends who use drugs. Thus, parents have a powerful influence on their adolescents by their influence on their choice of friends and their monitoring of the peer selection process. Youth are less likely to use drugs if they think their parents and friends disapprove of drug use and if their friends do not use drugs themselves.

2. **Get to know other parents**. Arrange to attend school events or other gatherings with parents. As parents, you can reinforce each other's efforts and provide a valuable support network for both you and your children.

3. **When your child goes out, make sure you know where he's going, who he'll be with, and what he'll be doing**. Ask for phone numbers and addresses of friends' houses and other places your child likes to go. Let him know you may call or drop by to check up on him, and don't be afraid to do just that. Start this practice early, when the child first starts to visit friends at 8 or 9 years old. Then it will be habit rather than hassle when he is 14.

4. **Have your child check in at regular times and make it easy for her to contact you**. Give her a phone card, change, or even a pager, with clear rules for using them. Make sure she has your cell phone number and knows where you are going to be and how you can be reached.

5. **Make sure your child has access to enjoyable, drug-free, structured activities**. Youth who are involved in constructive, supervised activities during after-school hours and on weekends are less likely to use drugs. Encouraging your child's involvement in these activities and participating when you can (e.g., going to a soccer game, painting props for a play) are powerful ways to prevent drug use.

Coranne, Jason, and Nicole's Story

Coranne's daughter Nicole is in seventh grade. Nicole's older brother Jason, a firefighter, is married and has a son of his own. Although he doesn't have to "check in" with mom anymore, Coranne says old habits die hard.

"Jason calls me almost every day. Sometimes it's just to say a quick hello; other times he needs some advice. I think it just became a routine for him that continued on into adulthood. It's the same with Nicole now. I make sure that no matter where she is, she has to call me. Because if I find out about something after the fact, then she is grounded or her privileges are taken away. For example, she went to a friend's house after school and I gave her a time to call me. That time passed, so I paged her. When she did call me back, I asked her why she didn't call. She didn't have an acceptable explanation, so I came and got her right away, and she had to come straight home from school the next day. But I made sure that at least I gave her the opportunity to explain, and I didn't just fly off the handle."

Monitoring Your Child's Activities and Providing a Variety of Positive Activities Are Important Because...

Some Kids Use Drugs When They Think They Have Nothing Better To Do

Many youth say they started smoking marijuana or using illegal drugs out of "boredom." In fact, having significant amounts of unsupervised time is a risk factor for youth substance abuse. Unfortunately, changes over the years in family structures and neighborhood networks have increased the amount of time that many young people spend unsupervised. Even if you aren't able to be with your child during the after-school hours, you can seek out activities your child can participate in. Involvement in supervised activities not only occupies free time that could otherwise permit involvement in harmful or dangerous activities, but it helps young people develop skills, establish friendships, identify their talents, and develop a strong sense of self-esteem. They learn self-confidence and skills that last a lifetime, and studies show they are much less likely to use drugs or alcohol.

Resources to help you find activities for your child include:

1. **School programs**. Check with your child's teacher, school counselor, or principal and ask about after-school activities sponsored by the school or your local department of education.

Coordinating and monitoring your child's activities ensures that your child always has something "better to do" than drugs.

2. **City and county programs**. Call your mayor's office or local department of parks and recreation and ask for information on youth programs. Many counties offer a brochure of youth programs. Ask them to send one to you by mail.

3. **Faith-based programs**. Many churches, synagogues, mosques, and other places of worship have youth programs. You don't always have to be a member of these organizations to have your child participate in their programs. Check with your place of worship or with faith organizations in your community.

4. **National organizations**. Many national organizations such as the YMCA, the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Boys & Girls Clubs of America have local chapters and affiliates that offer supervised activities. Find out what's available in your area. For a detailed list of some of these organizations, see the resources section in the back of this guide, or log on to the "Your Time—Their Future" Web site at *www.ncadi.samhsa.gov/yourtime*.

5. **Mentoring programs**. There's no substitute for a caring and involved parent, but sometimes another caring adult can make a world of difference in a child's life. Find out about mentoring programs in your area. A good place to start is with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (*www.bbbsa.org* or 215-567-7000) or the National Mentoring Partnership (*www.mentoring.org* or 703-224-2200).

Summary/Recap

By reading *Keeping Youth Drug Free* and taking the suggested action steps, you are helping to ensure your children reach their fullest potential and grow up happy, healthy, and drug free. Here is a quick recap of the things you can do to help your child resist alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.

- **Establish and maintain good communication with your child.** Talk with your children about alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs and listen to their pressures and problems. Teach your child the health, safety, and legal consequences of using alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs. If you're not sure what they are, look for information starting on page 17 of this guide, or call the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 1-800-729-6686 (TDD 1-800-487-4889) to request information on specific drugs or other literature (online at *www.samhsa.gov*). You also may contact the resources listed on the following pages.
- **Get involved in your child's life.** Get to know her individuality. Work with her strengths. Accept a child's unique talents and personality. Provide love, support, and encouragement to the child in your life.
- **Make clear rules and enforce them with consistency and appropriate consequences.** Be clear and consistent in your expectations, rules, and messages.
- **Be a positive role model.** Do not engage in any illegal, unhealthy, or dangerous drug use practices. Provide an example consistent with what you say.
- **Teach your child to choose friends wisely.** Practice ways for him to refuse drugs with methods that fit his personality.
- **Monitor your child's activities.** Ask questions about what he's doing, with whom, for how long, and where. Get to know the friends he spends time with and the other parents, as well. Be sure children have easy access to a wide range of appealing, drug-free, alternative activities and safe, monitored areas where they can gather, especially during after-school hours.

[1]CASA, National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse VIII: Teens and Parents, 2003.
[2]SAMHSA, Adolescent Self-Reported Behaviors and Their Association With Marijuana Use, September 1998.
[3]Partnership for a Drug-Free America, Partnership Attitude Tracking Study, 2003.
[4]Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Issue Brief: The Role of Media in Childhood Obesity, 2004.
[5]Mulhall, P.F., D. Stone, and B. Stone. (1996). Home Alone: Is It a Risk Factor for Middle School Youth and Drug Use? Journal of Drug Education, 26(1), pp. 39–48.

Federal Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information
P.O. Box 2345
Rockville, MD 20847-2345
800-729-6686
800-487-4889 (TDD)
301-468-7394 (Fax)
http://ncadi.samhsa.gov

SAMHSA's Building Blocks for a Healthy Future
http://bblocks.samhsa.gov

SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP)
http://prevention.samhsa.gov

SAMHSA's A Family Guide To Keeping Youth Mentally Healthy and Drug Free
http://family.samhsa.gov

SAMHSA's ¡Soy Unica! ¡Soy Latina!
http://www.soyunica.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Prevention Intervention Network
P.O. Box 6003
Rockville, MD 20849-6003
800-458-5231
301-562-1098
888-282-7681 (Fax)
301-562-1050 (Fax)
http://www.cdcnpin.org

Tobacco Information and Prevention Source at CDC
http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco

Administration for Children and Families' National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information
330 C Street, SW.
Washington, DC 20447
800-394-3366
703-385-7565
703-385-3206 (Fax)
http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov

Office of Minority Health Resource Center
P.O. Box 37337
Washington, DC 20013-7337
800-444-6472
301-230-7199 (TDD)
301-251-2160 (FAX)
http://www.omhrc.gov

Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)
P.O. Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849-6000
800-666-3332
301-519-5212 (Fax)
http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov

ONDCP's Parents: The Anti-Drug
http://www.theantidrug.com

ONDCP's Freevibe
http://www.freevibe.com

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and Center for Substance Abuse Prevention's Strengthening America's Families
http://www.strengtheningfamilies.org/

Children, Youth, and Families Education and Research Network
612-626-1111
http://www.cyfernet.org

Private-Sector Resources

African American Parents for Drug Prevention
311 Martin Luther King Drive
Cincinnati, OH 45219
513-475-5359
513-281-1645 (FAX)

Al-Anon/Alateen Family Group Headquarters, Inc.
1600 Corporate Landing Parkway
Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617
757-563-1600 (general information)
888-425-2666 (meeting information)
757-563-1666 (Fax)
http://www.al-anon.alateen.org

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.
475 Riverside Drive
11th Floor
New York, NY 10115-0002
212-870-3400
http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org

Boy Scouts of America National Council
P.O. Box 152079
Irving, TX 75015-2079
972-580-2000
http://www.scouting.org

Boys & Girls Clubs of America
1230 West Peachtree Street, NW.
Atlanta, GA 30309
404-487-5700
http://www.bgca.org

Camp Fire USA
4601 Madison Avenue
Kansas City, MO 64112-1278
816-756-1950
816-756-0258
http://www.campfire.org

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
625 Slaters Lane, Suite 300
Alexandria, VA 22314-1536
800-54-CADCA (542-2322)
703-706-0560
703-706-0565 (Fax)
http://www.cadca.org

Girl Scouts of America
420 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10018-2798
800-478-7248
212-852-8000
http://www.girlscouts.org

Girls Incorporated®
120 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005-3902
800-374-4475
212-509-2000
http://www.girlsinc.org

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)
511 East John Carpenter Freeway, Suite 700
Irving, TX 75062
800-GET-MADD
217-744-6233
972-869-2206/07 (Fax)
http://www.madd.org

Nar-Anon Family Groups
22527 Crenshaw Boulevard, Suite 200B
Torrance, CA 90505
310-547-5800

Narcotics Anonymous World Services
P.O. Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409
818-773-9999
818-700-0700 (Fax)
http://www.na.org

National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse, Inc.
340 East Second Street, Suite 409
Los Angeles, CA 90012
213-625-5795
213-625-5796 (Fax)
http://www.napafasa.org

National Association for Children of Alcoholics
11426 Rockville Pike, Suite 100
Rockville, MD 20852
888-554-COAS (554-2627)
301-468-0985
301-468-0967 (Fax)
http://www.nacoa.org

National Black Child Development Institute
1101 15th Street, NW., Suite 900
Washington, DC 20005
202-833-2220
202-833-8222 (Fax)
http://www.nbcdi.org

National Alliance for Hispanic Health
1501 16th Street, NW.
Washington, DC 20036
202-387-5000
http://www.hispanichealth.org

National Center for American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research
P.O. Box 6508, Mail Stop F800
Aurora,CO 80045-0508
303-724-1414
303-724-1474 (Fax)
http://www.uchsc.edu/ai/ncaianmhr/index.htm

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc.
20 Exchange Place, Suite 2902
New York, NY 10005
212-269-7797
212-269-7510 (Fax)
http://www.ncadd.org

National Crime Prevention Council
1000 Connecticut Avenue, NW
13th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
202-466-6272
202-296-1356 (Fax)
http://www.ncpc.org

National PTA Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention Project
330 North Wabash Avenue, Suite 2100
Chicago, IL 60611-3690
800-307-4782
312-670-6782
312-670-6783 (Fax)
http://www.pta.org

PRIDE Youth Programs
4684 South Evergreen
Newaygo, MI 49337
800-668-9277
231-652-2461 (Fax)
http://www.prideyouthprograms.org/index.shtml

Partnership for a Drug-Free America
405 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10174
212-922-1560
212-922-1570 (Fax)
http://www.drugfreeamerica.org

Students Against Destructive Decisions
P.O. Box 800
Marlborough, MA 01752
877-SADD-INC (723-3462)
508-481-5759 (Fax)
http://www.saddonline.com

YMCA of the USA
101 North Wacker Drive
Chicago, IL 60606-7386
312-977-0031
http://www.ymca.net

YWCA of the USA
1015 18th Street, NW., Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20063
800-YWCA-US1 (9922-871)
202-467-0801
202-467-0802 (FAX)
http://www.ywca.org

This list of resources is not intended to be exhaustive; inclusion as a resource in no way is intended to represent an endorsement of a non-Federal organization or Web site by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), its Agencies, or its subdivisions. Further, HHS does not endorse the views or warrant the content of any non-Federal Web site that may be referenced in this volume.