



TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT...



Drug Abuse

Keeping the Lines of Communication Open

The way drugs are taking over our schools and destroying our children's lives probably frightens you. But if you suspect your child is using drugs, you must tread carefully. Don't spy or make emotional accusations. Those are sure ways to make your child rebellious and defensive. Instead, tell him that drugs can damage his health and his future. Explain that you want to protect him from the danger of drugs just as you would want to protect him from any other threat.

Watch for the Warning Signs of Drug Abuse

Although the warning signs of drug abuse vary from person to person, there are some changes you should watch for in your child. Be concerned if he or she:

- gives up usual sports, hobbies, or friends.
- avoids the family by staying in his or her room all day or staying out all night.
- becomes angry or depressed easily.
- doesn't tell you where he or she is going or with whom.
- develops health problems such

as sleepiness, bloodshot eyes, or weight gain or loss.

- often borrows or even steals money.
- has academic or conduct problems at school.
- has blackouts, memory lapses, tremors, hallucinations or delusions.

Dispel Drug Myths

Two illegal drugs commonly abused by teenagers are marijuana (pot) and cocaine (coke). There are many myths that could make your child think pot and coke are safe to use.

Teenagers often think it's safe to smoke pot. They couldn't be more wrong. Marijuana is both physically and psychologically addictive. Long-term users suffer from irritability and insomnia when they try to quit. But not quitting can be even worse. Pot can cause lung cancer and other diseases, just as cigarettes can. Pot also causes kids to lose their ambition and drive, and may keep your child from becoming emotionally mature.

The risks of coke are better known. But youngsters often think they're invulnerable to

drugs. Tell your child that cocaine and "crack" (cocaine that's smoked) are some of the most addictive drugs around. They're also unpredictable. Cocaine can kill suddenly by triggering a heart attack or seizure. And injecting coke—or any drug—can put your child at risk for AIDS.

Self-Esteem Is the Best Defense Against Drugs

Children often try drugs in order to "fit in" or to impress their friends. Staying clean can be very difficult for a child who has little confidence in himself. You can help your child resist drugs by telling him that he is special—too special to waste his life with drugs.

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