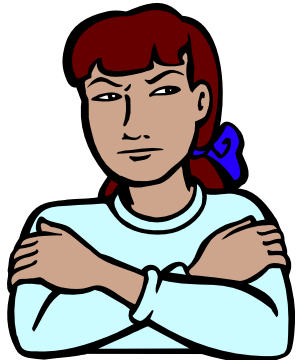


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TALKING TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT DRUG ABUSE

It's normal for children to sometimes be moody and rebellious, even fickle. But signs such as giving up sports, hobbies, or other interests, avoiding family, or being overly secretive...MAY BE SIGNS THAT THE CHILD IS ABUSING DRUGS.

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 or her that drugs can damage his/her health and future. Explain that you want to protect him/her from the danger of drugs just as you would want to protect him/her 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 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
- Often borrows or even steals money
- Has academic or conduct problems at school
- Develops health problems such as sleepiness, blood-shot eyes, or weight gain or loss
- Has blackouts, memory lapses, tremors, hallucinations or delusions

DISPEL DRUG MYTHS

Two illegal drugs commonly abused by teenagers are marijuana and ecstasy. There are many myths that could make your child think marijuana and ecstasy are safe to use.

Teens often think it is safe to smoke marijuana. 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. Marijuana can cause lung cancer and other diseases, just as cigarettes can. Marijuana may keep your child from becoming emotionally mature.

Ecstasy is called the "Hug Drug" or "Love Drug" because it lowers inhibitions and breaks down social barriers. Ecstasy can cause dramatic increases in body temperature and can lead to muscle breakdown, as well as kidney and cardiovascular system failure. Mixing ecstasy with alcohol or other drugs increases the risk of adverse reaction. Research findings link ecstasy use to long-term damage to parts of the brain critical to thought and memory.

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 children who have little confidence in themselves. You can help your children resist drugs by telling them that they are special – too special to waste their lives with drugs.

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