



PREVENTION Network

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For Parents

August 2007

• *Communicate*

• *Role Model*

• *Become Involved*

New School Year

New Opportunity to Talk with Your Child

When was the last time you spoke with your child about alcohol, tobacco or other drugs?

As summer comes to a close and we enter the "back to school" season for another year, it is an excellent time to have this conversation. Talk about the risks associated with their use and your expectations. If you have had this conversation before, maybe it's time for a refresher.

When your children are young, you remind them often to brush their teeth, to look both ways before crossing the street, and to eat their vegetables. Like these behaviours, substance use is a health issue. Start an ongoing conversation with your child about the risks of using alcohol and other drugs. As your children grow up, they will need more and more information, so start early and build on the conversation as your child matures. Use teachable moments.

When possible, point out examples of negative behaviour linked to substance use and the consequences and make sure it is age appropriate.

During these ongoing talks with your child, it is essential to listen. Being a good listener gives you insights into your child's world and shows you care about his/her concerns.

It is important that your children know your expectations for them on the issue of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use as well as the consequences for not following your rules. Research shows that young people are less likely to use tobacco, alcohol or other drugs if their parents set clear rules about not doing so. They are also more likely to have the self-confidence to say "no". On the other hand, studies show that children are at greater risk for drug abuse in homes where punishment is too severe or where there is no discipline.

Get the conversation going! It's never too early to start!

"Silence is not golden, it's permission"
Parents. The Anti-Drug

If your community has a substance abuse prevention event or activity you'd like to share with our readers, please contact Cathy Mah at cathymah@ades.bc.ca © 2007

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PREVENTION TIPS

Here are some tips for setting rules

- 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, behaviour at home, and behaviour outside of home.
- 2. When possible, try to relate the consequence you impose to the behaviour 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.
- 3. 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.
- 4. Acknowledge when they follow the rules.** Catch your child "behaving well" 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 family rules.
- 5. Discuss why using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs is 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 family values. Remember, when a child is deciding whether to use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs, a crucial consideration is, "What will my parents think?"

ASK AN EXPERT

What do I do if my spouse and I disagree about standards around teen alcohol and other drug use?

While it can be useful for parents to model respectful disagreement to their children, on issues of health and safety, a "united front" is most effective. Parents are the best protection against alcohol and other drug use in teens, so having both parents "on the same page" is critical.

As parents, it is important to educate ourselves on the effects of teenage alcohol and other drug use and communicate our expectations and concerns to our children in a calm, non-judgmental manner before problems arise. It is also important to engage our children in discussion and seek their opinions on this topic. We should not assume that all teens experiment with drugs and alcohol. In fact, this belief may contribute to substance use!

Some parents minimize the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol believing that teenage drinking or "smoking a little dope" is a right of passage. After all, they say, "we did it and we're okay". What they may not know is that recent research has shown that alcohol has a greater effect on the developing brain than previously

realized and that the THC levels in marijuana today is several times greater than the marijuana they may have smoked when they were young. Teenagers do not use alcohol the way responsible adults do – they tend to binge. Teenage drinkers are more vulnerable to alcohol dependence than older drinkers – 40% of alcoholics began drinking before age 15 while only 10% began drinking in their early twenties. For teens, alcohol is a major factor in date rapes, unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

The parent who is armed with all the facts regarding teenage alcohol and other drug use may present this information to the other more laissez faire parent in the hopes of winning that parent over. Regardless of their position on this issue, most parents believe they have the best interests of their children at heart. If parents still cannot agree, they should avoid arguing and expressing their differences in front of their children. These conflicting messages may appear to condone teenage alcohol and drug use.

Mimi Hudson, M.A., R.C.C.
Director of Community Programs
Family Services of the North Shore

RESOURCES

Books:

1. Grenny, Joseph, 2005, **Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High**

Learn more at –

vitalsmarts.com/books_more.aspx

2. **Words Can Work: When Talking About Alcohol**, 2007

To order this and similar materials go to -

www.wordscanwork.com/products/materials.html

Websites:

ades.bc.ca
theantidrug.com
family.samhsa.gov

COMMUNITY CORNER

Pemberton Heights Mums Group

The Pemberton Heights Mums Group in North Vancouver began in 1983 with six mums attending the first meeting. The group grew quickly from there and at its peak had 110 members. There are approximately 50 active members currently.

The original goal was to bring together mothers of pre-school aged children to network and support each other. As the group grew, so did the range in age of the children and the topics discussed. They balance their time with guest speakers and opportunities to network and discuss various topics amongst themselves. Topics range from child care issues, to alcohol and other drug prevention, to gardening.

The group meets once a month for about two and a half hours from September to June. The meeting place rotates, but always at a home of one of the members.

Networking and support from other parents in your community can be very valuable. The Pemberton Mums Group is a great example of a community pulling together to support each other in keeping their children healthy.

If you would like more information you can contact Shauna Markham at smarkham@shaw.ca, current Mums Group chair and original member.



Available Resources & Workshops

Making Decisions Series

A leading education initiative to combat drug and alcohol abuse and encourage social responsibility. [< More info](#)

Grades 4, 6, 7, 8 & 9

Parents as Preventors™

Workshops designed for parents, emphasizing the central role parents play in influencing their children to make healthy choices regarding alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

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