

• Communicate

• Role Model

• Become Involved

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

Have you ever thought about how your actions might impact your child's decision to use alcohol, tobacco or other drugs.

Have you ever used alcohol to relax after a busy day at work, or let a friend leave your house and drive home after having a few drinks? Have you asked your child to get you a cigarette or a beer, or laughed at a drunk or stoned person in a movie? If you have, or if you abuse alcohol or other drugs yourself, you may be sending the wrong message to your child. Your actions help form your child's opinions about how they will treat alcohol, tobacco or other drugs.

Young children need positive role models in their lives so that they grow up making healthy decisions. While television and other media have made it a practice to make well-known celebrities positive role models for children, in study after study, children name their parents

among their major role models. Even the most rebellious teens still look to their parents for certain cues and examples. Use this attention to show



your children the healthy behaviors you'd like them to copy, and do everything you can to keep your child safe.

Parents are the single most important influence on their children's decision to smoke, drink, or use other drugs, yet many parents do not fully understand the extent of their influence." So, be the person you want your child to be. What stronger prevention message is there?

Remember: Your children are watching you!

PREVENTION TIPS

Positive Role Modeling Tips

- Instead of turning to alcohol or other drugs for stress relief, model healthy ways of handling stress and practice with your child – go for a walk, find a good book at the library, or write in a journal.
- Make some family gatherings alcohol-free to show your child that you don't need alcohol to have fun.
- Don't allow your child to get a cigarette or a beer for you or others.
- Do not drink and drive or allow other family members to do so.
- Model effective refusal skills for your child. Allow your child to see you refusing to do something you don't want to do and don't allow yourself to be swayed.
- In spite of busy schedules, make time for special family fun activities.
- Praise your child's positive qualities and behaviours.

COMMUNITY CORNER

"It Takes a Village to Raise a Child"

Parent and public education is a crucial part of the Vernon School District's substance abuse prevention program. Accordingly, each year the school district hosts four substance abuse prevention meetings. In order to better communicate our message, we have recruited many outstanding and willing partners. KISSFM radio and the Vernon Morning Star newspaper help spread our message across the North Okanagan. As well, school district officials, school administrators, and PAC groups send the substance abuse prevention message home

with our students. Our past presenters have included physicians, mental health professionals, RCMP members, and researchers just to name a few. The next step in our communication process is to get our presenter's message home to all families – as many busy families cannot attend evening presentations. The editor at the Morning Star, Glenn Mitchell, has been an exemplary resource for our program. He sends a reporter to each presentation then publishes the important findings in the community newspaper that is delivered to each home in the North Okanagan. Finally, this whole community approach has been very effective. Our project has become a

comprehensive, community-based, multifaceted program for adolescent drug abuse prevention.

The skills taught at these presentations and in school programs are reinforced through parent, media, and community participants.

For more information please contact **Doug Rogers** - Substance Abuse Prevention Counsellor, SD#22 (Vernon) at 250-549-6179 or dougrogers@sd22.bc.ca

Other school districts in the province have taken similar approaches to Substance Abuse Prevention Among them are: West Vancouver, Vancouver, and Kamloops

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ASK AN EXPERT

When should I start talking to my child about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs?

A simple answer to this question is: **Early!** Certainly by the time children begin to use language. Children's exposure to drugs - over the counter or prescription, tobacco or alcohol, or in some instances other mind altering drugs - at home, on TV, billboards, magazines or other print media, will continue throughout their childhood and adolescence. Since their exposure begins early, so must their education.

Humans apparently learn a lot by intently watching. And so we parents have the first most glorious opportunity to be our children's educators, to shape their attitudes and values by our actions.

When talking with young children it is best to talk in a relaxed way, using everyday situations, and to make observations in a more humorous than scary way. Begin by introducing the idea of taking care of our bodies. We also need to model care and caution when taking or giving medications, whether over the counter or prescription. This is the time to talk about various types of medicines, pills, ointments and sprays. You can point out the directions and precautions printed on the containers and about problems associated with misuse, all the while reflecting on the example you are setting. It is important not to give the appearance of casualness about taking medication.

By age ten it is important to talk about alcohol, as well as illicit drugs. It is easier to reinforce a non-use norm than to try to change someone who has already decided that drug use is acceptable. A young person's positive expectations about drug use go hand in hand with future use. This is a good time to talk with your children about what they believe happens when these substances are used, and to clear up myths.

The most important message to communicate to children about alcohol and other drugs is that these substances are not for them to use. Equally important, focus on health promotion - building positive attitudes and teaching life skills.

"We need to teach from an early age that there are many ways to have fun, excitement, pleasure and adventure in life without drugs. And that there are many ways to minimize stress and alleviate tension without drugs. And that there are many ways to socialize with other people and be part of a group without conforming to a drug-using norm. Children who are empowered to meet their needs in these ways, without drugs, will be far less likely to abuse drugs than those who lack the necessary life skills." - Dr. Robert Schwebel, **Saying No is Not Enough.**

Brian Hall-Stevenson
Addictions Specialist
Vancouver Coastal Health

Parents: Become a Member

With the support from our membership, Alcohol Drug Education Service is able to bring you this newsletter and provide communities across BC with substance abuse prevention services.

With an A-DES Membership you will:

- Receive a quarterly members newsletter separate from our parent newsletter
- Have voting status at our Annual General Meeting
- Receive a 10% discount on A-DES products and services
- Support programs that address the root cause of drug use
- Receive special invitations to our social and fund-raising events throughout the year
- Help children avoid problems associated with alcohol, tobacco and other drug use

An individual membership is just \$20.00 annually and an organization membership just \$50.00 annually.

To become a member visit our website at www.ades.bc.ca or contact our office at 604-944-4155 or info@ades.bc.ca.

"Nothing I do will change the past, but everything I do will change the future."

Mother Thereasa



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



Available Resources & Workshops

Making Decisions Series

A leading education initiative to combat drug and alcohol abuse and encourage social responsibility.

Grades 4, 6, 7, 8 & 9 < [More info](#)

Parents as Preventors™

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

< [More info](#)

drugfacts.ca

tobaccofreesports.ca

For more information please visit our website or contact our office.

Every dollar spent on prevention goes a long way in a child's life.

For a regular subscription to this newsletter [click here](#) or contact our office.

To enjoy all the benefits of an Alcohol-Drug Education Service membership [click here](#) or contact our office.

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