

Polk/Burnett Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Newsletter



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Searching for Solutions on Youth Substance Abuse

Inside this issue:

- *What contributes to the choice to 'use'?*
- *What's a care provider to do?*
- *Why do kids get high/drunk?*

Sources:

Keeping Your Kids Drug Free –
www.theantidrug.com/pdfs/version3general.pdf

Teens & meth: what can parents do?

E. McCann, U of MN Extension Service
www.extension.u mn.edu/extensionews/2005/teen meth.html

American Council for Drug Education's Facts for Parents
www.acde.org/parent/default.htm

The Seven P's of Drug Use. To use or not to use? What contributes to the choice to use?

Perception: How a young person looks at getting high will influence their choice to use or not. If they think that smoking is cool, makes them look grown up, they are more likely to smoke. If they think that it makes your breath stink and causes cancer, they are less likely to smoke. The same dynamic is true for alcohol, pot and other chemicals used to get high.

Parents/Caregivers: Parents who pay attention, provide supervision, have rules and expectations, ask questions, show affection, communicate their love, are providing their youth a reason *not* to get high.

Peers: The culture of peers influences dress, music, fast food, sexual activity, attitudes toward school and parents, and last, but not least, drug use.

Pain: *Emotional pain* includes sadness, anxiety, loneliness, fear, stress, anger, embarrassment, etc. This pain is a given in the life of an adolescent. The big variable is *how they deal with it* – how they cope, how they overcome the negative impact of these emotions.

Pleasure: This is the *experimentation stage* of drug use. It is when and where a young person finds out what they think and feel about getting high and drunk.

Passion: This can be described as, “*I love to use.*” This is the *committed relationship stage* to getting high.

Purpose: This is best summed up as, “*I live to use.*” This is *Chemical Dependency* – out-of-control use, blackouts, unplanned use, passing out, overdose, medical complications, illegal behavior, broken promises, and broken relationships.

Source: Titus, T. (2005) for Family Information Services, Minneapolis, MN 2005. Reprinted with permission.

What's A Care Provider to Do?

Set expectations. Everyday parenting actions, such as establishing clear rules and consequences and encouraging desirable behavior, help prevent drug use.

Monitor. Be involved with your youth's activities, friends, and other important adults in their lives. Being informed and monitoring their relationships and behaviors will help you be able to distinguish between possible signs of drug use and typical changes in behavior.

Know their friends. Have your youth's friends stay for dinner. Ask them about their parents. Make a point of meeting those parents – find them at a PTA meeting, soccer practice, dance rehearsal, or wherever the kids hang out. Work with other parents to get a list of everyone's addresses, e-mails, and phone numbers so you can keep in touch.

Show up a little early to pick up your youth so you can observe his/her behavior.

Occasionally check to see that your kids are where they say they are going to be.

Why Do Kids 'Use'?

Gives *scared* kids courage.

Gives *hurting* kids relief.

Gives *lonely* kids friends.

Gives *sad* kids happiness.

Gives *bored* kids something to do.

Gives *confused* kids answers.

Gives *curious* kids intrigue.

Gives *funny* kids great material.

Gives *serious* kids a lift.

Gives *hyper* kids calm.

Source: Titus, T. (2005) for Family Information Services, Minneapolis, MN 2005. Reprinted with permission.



Reviewed by Mary Brintnall-Peterson, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Program Specialist in Aging.

Many youth get in trouble with drugs right after school – from 3 to 6 pm. Try to be with your kids then, but if you can't, make sure your child is doing something positive with an adult around: sports, jobs, clubs, after-school programs, or religious youth groups. If your kids have to be at home, make sure they are doing homework or chores and not hanging out with friends.

Ask the right questions: Who? What? Where? When? Know where your youth is and what he or she will be doing during unsupervised time. Research shows that youth with unsupervised time are three times more likely to use drugs. Unsupervised youth are also more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as underage drinking, sexual activity, and cigarette smoking. Make a list of his/her activities for the coming day and put it on the fridge, on a calendar or in your wallet or pocketbook.

Start an ongoing conversation. The most important thing to remember when it comes to talking about difficult subjects like drinking and drugs is that it's not a five-minute "talk." It's about building an ongoing dialogue. So start early and build on the conversations as your child matures. Discuss with your youth what is happening in their world. If they feel secure within the family and comfortable sharing their opinions, they are less likely to give in to pressure from friends.

Educate. Learn the myths before you talk. Knowing the facts is important when discussing the dangers of all drug use with your child. Did you know that today's marijuana is more potent, dangerous, and addictive than ever? Combine the realities of her world with the information you have to help guide relevant and useful conversations.

Model. Model the values and behaviors that you hold important for your family. Modeling may not seem immediately effective, yet will have a lasting impact on

the values your child develops, and the choices he makes about drug use. You are your child's most important role model. If you don't want your kids taking drugs, consider how your own use of tobacco and alcohol affects them. Kids notice.

These are *some* of the signs that may indicate a problem with drugs/alcohol:

- getting high or drunk on a regular basis
- lying about things, or the amount of drugs or alcohol they are using
- giving up activities they used to do such as sports, homework, or hanging out with friends that don't use
- believing they need to get high or drunk in order to have fun
- pressuring others to use drugs/alcohol
- getting into trouble with the law
- taking risks, including sexual risks and driving under the influence
- feeling run-down, hopeless, depressed, or even suicidal
- missing work or poor work performance

Source: *Straight Facts About Drugs & Alcohol*, US Dept of Health & Human Services & SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse. www.health.org/govpubs/rpo884/#signs/

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