

Helping Out When It's Not Your Teen

Do you know a teen who is involved with drugs and other dangerous activities? Are you asking yourself what can you do about it? Never underestimate your power as a role model. Many adults would agree that teens using drugs is risky and can lead to serious trouble. And today's teens are using drugs and alcohol at a much younger age, when their brains and bodies are still developing.

What Can I Do?

Get Educated. Gather and learn as much as you can about drugs and the effects they can have on a young body. Find resources to help guide you in a discussion with the teen and/or their parents. Visit www.TheAntiDrug.com for more information about drugs and what to do if you think a teen is using.

Talk with the Teen. Tell him or her the truth. Let them know you suspect he/she is using alcohol or marijuana. Be patient. Listen. Make your best effort to be non-judgmental about what the teen is telling you. Let him/her know that you wouldn't bring up the topic if you didn't care about him/her. Share with them the resources you found on alcohol and drug use by teens and what your expectations are for them, along with the consequences for violating the rules. Explain that while you're not an expert, you have access to experts in the community if they need help and you will be there. Get to know the signs so that you're ready to ask the tough questions if you suspect that a teenager you know or work with is using drugs or alcohol.

Talk with the Parents. Express your concern for the teen. Sit with the parents or caregiver to explain the facts as you know them. Offer information on teen drug use and how they may help in the situation. Provide the same information you used to educate yourself. Explain the consequences for using drugs and alcohol. Provide support and be prepared to answer questions.

Know Where to Get Help. Provide the teen and/or parents directions on where to get assistance if there is a drug or alcohol problem. Your community has resources to help you. There are many prevention and treatment specialists who can guide and inform you. Advice and information is available online. Visit the following link for resources: <http://www.theantidrug.com/ei/resources.asp>.

Sharing this information may seem hard at first, but it's worth it. For more information on how to keep teens drug-free, visit www.TheAntiDrug.com. Or if you want to share some information with troubled teens, encourage them to visit www.Freevibe.com, a Web-site dedicated to educating teens on making drug-free choices. This article is brought to you by the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign.

Additional materials, including brochures, posters, and postcards, are available free of charge through the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 1-800-788-2800.

