

Parents: The Anti-Drug

According to the 1998 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, while 1 in 13 sixth graders have smoked marijuana, that number jumps to 1 in 5 in seventh grade. Transitioning from elementary school to middle school/junior high can be a scary time for adolescents, who face a new environment and the difficult challenge of fitting in.

As a parent, **YOU MATTER**. Use the following tips to help ensure that your child remains drug-free:

Start: It is never too early to prevent your child from trying drugs. Building protective factors, such as letting your child know you care, plays an important role in protecting even the youngest children from drugs.

Connect: Take every opportunity to build lines of communication with your children. Do things as a family. Spend time together - eat dinner as a family, read together, play a game, attend religious services. Show that fun doesn't involve drugs.

Listen: Take an active interest in what is going on in your child's life. Listen to their cares and concerns. Know what they are up to - what parties they are going to, with whom, and what will be served or available.

Learn: Children today are sophisticated. In order to educate your child about the danger of drugs, you need to educate yourself first. In many cases, you and your child can learn side by side. Sit down together and learn about the risks drugs pose.

Educate: Spend at least thirty minutes with your kids every month explaining, with simple facts, how drugs and alcohol can hurt youngsters and destroy their dreams.

Care: Spend at least a few minutes each day telling and showing your children that you care. Make sure they know you care that they are drug-free. Explain to your child that you will always be there for them - no matter what happens. Make sure they know to come to you first for help or information. The extended family plays a major role in influencing a child's life.

Be Aware: Look for the warning signs that your child may be developing a substance-abuse problem and get help before the problem occurs. Your pediatrician can help.

Set Limits: By setting limits on what is acceptable behavior, you show your children you care and help guide them to a safer, drug-free future. Declare limits: "This family doesn't do drugs. This family doesn't hang around people who do drugs." Enforce these limits. If you say no to drugs or not drinking and driving, the rule applies to parent, too. Be consistent.

Get Involved: Effective prevention extends beyond the home into the community. Get involved in your community. Ensure that your community's streets, playgrounds, and schools are safe and drug-free. Start or join a community watch group or community anti-drug coalition. Become active in the PTA. Get involved in your church, synagogue, or faith.

Lead: Young people are as aware of what you do as much as what you say. Don't just say the right things; do the right things. Set a good example. If you, yourself, have a substance abuse problem, get help.

Additional Resources

Dads and Daughters: Fathers Matter www.dadsanddaughters.org

Partnership for a Drug-Free America: www.drugfreeamerica.org
Prevention Through Service Alliance: www.ptsanet.org

This article is brought to you by the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign. For more information on how to keep your child drug-free, visit www.theantidrug.com, the parent Web site of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign.