



ALMOST ALL TEENAGERS ARE OFFERED ALCOHOL AND DRUGS AT SOME POINT—WHAT THEY DO NEXT MAY BE UP TO YOU **By Kimberly Flynn**

TALK NOW:
So no one in your family pays later.

Kids, Drugs, and Taking C

By the time kids graduate high school, 77% have used alcohol, 56% have used marijuana, and 51% have used other illegal drugs. A third of the kids who drink will become dependent on it, as will half of those who get high.

Lay down the law

Studies show that kids whose parents warn them about drugs are 42% less likely to use them. But muttering “Just say no!” isn’t enough—you need to be specific.

“I love you and want the best for you, so I don’t want you using marijuana or any other drug.”

“If you’re at a party and you see drugs or alcohol being used, you need to leave the party. Call me and I’ll come get you, no matter what time it is. And I will never be angry—only proud.”

“If you ever get high or drunk, I’ll shoot the family cat.” (Use this only as a last resort.)

Recognize the signs

Unless your kid resembles Courtney Love on a bender, spotting addiction is tough. Look for telling behavior, such as social withdrawal, falling grades, and a lack of interest in normal activities.

If your child looks hung over, he or she probably is hung over. If booze is disappearing from the house, it ain’t because of alcoholic mice. If your kid is stocking up on eyedrops, forgets what he’s talking about in the middle of sentences, and stinks like incense, marijuana use may be the culprit.

one week or—experts warn—*your kid will stop connecting the cause with the effect.*

Evaluate the problem

Parents often aren’t capable of assessing or diagnosing their own children’s issues. You need expert advice. One option is to have your teen’s doctor recommend a trained professional. A psychologist can also recommend local treatment centers, or you can use the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s “Treatment Facility Locator,” available on the Web at dasis3.samhsa.gov.

Remember, no matter how mind-grindingly hard it is to deal with the problem now, it’s better to nip it in the bud than let it fester and grow out of control—allowing it to become an issue you and your child may have to deal with for the rest of your lives.

Confront your son or daughter

Convey disappointment—it’s often a far more lasting and effective reaction than anger. Don’t talk about *your* usage habits; they’re not relevant. Instead, explain or investigate together the realistic effects of drinking and drug use, such as the deadly danger of drunk driving. Explain to your child that being considered cool is simply not worth dying for.

There, does everyone feel better? Well, not for long, because there must be punishment of some kind. Restrict use of the car, TV, or computer. But limit the punishment to a maximum of

person alive. Drinking is a **personal** choice. But there **are** countless reasons why kids start drinking, and one of the biggest is peer pressure: The “cool” guys or girls at school do it.

My take on why some kids get high or drunk is simple: The **higher** you get, the **less** things bother you. Addiction is about not knowing how to solve everyday problems. And the **way** kids problem-solve will determine whether they succeed in life. Granted, certain people are more susceptible to addiction than others, but why can’t an “addictive” personality be just as addicted to good habits?

A solution? Teach your kids at an early age that self-love, self-respect, and self-confidence are the coolest posse they’ll ever hang with. Teach them early on to get **rid** of their problems—not hide from them—or their problems **will** eventually get rid of them.

SLY ON . . . KIDS AND ALCOHOLISM

I’ve been around the problem of children and alcoholism, and it’s like residing in Hell. However, I’m not so sure that excessive drinking by children is really a disease. I believe a disease is an invasion by microorganisms intent on devouring a

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