



caron

Student Assistance Program

Tips for Parents

Being a parent isn't easy – but then, neither is being a kid in this day and age. If you suspect a problem, chances are there is a problem. For confidential help, please contact a SAP Specialist at **800-678-2332 ext. 6117** or visit **www.CaronSAP.org**.

Some Suggestions for Parents

Be a Good Role Model

Studies show that parents significantly influence their children's choices and lives. With this in mind, parents need to continue to effectively communicate with their children. Learning to talk and listen to your children can help prevent them from making poor choices, sometimes with devastating consequences. Communicate, not only verbally, but also by the way you live. If you have used or abused drugs or alcohol in the past, be honest, but brief. Set a good example in your own home and socially. "Walk the walk and talk the talk."

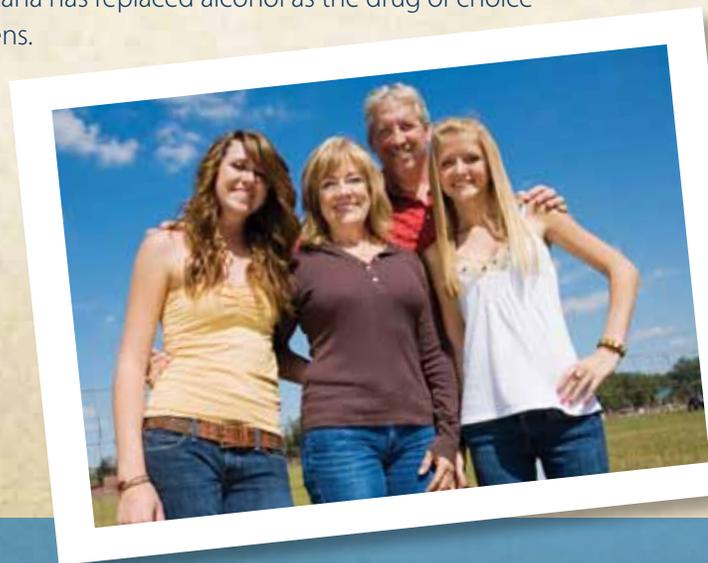
Set consistent no use rules about drinking and other drug use. By giving a clear and concise message about drug and alcohol use, children will witness good decision making skills. Parents need to provide opportunities for their children to learn critical thinking and decision-making skills to combat the peer pressure to use drugs. Teens today are more likely to experience increased pressure to use illegal drugs than they did several years ago. It is also important to discourage the use of the new herbal drugs that can be improperly used, with a sometimes-fatal result.

Stay Involved With Your Children

To help prevent early drug use, parents need to remain involved in their children's lives. If parents resign themselves to the belief that they cannot influence their children's behavior, they increase the likelihood that their children will use drugs or alcohol. Some parents need to confront their belief that their children's drug use is inevitable, while other parents need to address their own denial that their child would use drugs.

Focus On the Problem Before It Starts

People who go through adolescence to age 21 without smoking, using drugs or alcohol have a very good chance of never abusing substances. Generally, the major weakness in drug prevention programs is that they do not begin before teens start using drugs. Unfortunately, today's exposure to drug use starts as early as grade school. Parents, as well as schools, need to recognize this and provide earlier prevention programs. Children need to learn the skills to resist peer pressure to use alcohol and drugs before being exposed to that pressure. Early prevention and education can decrease the possibility of drug use among children and younger teens. For instance, studies have suggested that the earlier teens use marijuana, the greater chance that the same teen will use other drugs. Consequently, prevention may make the difference in whether marijuana becomes a gateway drug for that adolescent or child. A 5-year study conducted at Caron Treatment Centers showed that marijuana has replaced alcohol as the drug of choice for teens.





Don't Make It Easy For Your Children To Use Drugs

Adolescents who are limited in their exposure to others who use drugs and alcohol are less likely to use substances themselves. Studies point to the pattern that limiting accessibility to drugs and alcohol decreases an adolescent's first experience with drugs and alcohol. It is important for parents to be aware that their children will most likely use drugs and/or alcohol at a friend's house than any other place. As a parent, do not always assume that your children are being appropriately supervised when at a friend's home. Sometimes it is best to go with your instincts; if you feel uncomfortable about one of your children's friends or their family, follow up on it.

As a proactive measure, parents need to join together to combat the risk of drug use. Build a support system and encourage open communication with your children, so they receive consistent messages and supervision in nurturing environments.

Help Build Healthy and Resilient Children

Parents can help to create an environment that decreases the risk for drug use and other at-risk behaviors. The following list of proactive factors can help a child become more drug-resistant:

- Positive communication- nurture an aspect of trust
- Daily family rituals- including eating dinner together
- Appropriate supportive parental role models
- Extended family involvement
- Diversity in peers and peer activities
- Community/religious involvement
- Positive presence of law enforcement
- Leisure family activities

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"Everyone Does Drugs"

Teens often believe the blatant misconception that "everyone does drugs" based on their peer relationships and the messages received by the media. Parents need to convey a message that not everyone uses drugs and as parents we need to set clear guidelines regarding drug use. As long as adolescents believe that everyone uses drugs and continue to associate with friends who use drugs, the likelihood of their involvement with drugs increases.

Talk About the Dangers of Using More Than One Drug

Teens need to know the risk of each drug and the possible deadly combination of using more than one drug. Even when combining what is perceived to be a "harmless" herbal drug, using them together with another drug can be fatal. It is so important that children are aware of the possible effects of combining drugs. For instance, marijuana

can inhibit the natural feeling of nausea, thus decreasing the body's tendency to reject toxic amounts of alcohol. The unknowing adolescent could reach the lethal danger of alcohol overdose when using marijuana and alcohol together. Talking to your children about drugs will not lead to using drugs, but rather help them make healthy decisions.

