

# DRUG AWARENESS PARENT GUIDE



Drug awareness provides a reality check and resource for parents to understand the issues their children are experiencing. Children are bombarded with opportunities for mischief and crime, from egging to shoplifting. Having a child experimenting, using and abusing drugs is every parent's nightmare. Recognizing the signs and behavior of drug use and working with your child is better than going through drug rehabilitation treatment later. A parent's biggest asset is communication and setting high family values.

## Where Do I Start?

Drug awareness education for your child should begin and continue at home, be enhanced through classroom education and be promoted by law enforcement. Make sure you are open and honest with children - let them know experimenting and using drugs are not accepted practices at your home. Utilize resources from schools, churches and community groups to provide accurate information since parents need to know as much about drugs as their children do! Finally, look to local law enforcement who often speak at public meetings and in schools. Additional resources can be found on-line.

## What Is Out There?

Learning about drugs is easiest when they are classified into 4 categories:

- 1. Hallucinogens:** Block the brain's pain receptors. Time and movement seem to slow. Speech is difficult to understand and users hallucinate. Physical effects include loss of appetite, dilated pupils, increased heart rate and sleeplessness. Common names: PCP, Angel Dust, Magic Mushrooms, White Lightning.
- 2. Stimulants:** Make the heart beat faster which result in elevated blood pressure, blurred vision, dizziness, and anxiety or sleep deprivation. Stimulants may cause stroke or heart failure. Taken orally, injected or inhaled. Common names: Speed, Uppers, Black Beauties, Footballs, Crank, Crystal Meth.
- 3. Depressants:** Same effects as alcohol - slurred speech and altered perception of reality. Many are in colorful pill form. Large doses often result in convulsions or death. Common names: Downers, Blue Devils, Red Devils, Yellow Jacket, Ludes, Quaaludes, Valium, Librium.
- 4. Narcotics:** Addictive drugs that reduce pain, alters the mood and behavior. May induce sleep. Excessive amounts suppress the ability to breathe and can cause coma or convulsions. Common names: Opium, Morphine, LSD, Demerol, Hillbilly Heroin, Purple Drank, OC, Ox, Oxy, Oxycotton (oxycotin, synthetic morphine), Sippin Syrup.

## What Do I Look For?

- 1. Sight:** Look at your child - are their eyes and cheeks flushed red? Are the pupils overly constricted or dilated? Are there strange burns on the mouth or fingers? Do long sleeves hide marks? Nosebleeds?
- 2. Smell:** Most drugs leave telltale smells. If you notice smells on the breath or clothing - be concerned! Be cognitive of overused breath fresheners or heavy perfumes to mask smells.
- 3. Sound:** Listen to what your child says (or doesn't say) and laughs at. Silence should be a clue! If grades start slipping, be aware of possible drug abuse. Other indicators include skipping school, quitting extracurricular activities and losing motivation. Often recollection of events isn't logical and social circles begin changing. Observe and interact with your child to note changes in behavior, appearance, personal habits, health and school work that occur over time.

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