

Respect Chapter Eight: Substance Abuse Prevention with Children

Children as young as six start drinking alcohol on their own. Drug dealers want children as young as nine to use. Parents who feel it is all right to try drugs and only drink alcohol at home so they can monitor their children or teens are kidding themselves their way is safer. Children will try anything their parents give permission to do and with drugs this can be a one-way trip.

Children need to know parent's feelings and values on these issues. However, in our culture we have fallen by the wayside when it comes to drug use. To tell a child marijuana is harmless is telling the child doing something illegal is harmless. Teaching children your values, morals, and ethics, by saying it is OK to break some rules, but you can choose and pick which ones not to follow isn't helping the child understand a value system.

Some parents feel this value system is in conflict with being honest with their children. This is an excuse for our own guilt at having past drug use. If they know you used drugs and came out OK then they may think 'why shouldn't they try drugs for themselves?' Parents who give too much information can hurt the child. Such as, have you told your children all about your past sex life? Parents seem to understand it is inappropriate to disclose their past sex life with their children, however some parents seem to want to tell their children all about their drug and alcohol escapades. There is nothing glorious about drugs or alcohol. Teens who smoke pot or drink make poor judgments when not having protected sex or trying other drugs and when driving a car.

- The first part of prevention is a home where children feel listened to and valued.
- The second part is parents saying no to drugs and alcohol.
- The third part is letting the children know it is not ok to drink or use.
- Take advantage anytime you have an opportunity to express your views on drugs. Such as watching TV and the film is glorifying drug use. Show your disapproval.
- The fourth part is being pro active in your children's lives:

Know who your children hang out with.....

Keep all your alcohol locked up like a gun cabinet.

Know where your child hangs out.

Listen to your child talk about school-most elementary schools have drug dealers.

Ask your child what he/she thinks about alcohol/drugs.

Some Signs of Alcohol/Drug Abuse

- Spends more time away from family....
- Develop new friendships.....but you never get to meet them.
- Attitude with anger and negative thoughts
- Isolates....
- Sleeps most of day....
- Lacks goals.....
- Making more excuses the behavior such as coming home late....
- Use to tell parents about her/his week doesn't share information freely...
- Change in temperament...use to be easily pleased now nothing is pleasurable.
- Challenges parents daily on most issues...
- Loss of respect for self and others
- May have lower grades or lack of interest in school activities...
- Skips school using illness as an excuse
- Burst of energy and sudden drop in 48-hour period....

If you feel your son or daughter is abusing drugs or alcohol then take him/her to a drug and alcohol facility or hospital that works with drug and alcohol abuse and have an assessment done. Giving your child the home drug test may create more problems in your relationship with your child. The facilities can give the drug test for you.

RESPECT CHAPTER NINE: WHAT I'VE LEARNED, WHAT I NEED TO DO

Being a parent is an exciting and challenging responsibility. We never know what it is going to be like until we have become one. It is truly a twenty-four hour, seven days a week job. Being a parent is also one of the most rewarding experiences that can happen to anyone. To feel the love and the trust of a child is one of the most incredible experiences one can ever have. Earn that feeling, cherish that feeling, and bask in the feeling.

Part of being a good parent knows how to take care of you. You cannot bring up a healthy child if you are not a healthy individual. Take care of yourself, remember that you are _____ (your name) in addition to being _____'s (your child's name) parent. Allow yourself to have fun away from your children, to be a kid yourself sometimes. And know when the stress level is too high and it is time to step away from your children for a moment.

If you have a support system, use it. You don't have to be the Lone Ranger in order to be a good parent. Let others love your children, encourage healthy relationships with friends and family, use and rely on the wisdom of those who you respect as parents. Remember to take care of your other relationships. If you do this job of parenting well, your child will leave you, and it is important that you have other things in your life to help you deal with that eventual loss.

As the closing of this program, please use the following form to write a letter to your child. This letter is to tell them what you hope and want for them in their life. Tell them what is special about them, what they need to work on in order to be strong, what areas you see that could be their weak areas, and how to be strong loving individuals.

If your child is old enough, give them a copy of the letter. If not, wait until they are old enough. Keep a copy for yourself. Now-when things get tough, when this child is challenging you to your max and you think you want to give up-take the letter out and read it to yourself. Read it on every anniversary of the child's birth to see how on track you are. Read it and take heart, because this letter is why you are being a parent.

Good luck!!!

Please answer the following questions

1. My weak spots as a parent are:

2. I have learned to deal with these weak spots in the following ways:

3. My support system for being a good parent is:

4. My triggers for poor parenting are:

5. My plan for on-going help and support in being a good parent is:

6. The most important thing I learned from this program is....

7. I have changed in the following ways...

8. I still want to work on...

9. I plan on using the following supports to keep me focused and on the right path...

Dear _____

The Magic Years by Selma H. Fraiberg
Your Child's Self-Esteem by Dorothy Corkille Briggs
Please Don't Sit on the Kids by Clare Cherry