

Drug
Abuse
Resistance
Education

D.A.R.E.

AMERICA

Teaching kids to never take drugs.

Parents'

Guide

Book

Parenting Skills and Drug Awareness

INTRODUCTION

Being a parent today is a difficult job, but so is being a kid. Children today are faced with tough decisions at increasingly younger and more vulnerable ages. The pressure on our kids to use drugs progressively increases throughout junior high and high school.

Clearly, we do need to help our children develop the skills and knowledge to make decisions and to learn how to tactfully resist pressure from their peers to use drugs.

If the information in this booklet seems overwhelming to you, don't feel alone. You don't need to become an expert on drugs and their effect, but you can develop a basic understanding of the major drug groups and their effects as well as become familiar with some drug prevention strategies that you can put into practice in your home and at school. This booklet begins with a discussion of the most commonly used drugs called "**Gateway Drugs,**" alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana (page 2). Next is a section on "**Recognizing Drug Use**" (page 5) and "**Prevention**" (page 6) followed by "**Parenting Skill Tips**" (page 9). Knowing and understanding what to do will help our children to resist the pressure to use alcohol and other drugs.

The Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) Program is our most promising long-range solution. D.A.R.E. has helped to produce future generations of young adults who not only have no appetite for drugs, but who also have the strength of character to dissuade others from drug abuse.

The schools, law enforcement, and the corporate community are but some components of the partnership needed to help D.A.R.E. achieve its promise. The other, and most important component, are the children's parents.

All of us working together can save this nation's most vital resource, our children.

NATHAN SHAPELL
President
D.A.R.E. America

GATEWAY DRUGS

(Alcohol, Tobacco & Marijuana)

Gateway drugs are those drugs people are first exposed to and experiment with. Traditional gateway drugs are alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana.

The significance of gateway drugs is that most people with a drug dependency began their cycle of addiction by experimenting with a gateway drug. While not everyone who tries alcohol, cigarettes, or marijuana become addicted to drugs, most addicts began their habits with one of these drugs.

ALCOHOL

Most of you know what alcohol looks like, how it is packaged, and how it makes you feel. Perhaps something you didn't know is that alcohol is a drug. Its scientific name is ethyl alcohol and it is classified as a depressant, the same drug class as a barbiturate or tranquilizer. Alcohol is unique because it is legal for adults to buy and drink and is widely accepted in our culture. In fact, alcohol is the most popular drug among youth and adults in our country.

Sadly, alcohol is also one of the most deadly drugs available to our youth today. The leading cause of death among teens in this country is alcohol-related traffic accidents.

Alcohol causes heart disease, high blood pressure, liver damage, brain damage, and also contributes to many other health problems.

Once alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream, it acts upon the central nervous system like a depressant, affecting speech, vision, and coordination. The physical effects of alcohol depend on many factors, including the amount of alcohol consumed over time, the emotional state and body weight of the drinker, the concentration of the drink, and the amount of food in the stomach at the time of consumption.

Smaller doses of alcohol may cause euphoria and a mild relaxed feeling. Intoxication occurs when higher doses are taken. Responses to higher doses of alcohol are varied: it may make some people feel more outgoing and giddy, while others will feel depressed, aggressive, or hostile. Physical responses to increased doses of alcohol include altered perception, impaired judgment, loss of coordination, staggered walk, blurred vision, bloodshot eyes, slurred speech, dizziness, nausea, and vomiting. An overdose of alcohol can cause unconsciousness, respiratory failure, and death.

Alcohol is an addictive drug. The medical term for this addiction is called alcoholism. Research suggests that alcoholism may be a genetic predisposition, and that a child of an alcoholic parent runs a much greater risk of becoming an alcoholic. Alcoholism strikes all age groups; about ten percent of the population will develop the disease.

TOBACCO

Tobacco is used in many forms, including cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco, chewing tobacco, and snuff. Cigarettes are the most common type of tobacco use by teens, followed by chewing tobacco and snuff. Studies of school age children indicate that initiation of daily smoking (not occasional use) is the highest among junior high school students (about ages 12-14).

Many harmful ingredients in tobacco, such as nicotine, carbon monoxide, and hydrogen cyanide are absorbed into the body through the lungs. Nicotine, the addictive substance in tobacco, is so toxic that it has been used as an insecticide.

Tobacco acts both as a stimulant and a depressant. A beginning smoker will experience euphoria, lightheadedness, giddiness, dizziness, elevated heartbeat and respiration rates, and a tingling sensation in the hands and feet. A Chronic smoker will suffer from a diminished sense of smell and taste.

Not everyone who begins smoking will become addicted; however, when users give up smoking, withdrawal symptoms such as restlessness, nervousness, sleeplessness, sweating, reduced heart rate and blood pressure, inability to concentrate, compulsive eating, headaches, and irritability can occur. These physical withdrawal symptoms last for about one to three weeks.

Medical problems associated with smoking tobacco are normally the result of long-term use. Some of the many health hazards of tobacco are heart disease, cancer, lung disease, obstructive pulmonary and bronchial disease, gum and jawbone deterioration, gastrointestinal disease, eating disorders, and allergic reactions. The use of smokeless tobacco, such as chewing tobacco and snuff, can be as dangerous as smoking, causing mouth lesions and cancer.

MARIJUANA

Following alcohol, marijuana is the second most popular drug with youth. It consists of the leaves, flowers, stems, and seeds of the cannabis plant, which are dried and chopped into small amounts. Marijuana can also be found as Sinsemilla, the potent flowering tops of the female marijuana plant.

Commonly referred to as *grass*, *pot*, *weed*, *Acapulco Gold*, *ganja*, and *smoke*, marijuana is usually sold and stored in small plastic bags, aluminum foil, or small rolled cigarettes. Marijuana is usually smoked in hand-rolled cigarettes called “joints,” and has a strong, pungent odor when smoked. Once the marijuana cigarette is partially smoked, it is often held by a small clip called a “roach clip.” (Roach clips are made from many items, such as tweezers or electrical clips). The leaves can also be smoked in small wooden pipes or water-filled pipes called “bongs.” And finally, marijuana can also be blended into food, then cooked and eaten, most often in brownies.

Paraphernalia associated with marijuana includes pipes, bongs, rolling papers, plastic bags, roach clips, “stash boxes” (decorative boxes designed to conceal and store marijuana), and eye drops and breath fresheners used to cover up signs of use of the drug.

Marijuana is smoked in small pipes or rolled into cigarettes, which are sometimes held by “roach clips.”

Marijuana is sold in plastic bags or in hand rolled cigarettes called “joints.”

In low doses, marijuana can induce restlessness, a dreamy state of relaxation, red or bloodshot eyes, and increased appetite. Stronger doses can cause shifting sensory images, rapidly fluctuating emotions, a loss of self-identity, fantasies, and hallucinations or image distortions.

MORE ON GATEWAY DRUGS...

Other drugs may be considered gateway drugs. For example, glue or other inhalants are widely abused by young children in low-income communities because of their low cost and availability. Crack or rock cocaine is becoming a gateway drug in some communities because of its availability and low cost.

Children learn about the use of gateway drugs from depictions in advertising, television, movies, music and even from parents themselves. According to research from the University of Washington in Seattle, parents who involve their children in the use of one of these drugs increase the child’s risk of becoming an abuser of alcohol or other drugs. For example, parents may involve their children in their smoking by saying, “Jimmy, please light my cigarette.” Or, parents may involve their children in their drinking by asking, “Linda, would you please get Daddy a beer from the refrigerator?”

Parents who involve their children in their own use of drugs in this manner are setting an example that says, “It’s okay to smoke or drink because I do it.”

Do not underestimate the impact of gateway drugs. Examine your own use of these drugs to see if you are modeling drug use by involving your child.

“YOUTH” – WHY DRUGS OR ALCOHOL?

Teenagers may try drugs and alcohol for the same reasons they experiment with other behaviors to try on new identities.

- ★ **Curiosity** – The desire to seek out new experiences.
- ★ **Peer Group Pressure** – The security that comes from being like others.
- ★ **Insecurity** – The desire for affection, identity, and respect.
- ★ **Boredom** – Lack of excitement, zest, or challenge.
- ★ **Escape** – From problems, loneliness, failure.
- ★ **Defiance of Authority** – Can be against parents, school, or society in general.

- ★ **Values or Standards** – Lack of appropriate values for maintaining health and well-being.
- ★ **Ignorance** – Lack of actual information about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse.
- ★ **Physical and Emotional Problems** – To overcome pain, stress, and strain.
- ★ **Stimulation** – To quickly and seemingly effortlessly, obtain increased physical and/or mental energy.
- ★ **Modeling** – Teenagers model the coping skills they see demonstrated by adults.

RECOGNIZING DRUG USE

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

There are many signs and symptoms that go along with substance use and abuse. The following list describes some of the changes you may see take place. In and of themselves, the symptoms may not mean a thing. However, if you see several of them consider it a warning flag and seek further help.

Physical Symptoms

- ★ Acting intoxicated
- ★ Bloodshot or red eyes, droopy eyelids
- ★ Imprecise eye movement
- ★ Wearing sunglasses at inappropriate times
- ★ Abnormally pale complexion
- ★ Change in speech patterns and vocabulary patterns
- ★ Repressed physical development
- ★ Sudden appetite, especially for sweets
- ★ Unexplained weight loss or loss of appetite
- ★ Neglect of personal appearance, grooming

Behavioral Changes

- ★ Unexplained periods of moodiness, depression, anxiety, or irritability
- ★ Strongly inappropriate overreaction to mild criticism or simple request
- ★ Decreased interaction and communication with other
- ★ Preoccupation with self, less concern for the feelings of others
- ★ Loss of interest in previously important things such as hobbies and sports
- ★ Loss of motivation and enthusiasm
- ★ Lethargy, lack of energy and vitality
- ★ Loss of ability to assume responsibility
- ★ Need for instant gratification
- ★ Changes in values, ideas, beliefs
- ★ Change in friends, unwillingness to introduce friends to family

- ★ Curfew violations
- ★ Large sums of money

School Changes

- ★ Decline in academic performance; drop in grades
- ★ Reduced short-term memory, concentration and attention span
- ★ Loss of motivation, interest, participation in school activities, energy
- ★ Frequent tardiness and absenteeism
- ★ Less interest in participation in classes and meetings
- ★ Sleeping in class or meetings
- ★ Untidy appearance, dress, personal hygiene
- ★ Slow to respond, forgetful, apathetic
- ★ Increased discipline, behavioral problems
- ★ Change in peer group
- ★ Disappearance of money or items of value

Physical Evidence

- ★ Odor of marijuana (like burnt rope) in room or on clothing
- ★ Incense or room deodorizers
- ★ Eye drops, mouthwash
- ★ Marijuana cigarettes (rolled and twisted at each end)
- ★ Powders, seeds, leaves, plants, mushrooms
- ★ Capsules or tablets
- ★ Cigarette rolling papers
- ★ Pipes, pipe filters, screens, strainers
- ★ “Roach” clips (metal clips to hold the butts of the marijuana joint)
- ★ “Bongs,” water pipes (usually glass or plastic)
- ★ Small spoons, straws, razor blades, mirrors (for use with cocaine)
- ★ Stash cans (soft drink, beer, deodorant and other cans that unscrew at the top or bottom)
- ★ Unfamiliar small containers or locked boxes
- ★ Plastic baggies or small glass vials
- ★ Drug-related books, magazines, comics

It is important to stress that these are possible but not conclusive signs of drug use.¹

PREVENTION

Prevention begins with being:

- ★ **Understanding** – “I realize you’re under a lot of pressure from friends to use drugs.”
- ★ **Firm** – “As your parent I cannot allow you to engage in harmful activities.”
- ★ **Supportive** – “I’ll help you find a way to say ‘no’ to drugs.”

¹ Source: *National Federation of Parents of Drug-Free Youth*

- ★ **Self-examining** – “Are my alcohol and drug consumption habits exerting a bad influence on my child?”

Prevention does not begin with:

- ★ **Sarcasm** – “Don’t think I don’t know what you’re doing.”
- ★ **Accusations** “You’re lying!”
- ★ **Stigmatizing** – “You’re a terrible person.”
- ★ **Sympathy-seeking** – “Don’t you see how much you’re hurting me?”
- ★ **Self-blaming** – “It’s all my fault.”

TEENAGE PARTIES

The strongest pressure on our youth is the need for group acceptance. Many parents and their teenager’s talk about guidelines in this area yet continue to feel helpless.

By working together, the pressure to serve and allow the use of illegal beverages and drugs will be significantly reduced. Don’t fall prey to the teen tactic, “But all the other parents let their kids do it.”

As a parent you must take a stand, no drugs or alcohol will be allowed.

Parents, When Your Teenager Is Giving a Party...

Plan in advance. Check party plans with your teenager and know who the guests will be. If you agree on who is to be invited, you can curb the “open party” situation. Set definite time limits. Agree to rules ahead of time. Possible rules could be:

- No drugs, including alcohol.*
- No leaving the party and then returning.*
- No gate crashers.*
- Some rooms in your home are off limits.*

Know your responsibilities. The responsible adult at a teenager’s party must be visible and aware. Remember it is illegal to serve drugs, including beer or wine coolers, to anyone under 21 years of age. You may be liable both to the criminal charges and for monetary damages in a civil lawsuit if you furnish drugs or alcohol to a minor.

Anyone who leaves the party should not be allowed to return. This discourages people from leaving with the intent of drinking or using other drugs in their cars or elsewhere and then returning to the party.

Notify your neighbors beforehand that a party is being given and will be supervised.

Notify police when giving a large party. Discuss with them an agreeable parking plan. Let the police know whom to contact in case of complains.

Plan to have plenty of food and non-alcoholic drinks.

Plan some activities ahead: movies, dancing, sports, etc.

Discuss the party afterwards with your teenager and share your observations and possible frustrations.

Parents, When Your Teen Is Attending A Party...

Know where your teenager will be. Obtain an address and phone number. Agree that he will call you if the location has changed.

Personally contact the parents of the party giver to:

Offer assistance and support.

Verify the occasion.

Make sure the parents will be present.

Be certain that alcohol and other drugs will not be permitted.

Agree beforehand on a curfew.

Know how your teenager will get to and from the party. Arrange that you, a specified friend, or neighbor can be called if he needs a ride home. Discuss the possible situations, which might necessitate this. Reinforce that under no circumstances should your teenager allow someone who has been drinking or using drugs to drive him or her anywhere.

If your teenager stays overnight with a friend after the party, personally check with the parents.

If your teenager attends a party where alcohol is either served by the parents or allowed, it is important to:

Phone and discuss your feelings with the parents.

Discuss the legal ramifications with them.

Share notes with other parents.

Express thanks and support to parents and students who give parties within these guidelines.

Through cooperation, parents in other local communities have made drug-free and alcohol-free parties for their teenagers a priority and a success. We too can make it work in our community.

Parents, When You Are Out of Town...

Homes where parents are absent are frequent party sites. When you must be out of town, inform your teenager of his responsibilities and the consequences of his actions. Have a responsible adult live in your home during your absence. Explain to him or her your family policy and rules for parties. Inform your neighbors of your absence. Request they contact you or a responsible adult or even the police, if a party occurs. Let the parents of your teen's friends know of your absence. Cooperation is both essential and productive. If a party is held, find out who attended and contact their parents as soon as possible.

PARENTING SKILL TIPS

FIFTEEN WAYS TO HELP CHILDREN LIKE THEMSELVES

1. Reward children. Give praise, recognition, a special privilege or increased responsibility for a job well done. Emphasize the good things they do, not the bad.
2. Take their ideas, emotions and feelings seriously. Don't belittle them by saying, "You'll grow out of it" or "It's not as bad as you think."
3. Define limits and rules clearly, and enforce them. But do allow leeway for your children within these limits.
4. Be a good role model. Let your children know that you feel good about yourself. Also let them see that you too can make mistakes and can learn from them.
5. Teach your children how to deal with time and money. Help them spend time wisely and budget their money carefully.
6. Have reasonable expectations for your children. Help them set reachable goals so they can achieve success.
7. Help your children develop tolerance toward those with different values, backgrounds and norms. Point out other people's strengths.
8. Give your children responsibility. They will feel useful, and valued.
9. Be available. Give support when children need it.
10. Show them that what they do is important to you. Talk with them about their activities and interests. Go to their games, parents' day at school, drama presentations, awards ceremonies.
11. Express your values, but go beyond "do this" or "I want you to do that." Describe the experiences that determined your values, the decisions you made to accept certain beliefs, the reasons behind your feelings.

12. Spend time together. Share favorite activities.
13. Discuss problems without placing blame or commenting on a child's character. If children know that there is a problem but don't feel attacked, they are more likely to help look for a solution.
14. Use phrases that build self-esteem, such as "Thank you for helping" or "That was an excellent idea!" Avoid phrases that hurt self-esteem: "Why are you so stupid?" "How many times have I told you?"
15. Show how much you care about them. Hug them. Tell them they are terrific and that you love them.

IS THERE HOPE?

Whether you think your child is on drugs or experimenting, there is evidence that some of today's teenagers are understanding the problems of drug abuse as a result of education. For example, the number of high school seniors who believe there are great "risks" in regular marijuana use has increased significantly in the past five years. This makes it a little easier for them to say "no" to drugs because there is a decrease in peer pressure.

Despite the fact that regular maintenance use is decreasing, we still face an uphill battle with the increasing abuse of other drugs. And the best people to wage that battle are PARENTS.

WHAT CAN A PARENT DO?

The first thing a parent can do in the fight to have a drug-free child is learn about the kind of drugs kids' abuse. This will put you in a good position to have frank, open discussion with your children to impress upon them that they are being sold a bill of goods by the drug culture. That they are being led to believe that drugs are "cool" when in fact they represent a tremendous health hazard. Armed with the property information, you can give your kids the help they need to say "no" to drugs.

It's important for you to encourage your children to get involved in activities that can give them a "natural" high. Sports, recreational, religious, and volunteer activities can be real substitutes for drugs. It's important for both of you and your children to discuss rules of behavior and to set clear and distinct limits they can understand.

It's also crucial that you participate. Form groups with other concerned parents. Join your P.T.A. Invite drug counselors to meetings. Talk with school superintendents, principals, coaches, church people, physicians, and local politicians to make sure that everyone is not only aware of the drug problems but that they are responsive to them.

If we can stop drug abuse at the experimental stages, we'll be getting at the problem before it gets a grip on our kids.

RESOURCE REFERRAL INFORMATION

Referral information in your community can be obtained from your local law enforcement agency.