

What Parents Can Do About Teen Drug Use

There is no easy answer for how to deal with teen drug and alcohol use. A straightforward discussion with your son or daughter may be the best way to start. You may want to seek out the advice of someone you most trust - perhaps a close friend, school counselor, or clergy. Watch your own tendency to deny the existence of a problem.



If you feel absolutely confident that your son or daughter has only "experimented" and will not continue, you may need to do little more than clearly state your position regarding abstinence and then closely monitor their behavior. However, watch your own tendency to deny the existence of a problem. Many, perhaps most, teens have used for several years before their parents became aware of the extent of their use. If your teen is more deeply into substance abuse or has other emotional, behavioral, or academic concerns, immediate consultation with a behavioral health or substance abuse professional is apt to be the safest option.

- ✓ This is no time to be less than clear. Don't overreact and lose your temper, but your teenager needs a strong message that drug and alcohol use is not okay. A parent support group like *Families Anonymous* may prove very useful.
- ✓ Become aware of the drugs that teens use, what their effects are, and what your adolescent is likely to look like when under the influence. Check out a website like www.notmykid.org or www.drugfreeaz.com.
- ✓ Get to know your kid better. Find out how they see themselves, where they want their life to go, and what's important. Find out what drugs & alcohol do for them. Don't lecture, be clear, and keep your message short & to the point. Spend time with your son or daughter in recreation and family activities.
- ✓ Find out the names, addresses, and phone numbers of your teen's friends. Get to know the kids if possible. Form a network and keep in touch with the parents their friends. Don't be put off if other parents don't share your concern about substance abuse. Don't be too shocked if you find that another parent is using drugs with them or is supplying the kids with drugs and alcohol.
- ✓ When you allow your teen to go out at night, have them check in from a land-line (corded) phone and use caller ID & anonymous call rejection on your home phone to help insure they're honest regarding their whereabouts.



- ✓ If you allow your teen the privilege of a cell phone, consider purchasing one that is GPS-enabled and provides a "teen tracking" ability so you can monitor their whereabouts. Similar GPS devices are available for cars.
- ✓ If teen behavior is unacceptable, use discipline that is most apt to be effective. Restrict or eliminate use of a car, take away cell phones, and limit unsupervised free time unless your teen is committed to being 'clean and sober.' Set clear, firm, and reasonable limits. Be consistent.
- ✓ A quick review of the contents of your teen's room or their listing on Facebook may tell a lot about their values and behavior. Check their room at night. Are they there?
- ✓ Sleep-overs and teen parties are often a problem. Check to be sure that the other parent will be home and determine if they have the same curfew, values & expectations as you do. Kids often select homes of absent or permissive parents for sleep-overs and all-night drug/alcohol parties.
- ✓ Consider having your son or daughter involved in a twelve-step self-help support group like A.A, C.A., or N.A. (young people's group), or a support group offered by the guidance department at your teen's school .
- ✓ If other family members have a drinking problem, abuse medication, or use illegal drugs, these issues must be dealt with as well as your teen's use. Get rid of all of the alcohol in your house and remove any mind-altering drugs from the medicine cabinet.
- ✓ Be aware of their internet use, consider checking their website "history" and monitor their involvement in social networking apps like Instrgram, SnapChat, or FaceBook.

✓ Kids dealing with substance abuse need to avoid the people, places, and events that have been associated with their use. Your teen is not apt to stay sober if they attend unsupervised 'parties' where drugs & alcohol are available. Did we suggest getting rid of all of the alcohol and locking up prescriptive medication? Help them locate sober activities.

✓ Determine how they pay for their drugs/alcohol. If it's from your ATM card, wallet, or pocketbook, keep them out of reach. Consider the amount of money that you provide for allowance, lunches, movies, etc. Many parents don't realize that they have been financing their son or daughter's drug use. If your teen seems to have access to drugs and they don't have a job, consider the possibility that they are "dealing or stealing."

✓ Do drug & alcohol testing at home. Buying several dozen tests via the internet will send your kid a message that you are very committed to their sobriety. Become aware of how kids can "fake out" drug tests. We suggest that you buy the drug test kits online because they are much less expensive. www.drugtestsystems.com

✓ If you decide to work with a professional or program for counseling, be sure to check their credentials and experience. Most counselors and psychologists are generalists who do not have specific expertise in substance abuse and they may make the problem worse by addressing the wrong issues. Strongly consider the use of random drug and alcohol testing to help insure progress

