

DRUGS

WHAT YOU NEED TO

KNOW

In Arabic, "SKOUN" means the internal tranquility and silence. "SKOUN" is also an Arabic punctuation mark, which indicates a pause while pronouncing a word.



? What can you do to protect your children from resorting to drugs?

As a concerned parent, keeping your children off drugs is no easy task. Keeping children off drugs involves open communication with children and teaching them about the harmful effects that drugs can have on the body. Tips and warnings:

Spend quality time and be involved

Fostering a close relationship with your teen is the best protection you can give them.

1. Participate in and encourage their social, athletic, and academic lives. This shows them that you care and makes you their go-to person.
2. Find a hobby or activity you can share together.
3. Encourage your son/daughter to invite their friends over to hang out at your house.
4. Eating meals together is important family time. Try to have a sit-down dinner at least once a week.
5. Talk to your children.
6. Keep in touch with your children. Know their whereabouts.
7. Get to know their friends.
8. Get to know their friends' parents. Invite

them over for a coffee. Explain that now that your children are friends it would be nice for the parents to know each other.



Set a Good Example.

Be healthy. Don't just preach it. Taking care of yourself teaches your children to love and take care of themselves.



Set clear and consistent rules.

Don't be afraid of setting rules for your children. Rules give your children guidelines to go by when you're not there. Rules that are not too lax or too strict teach children how to be responsible and make healthy decisions.

- Make it clear that drug and alcohol use is not acceptable.
- Bars, night clubs, pubs, & raves are not acceptable before the age of 18.
- Have a suitable curfew that can be nego-

tiated ONLY on special occasions. Remember rules that are too strict are usually not effective. When rules are broken, try to make the consequences appropriate to the misbehavior and make sure to follow through on the consequences.

Keep track of your children's accomplishments and improvements.

The best protection for your child is to give them confidence, so do not forget to consistently reward their positive behavior and accomplishments. Showing your children that you are aware of their improvements and accomplishments helps them focus on the positive and invest in the areas in which they excel.

Practice open communication.

Try to remember that communication is a two-way street. Practice "active communication"; i.e. try to understand what they're saying instead of just listening to the words. Children are more likely to listen to you when they themselves feel heard.

X A: Mom I'm very worried about my future. I don't know what to do with my life.
B: You need to get a job and get your life in order. You can't spend the rest of your life pondering what you should do.

Instant advice-giving can make your child feel like you do not want to be burdened with their worries. It blocks the conversation.

✓ A: Mom I'm very worried about my future. I don't know what to do with my life.
B: You seem very lost. Tell me what's on your mind.

Listening to the words will allow you to better understand what your child is trying to tell you. It helps your child open up and possibly facilitates reaching a solution.

Give them practical guidance and support.

- Let them know that it is very dangerous to drink and drive or to ride with someone who is intoxicated.
- Make sure they have a number of a taxi service they can call in case they need it.
- Let them know that you will pick them up from anywhere at anytime if they find themselves in a situation they are uncomfortable with.

Factors that might put your children at risk of drug use

- Transition periods (divorce, changing schools, moving houses, or a death in the family)
- Mental illness (depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder)
- Poor social skills
- Poor academic performance
- Behavioral problems
- Overly lax or strict rules
- Inconsistency regarding rules
- Unavailability of a close committed adult
- Lack of parental involvement
- Caregiver/parent who abuses drugs
- Caregiver/parent who engages in criminal behavior
- Caregiver/parent who has a mental illness
- Peers with problem behaviors
- Peers who use drugs
- Being overly secretive about whereabouts and friends
- Excessive use of deodorizers could be masking the smell of the drug
- Overspending or always being in need of more money
- Consistent lying
- Physical symptoms that do not have a medical explanation: diarrhea, vomiting, pain in the joints, runny nose, weight loss/gain...
- Too much or too little sleep*
- Depressed mood*
- Irritability*
- Lethargy after parties
- Demotivation*
- Difficulty concentrating*
- Loss of interest in hobbies and activities*
- Change in choice of friends*
- Mood swings*
- Drop in grades*
- Drug-related posters, t-shirts, jewelry, and music
- Drug paraphernalia

Signs of drug use that you might want to watch out for

- Isolation, withdrawal, and deterioration of your child's relations with you and other family members*
- Excessive curfew-breaking

*Please keep in mind that some of these symptoms can be due to growing up, a result of a difficult transition such as divorce, or signs of a mental disorder. Please consult your mental health specialist or call Skoun at 01/202714, 01/202681.

? What can you do if you have doubts about your children using drugs?

If your child does not want to be helped, you cannot make that decision for him/her. However, sometimes people are too proud to ask for help or get defensive. Here are some pointers:

- Plan to approach the topic only when both of you are calm.
- Show concern for your child and be specific if you're going to talk about changes in his/her behavior. For example, instead of "what's wrong with you lately? You don't want to be around us and you're always angry and yelling", try "I'm worried because lately you don't seem okay. I feel like you just want to be left alone and that things are getting to you".
- Show care, not pity. This way the same message gets across without your child feeling blame, guilt, or belittlement.
- Mention that you were wondering if your child was using drugs and describe how

you think it's becoming problematic by giving concrete examples from her/his life. For example, mention how they've missed class or had a drop in grades.

- Expect some denial and resistance at first; it's not easy admitting to drug use. Some people do not realize how detrimental addiction can be and will not get your point. Others are scared and/or ashamed of it, or know how dangerous it is but are unaware that they are addicted. Making them feel like they will not be judged might encourage them to open up.
- Let them know that if there are treatment options and that you'll be there to help. More importantly, inform them that there is treatment.

For confidential advice, treatment,
or help call Skoun at:
01/202714, 01/202681.



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