

Confronting the Drug Issue

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Be open and honest about your feelings but don't let anger or fear overwhelm your effectiveness in communicating with your child. Very little good comes out of an emotionally charged situation. Take a walk and cool down before considering the best way to respond. Don't confront when your child or you are "high" or drunk - it's just a waste of time. There are healthy and unhealthy ways to respond to a problem. Both take time, energy, and planning.

Don't Minimize and Deny

Sometimes, even in the face of unalterable facts, we, as parents, want to believe otherwise. Putting your head in the sand may be comforting, but it is also counterproductive. Underacting is as harmful as overreacting.

Treat the Behavior and Set Standards

Name calling, scolding, blaming, and threatening can create bitterness. Mutual respect should be safeguarded, especially when serious problems arise.

Don't Be Afraid to Set Standards

One of the comments counselors often hear from adolescents is that parents have not taken a stand at appropriate times. Often they wish parents would say "NO" clearly and firmly. Not taking a stand may lead the adolescent to wonder if their parents really care for them. Failing to carry through with promised consequences is often more damaging than having no consequences at all.

For the Time Being, Don't Ask Why

Sometimes parents are made to feel guilty when problems arise with their children. The home environment is only one of the several forces affecting your child. If you feel guilty, your child can more easily exploit these feelings in order to avoid the real issues. For the time being, work with what's happened rather than why it happened.

Ask for Help

There are many confidential resources available to parents - if you'll only ask. They can help you sort out whether there is a serious problem and what you might do about it. You can ask another adult, school counselor, school social worker, school psychologist, or professional alcohol or drug counselor for advice.

Never Put Yourself in Danger

Speaking up yourself may not always be appropriate. If this is the case, Peer Mediation and Student Assistance Programs are available in most Berks County schools. Help is just a phone call away. Collect Information - Suspend Judgment - Ask for Help and Support.

When a Kid is High, Stoned, or Drunk

What to do if your son/daughter comes home drunk or stoned...

That Night

- Do... Try to remain cool and calm.
- Do... Verbally attempt to find out what substances they have ingested, and under what circumstance.
- Do... If son/daughter is incoherent and/or quite ill call a doctor or take to emergency room.
- Say... To son/daughter we will talk about this tomorrow.
- Send... Son/daughter to bed and check frequently during the night.
- Do Not... Shout at, accuse or physically abuse your son/daughter.

All this is quite useless when they are in this condition.

The Next Day

- Do... Have them assume responsibility for their actions including clean-up.
- Do... Have a talk with son/daughter immediately.
- Do... Try to find out circumstance under which they came to use drugs/alcohol including the people he/she was with.
- Do... Let your son/daughter know you do not condone their behavior and you will be watching him/her closely in the future.
- Do... Establish guidelines for behavior with your son/daughter as well as curfews for going out with friends. Expect compliance.
- Do... Consider with son/daughter alternative activities to avoid repeat exposure to drugs/alcohol.
- Do Not... Have your discussion with your son/daughter if you are too angry to talk about it without losing your temper. Wait until you can discuss it calmly. Don't try to hide the incident from other family members.