

Hope
UK

THE

PARENT

★ ACTION PLAN ★

action to promote drug-free lifestyles

You and your child are unique. The best way to talk about alcohol and other drugs will vary from family to family. If you are not sure what to do, use some of the suggestions in this leaflet, and find out what works for other people.

There is no single age at which it is best to start talking about drugs. Young children may ask questions because of what they see or hear somewhere. You may know more about drugs than they do, but not feel confident to discuss drugs with your child. Remember that what you do is as important as what you say. Decisions not to drink and drive, or to cut down (or give up) smoking or drinking may have a very positive influence.

No parent or carer can guarantee that their children will never use drugs. Young people make up their own minds and have access to all sorts of substances.

The good news is that anyone can reduce the possibility of drug use.

There is no 'miracle' cure. Preventing drug-related harm is a long-term activity. It involves encouraging healthy choices and fostering good parent-child relationships.

So begin now. Use the advice in this Action Plan to get you started or reinforce what you do already. There may also be general parenting skills courses in your area which might be helpful.

HERE'S THE PLAN...

1 **Become informed**

Knowledge helps if difficult situations occur.

2 **Do things together...**

that your child enjoys. This will help build a good relationship and make it easier to talk when important issues arise.

3 **Always be ready...**

to listen to and talk with your child. Help them feel safe and cared for.

4 **Adult example...**

is important. If you smoke or drink have you considered stopping or limiting your use? This would give a powerful message to those around you.

5 **Offer a choice**

Consider using alcohol-free drinks. Research shows that delaying the first use of alcohol and tobacco decreases the likelihood of having a future problem with legal or illegal drugs.

6 **Make sure that...**

your child is well practiced in the art of choosing for themselves. This will help them make up their own minds when they have to make big decisions.

7

You are in...

partnership with other people such as school teachers and youth workers. Ask what is being taught at school. Find out if the youth group programme covers drugs.

8

Build up self-worth...

both for yourself and for your children. It is important for young people to feel good about themselves. Always build on the positive.

9

What works best?

There are many ways of passing on skills and information; not all will work for you and your child. Find out what works for your family.

10

Don't exaggerate...

Don't exaggerate the dangers. Scare tactics do not work in the long term.



Don't give up!

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS - RECOGNISING DRUG USE

Although many people are familiar with the signs of alcohol or tobacco use, it is not always easy to be certain about other drugs.

Many symptoms could be caused by 'normal' adolescence. For example, mood swings, changes in eating or sleeping patterns, missing school.

Recognising signs and symptoms is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. Shortage of money (or too much money), strange behaviour, loss of concentration, apathy and secretiveness may point to the possibility of drug use. Physical evidence might include finding empty wrappers, pills, or unusual smells.

Most people start using drugs because a friend offers them the chance to try something.

Recognising drug use is as much a matter of observing patterns of behaviour as finding physical evidence.



WHAT IF YOU DO FIND THERE IS A PROBLEM?

A Don't panic

Make sure your child's safety and wellbeing are taken care of first.

B Try and discuss things...

when everyone is calm and has time to talk. LISTEN – let them tell you their feelings etc, without feeling judged. Remember your child might be unwilling to talk, especially if it means letting friends down.

C Try to help them...

avoid situations where the risk is high. You may have to help your child travel safely, or encourage them to avoid certain events/friends.

D Seek help

There are people in the community who can help you – your GP, support groups like Alateen, the council will know local groups who offer support.

E If your help is rejected...

...don't be surprised and try not to be angry. Drug use can be part of a youth culture and linked to strong friendship ties. Remember that young people make their own choices and take responsibility for themselves in doing so. Parents may have to stand by and be there to provide a caring safety net where possible. Let your child know you are there for them.

IMPORTANT!

All young people are at risk, but even though some will experiment with illegal drugs the majority still leave them alone. Many who do experiment will not become regular users. Alcohol is still the main drug that young people use.

HOW HOPE UK CAN HELP...

We can help you learn more about drugs – what they look like, do etc – and their signs and symptoms. We also run workshops for parents and other carers to help them consider helpful ways to support and help their children (and it's a good idea to start when your children are young).

USEFUL WEBSITES...

Talk to Frank website: www.talktofrank.com

NHS Smokefree website: www.nhs.uk/smokefree

NHS website: www.nhs.uk

Hope
UK

50 Gold Street, Kettering, NN16 8JB

020 7928 0848

enquiries@hopeuk.org

www.hopeuk.org