



YOUR CHILD AT RISK

March 2004

There is no magic formula for keeping children off drugs. Michele H. McGuire, R.N. offers some suggestions and thoughts from raising her own children.

It is imperative to realize that all children are at risk for experimenting with drugs. Why some can experiment and not suffer dire consequences and others become addicted or die taking their first "hit," is still a mystery. Teaching children to say "no" is a good start, but certainly not enough.

- ?? Stay close and listen to what your child is telling you about their feelings.
- ?? Teach them coping skills. Children especially need to learn how to cope with loneliness, disappointment, sadness and anger.
- ?? Help them discover their own talents and interests.
- ?? Teach them to share this talent. Everybody has something to give back to his or her community.
- ?? Teach them how to make choices. Help them reflect on the consequences of their choices from a personal perspective...emotionally, physically, spiritually...and the effects that the child's decision has on others.
- ?? Let them experience the consequences of their choices both good and bad...as long as it is safe for the child to do so. Let them face the consequences even if you know the choice your child made is a wrong one.
- ?? Know who your child's friends are. Discern the personality of the group. Be as diligent as possible about knowing where they are and what they are up to. Hopefully, you can accomplish this good communication and by opening your home for your child's friends without employing "stalking" tactics!
- ?? If you suspect that your child may be in trouble, has change in attitude, is more isolated, or begins to perform poorly in school, do not hesitate to get professional help or guidance. Many parents out of fear, shame or ignorance wait too long to confront these issues. It is tough to imagine that your child may in fact be developing a drug problem but the sooner it is confronted, the better chance the child has of being helped.
- ?? Let your child know they are loved for who they are. While we all love to see our children succeed and be accomplished people, we love them for who they are...not what they accomplish.
- ?? Lastly, pray that all the above work will strengthen your child to say no to drugs. Hopefully, in making the choice to stay drug-free your child will feel tremendously good about themselves and their choice and will be able to look at the long-term rewards of choosing a drug-free lifestyle.

Parents are responsible for protecting American's greatest asset...our children. Teaching kids the benefits of a drug-free lifestyle is a great responsibility and one that should be taken seriously.