A DRUG-FREE WORLD - OUR ROLE AS PARENTS

Because of the powerful influence alcohol and drugs have on our children, as parents we have the most important role in protecting our children Talking with our kids about drinking can be difficult. Even parents who give their children a clear "just say No" message about drugs, find it hard to be as tough with their children about alcohol use.

Even though alcohol is a drug, it is legal for adults to use and many parents do drink at home occasionally. It's the social acceptance of alcohol that makes it one of the most dangerous drugs that children may have contact with. Be aware that it's alcohol – not drugs that's responsible for accidents and suicides as the leading cause for children of 14-24 years of age.

Talk to them early

Many parents make the mistake of waiting to talk about alcohol/drug issues until our children are in high school. But studies report that many attitudes of children about alcohol and drugs are formed much earlier in a child's life. Some children have their first alcohol or other drug experience even from the age of 10. That's why it is so important to begin talking openly and naturally about alcohol and drugs to our children right from younger age. This will help them to accept your views and information, rather than relying on peers, television, movies and magazines.

Reacting to pro-alcohol messages

Children are receiving powerful messages about alcohol from the media, friends, families and from our own attitudes and behaviours. As parents, we cannot control all of the information that our children receive, but as their single greatest influence, we have the ability to prepare them to deal with peer pressure and media messages. The following are some suggestions on ways to counteract to pro-alcohol messages:

- Monitor whom our children spend time with and what they are doing – directly and indirectly.
- Get to know our children's friends and their families.
- Determine a time for our children to be at home
- Be clear about what places and people they must avoid
- Make sure parties have adult (preferably mother's) supervision
- Be selective about television shows, movies and concerts that glamorize alcohol/drug use.

Practice refusal skills

Whether to use alcohol and other drugs is a decision that our children will be forced to make starting from an early age. That's why it's so important to teach young children, decision making skills, the most important skill to say No, as early as possible.

Practice with our children so that they will already have an idea about what to say when someone confronts them with alcohol or drugs. Don't just expect them to say exactly what you tell them to say, but role plays with our children will make them comfortable when the real situation comes up. Let them know that we understand that saying "no" is hard to do, but to refuse strongly at the first instance itself is the key. Show concern and be patient as they practice their appropriate responses. If they practice ahead of time, they are more likely to succeed in difficult situations such as these:

- One of your friends offers you some beer. What can you say? What would you say if they tease you and call you a baby?
- Some older children say there will be lots of beer to drink. What can you say to them?
- A friend's father or brother offers you a ride in his car, but he is drunk. What can you do/say?

Make your expectations clear

It's important to tell children what you expect of them. Make sure that they understand, and that you are serious. Let them know what will happen if they don't honour your expectations. Choose consequences that are immediate, realistic and important to your children. If our consequences are too severe, we may find it hard to bring to an end. It is more important to be consistent than harsh.

Set a good example.

Children learn by watching what you do. Setting a good example is the best way to assure that our children will make healthy choices about alcohol and drugs.

- If you drink, let them see that drinking doesn't mean getting drunk. Let them hear you use some refusal skills, such as, "No thanks, with a reason that should stop further insisting, like I'm driving."
- When you don't drink, let them know your reasons for making this choice.
- Be a responsible host by having non-alcoholic drinks available, and never persuade a guest to have a drink.
- Show that you are able to handle stress without using alcohol. Don't make comments like, "I need a drink to relax, or celebrate a happy occasion"
- Keep alcohol away from children. Never ask your children to serve drinks or get you a beer.

It's not luck that keeps children alcohol and drug-free.
It takes consistent effort, caring, and thoughtful actions.

Judeans say "No" to Drugs and Alcohol : *For more information on drugs and addictions, watch a Students Project Presentation on www.sjonsite.com*

Note: Parents are requested to send their valuable comments and suggestions to info@sjonsite.com. We also welcome parents and students to send their articles and projects for publishing on the school's website.

Approved for circulation by: Sneha Sajen, Principal
Date of Issue: 30/07/2012