

Helping a Child Who is Using Alcohol or Other Drugs

If warning signs point to a child using alcohol or other drugs, it's time to take action. If you deal with possible drug use head-on, there's a very good chance your child can be helped. Don't spend time hiding from the problem. Spend your time helping your child. The faster you act, the faster your child can start to become well again.

Sit down with your child for an open discussion about the use of alcohol and other drugs. Openly voice your suspicions to your child but avoid direct accusations. Do not have this conversation when your child is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, and make sure you sound calm and rational. This may mean waiting a day if he comes home drunk from a party, or if her room smells like marijuana. Ask your child what's been going on in her life. If you need help during this conversation, get another family member, your child's guidance counselor, or physician involved.

Remember to reinforce your no-drug policy during the conversation. Be firm and enforce whatever discipline you've laid out in the past for violation of house rules. You should discuss ways your child can regain your lost trust: calling in, spending evenings at home, or improving grades.

Just like many adults, many young people deny their alcohol and other drug use. If you have strong evidence that your child is lying, you may want to have her evaluated by a health professional experienced in diagnosing adolescents with alcohol- and drug-related problems. If you decide to go this route, remember that you're trying to help your child.

If your child has developed a pattern of drug use or an addiction, you will probably need to seek professional help. For more information on treatment in the Lancaster area, contact Compass Mark at (717) 299-2831. In addition, your school district should have a Student Assistance Program or a counselor who can discuss possible solutions.

Source: Drug Free America

Compass Mark Drug & Alcohol Information Center
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