

What Parents Should Know

FOREWORD

The information contained in the following section is not intended as a quick fix for parents to read up and use, to just get them out of any drug related problems that they may encounter with their children. It is intended rather as a guide towards building lasting, powerful relationships within our families.

We firstly wish to acknowledge the difficult task of being a parent, for which most of us have received no training, save the example of our own parents, perhaps 20 - 30 years ago. Secondly, we wish to recognise the rapidly changing face of society. In our youth most of us hardly ever heard of drugs, let alone "raves", or drug peddlers, and there was almost no anti-drug legislation, save perhaps concerning alcohol.

We would like to provide a guideline for parents in handling the relationship and communication demands which have increased over the past number of years. The youth culture of today has become almost dangerous for the unwary. It is as if it is more focused on the dark side of life, rather than on the bright side. How does this affect the society of the future, and the future of your child? Are you prepared to stand by and watch negative influences take over your child's life? "Action is not success, but there is no success without action."

Perhaps what parents today need, is to know what kind of action they can take to be more likely to have greater success in influencing their children in the difficult task of growing up. Prevention has always been better than cure.

We urge you as parents to become involved in parent support groups, wherever you are. If there is no such group in your area, then begin one with a few friends. Use this CD as a study guide, and use books, articles in magazines, etc. to prepare your sessions. Share your experiences, support each other, and prepare yourself before trouble starts. Everyone can learn from those whose children are into drugs, and everyone should rally to support those parents.

"The middle of a storm is not a good time to start learning navigation"

Introduction

"If we can heal the family, we can heal the world." - Virginia Satir

The family is the building block that makes up society. The family is the nest in which we raise our young, in which we nurture and protect and cultivate them, anticipating and actually creating for them a future such as we see it, and such as we wish for them to achieve. We regard our

vision of the best future for our children, as being both desirable and attainable, according to our view of life, and within our culture.

The family is the seat of culture. Families give a society its unique character, and through the upbringing of our children, our culture is transferred and established in generation after generation.

The family presupposes parenthood. Parenting is surely the most crucial and demanding task anyone will ever perform. The way we bring up our children will shape the future of our society. Parents tend to bring up their children as they themselves were brought up, by their parents before them. Some of our parenting skills of today go back many generations, and were formed over the years providing the parent with tools of upbringing. These tools lasted so long, because society changed so little, for centuries. To our ancestors, their "present" and their "future" looked the same.

And then came the Industrial Revolution and the World Wars. And with them came unprecedented change. Change laid new demands on parenting strategies. Suddenly the future was no longer so predictable, and as the pace of change quickened, parents found themselves having to prepare their children for a future, the face of which they did not know, and could scarcely imagine.

Technology, economy, transport, communication and political and social structuring took to flight, and outstripped the parent, leaving them bewildered, as they struggled to understand and accommodate the needs of their children for living in an atomic age. Family structures became smaller, and family support systems often too far away.

Moral and ethical values became blurred, guidelines for behaviour and decision making seemed to lose their edge, and previous points of safe anchorage became doubtful, at best, or at worst, seemed to vanish. Right and wrong started to merge in vast expanses of grey, and it became increasingly difficult to decide whether to fight for, or against some things or simply to tolerate them, and do nothing. Things such as drugs.

Drugs came very quietly. For them there was no fanfare, as there had been for antibiotics, or the Salt vaccine against polio. Drugs just slipped in, virtually unnoticed, except to those who KNEW.

Indeed, drug-like substances have always been used in societies, usually only for the occasional ritual and then only by certain people, as it had to be collected and at times specially prepared for the occasion. It had always been scarce.

But all at once the scene had changed. More and more reports started coming in, of over-dosing, and raves, of drug busts and drug related crimes. New words started to appear words like crack, and ecstasy and khat and mainlining.

And more and more doctors and rehabilitation institutions were getting visits by desperate parents seeking help for their addicted children. Prisons filled up with youths from all levels of society, on drug related crimes. But still, it seemed, that was only over there, in overcrowded high rise suburbs, or around dockyards. Drugs don't touch the ordinary family, do they? Not here, not where we are. We are nice people. We go to church. We care about things. We are respected. Our kids would never do that. Drugs are not a factor in our lives.

Until one day. At first we started hearing about this youngster and that one, in our neighbourhood (from the local school, in fact) who had been caught dealing in or using drugs. The same ages as our Matthew and Mary! We may even know them. Still, that's them, not us.

Until one day. The day when we, too, get that fateful phone call, saying: "We demand you settle your son's account with us, or you will never see him again! He owes x amount." Or "Could you please come down to the police station, your son is here" or to the mortuary. And suddenly we realize that we don't know what to do. No one ever really told us about drugs; we know almost nothing, but the situation demands that we do something.

We find ourselves asking: "How could he do this to us?" And who must we blame? The child or the drugs? We go through all the phases described by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross: shock, denial, anger, grieving and eventually accepting. Yet, while many of us are still in shock, we realize, the time has come TO FIND OUT. To know what is best to do. Because this life threatening scourge is in our midst. This faceless, formless threat has invaded our homes, our community, our land, and is wreaking havoc with our children, everywhere. No one is safe any more, not one child will escape exposure to drugs. Wherever young people get together, from now on, there will be the possibility of drugs. We cannot, we dare not, sit still and do nothing. But what? How?

Sure, some kids will truly never get involved in drugs, but how do we know, beforehand, who will and who won't? The pressures on them are so great. Who will endure? Your kid? Are you prepared to take that chance?

Availability of drugs

The availability of drugs, right across the country, is increasing daily. So you live in some quiet little rural town. No drugs here, you say. Wise up, the drugs have come! Drug dealers have targeted the children. - but many parents don't seem to believe it. The drug dealers have seen people like your children, they have seen the potential of their target market. They are using the power of peer pressure to spread their dangerous lies to every corner of our land. And the target market is becoming increasingly younger.

True statistics on the availability of illicit drugs are hard to come by, and unreliable at best, owing to the nature of the phenomenon. All we have to go by are the estimates of professional workers in this field. But they are telling us horror stories, of more and more youngsters turning up hooked on anything from alcohol to dagga (marijuana), from ecstasy to heroin and "coke". More than ever before.

Another source of information that indicates the size of the problem, is the number of drug busts that are taking place. Not a week has gone by recently (at time of writing, August 2003), that there isn't some news item on drugs being confiscated at airports or dockyards, or drug finds in houses in respectable suburbs. And some of these finds have been truly enormous, like four tons of Mandrax seized in one warehouse. Another was seven million Rand's worth of heroin. We are grateful that these drugs have been confiscated. But how much is still getting by, unnoticed? We can only guess, but according to the amount still in circulation on our streets, we are only touching the tip of the iceberg.

What we do know, however, is that the price of drugs on the street has dropped dramatically in recent years, by as much as 50% - 75%. The price of any commodity is self-regulating, according to the laws of supply and demand. This decrease in the price of drugs carries a message, which we are called upon to interpret. The demand for drugs is obviously growing, judging by the increased number of dependencies coming to our notice. An increase in demand should surely result in a price increase. But the price is dropping. Why? Because more and more drug dealers are entering the market, and the supply has outstripped the demand. The stuff is simply pouring in.

This carries a message, too, from the drug lords. They are telling us that they are targeting us – our kids, our country. They see our society as naive, gullible, unprepared, wealthy enough, apples ripe for the picking. Are we? Maybe we are. But we are about to change all that. And for this, we need, nay, we lay claim to the support and cooperation of every parent, every family in the entire country. For we have a message for the drug lords, too.

Parents are blamed but not trained

Not one of today's parents could have been prepared for the onslaught of drugs. Most of today's parents themselves grew up in a culture in which they had nothing to do with drugs, save perhaps alcohol. For the most part, parents know virtually nothing about drugs, and much less how to deal with this scourge. Yet today parents have to take full responsibility for bringing up, guiding and influencing their kids in a drug-infested culture, where they are being pressured on all sides to become part of the drug sub-culture, and not the least by their peers who have already fallen in.

Our children have been taught obedience to authority since babyhood, and the peer group is an extremely robust authority figure to any teenager, even more so than parents, teachers or laws of the land. The peer group is very hard to refuse. Research in Britain has indicated that even professionals are strongly affected by peer pressure. It takes a very self-disciplined person with a strong self-image to speak his/her own mind in a group. To stick to that in which he believes, day after day, takes courage, perseverance and an inner strength of character.

Most researchers agree that the best drug prevention program in the world consists of a caring, informed parent giving loving guidance to a child within a relationship of mutual trust and respect.

Research done in Pretoria, under the auspices of UNISA (University of Southern Africa) and completed in the year 2000, indicated that more than 85% of teenagers declared that the drug problem at schools could be solved if parents were to discuss and inform their children about drugs. Children need to be informed of the consequences of drug taking. Also, while each person is indeed free to choose his/her own actions, at the same time we are each responsible for the results of whatever we do – and this includes not only the bad choices we make, but also the good things that come from our responsible actions.

All children are, sooner or later, going to find out about drugs. It is inevitable. See to it that they are informed about drugs within the family – what drugs are, how they affect the body, and what our (the society as well as our own) strong attitude is towards them.

See to it that they are informed about drugs, within the family

If we, the parents do not speak to our sons and daughters ourselves about drugs (and other related issues eg. crime, promiscuous sex, prostitution, satanism, as well as positive values such as valuing life, a personal belief in a God who cares and answers prayer, forgiveness, etc.), be sure that they will get the message from someone else, but then perhaps, a wrong message, which may be to their grief.

Parents must realise that to keep silent now, is to say to your child that he is not important enough to talk to him about this important subject. He must be warned. But information about drugs must go hand in hand with the unmistakable realisation within the child that we love him very dearly, we appreciate him, we are glad he is part of our family, and the we wish only the best future for him. He is important to us, his future is important to us, every good choice he makes or good thing that happens to him, lets us feel proud once more about him, and we would NEVER want to have him get into drugs. We must be believable in this. Our deeds (if not already such) must, from now on, display our love and integrity around every corner.

A child should never be seen as simply a status symbol, or a burden, or a plaything while he is still small. He is a precious gift which can bring us much joy. We look forward to a future where we will remain important and valuable to each other. So it isn't simply that children must receive the information on drugs. Indeed, they do get much of this information at school. But the information they get from their PARENTS has a different quality to it – it comes wrapped in a parcel of love, with which the children can savour our love for a long time, which they can carry in their hearts, and not just in their heads.

Parents must therefore take the lead. Make a point to talk about troublesome issues, such as drugs, sex, AIDS, crime, prostitution, satanism, etc.

The true facts about drugs speak for themselves

Child drug abuse

Research in 2000, under the auspices of the Department of Criminology of UNISA (University of South Africa), found that 40% (or 800 individuals) from a sample group of just more than 2000 learners taken from a number of primary and high schools in Pretoria had, within the month prior to the survey, become drunk. A further 62% (or 1240) of these learners had used alcohol during the month of the survey.

Teenagers are also easy targets for drug pushers. They are adventurous, many are daredevils, and tend to explore their world by aggressively putting all dubious or ambiguous information to the test, no matter the danger.

They want to gain and to retain the esteem of their friends. Therefore they will easily give in if peer pressure is applied to them in any situation that appears to challenge them.

In fact, it requires a very high degree of steadfastness of a teenager (and so also the younger child) to refuse to get involved with drugs. If the child is teased, called "Chicken!", or urged and tricked by lies told by their possibly ignorant friends, virtually every time they meet, it is extremely hard to withstand. Children are not aware that their drug-taking friends are in essence saying to them: "Come, let us help you destroy your life!"

This in itself is enough reason for parents to become involved, as far as possible. They can work on their relationship with their child, to strengthen the sense of responsible decision taking from within the child, to bolster his self-esteem by treating him with respect and loving guidance, and valuing his efforts to stay "clean". He may even have to change his friends in such situations, and this can be very hard to do. He will need the stability of a strong, long term relationship at home. Blood is thicker than water. There is also the power of example that can lead them astray. "Everyone is doing it, why can't I? I feel left out if I

don't". Some of them will experiment with drugs for the first time because they see their friends doing so regularly, and with obvious enjoyment. They don't interpret the power of expectancy of the group as pressure any more, and they now start to use drugs because they actually want to, they have become curious and don't see any harm. They have seen their friends using drugs, and with no obvious detrimental effects, despite all the warnings that drugs are dangerous. What they don't know is that the problem seldom manifests from the beginning, and that it may take weeks or even months before they get caught in the trap. By the time they become aware that they have a problem, it is often too late to turn back without assistance. As a member of Alcoholics Anonymous said: "When you drink, by the time you think you've had enough, it is already too late." To whom would your children turn for assistance?

Who are those who say "NO" to drugs?

Who remains drug free in the face of pressure and temptation, and how do they manage to resist, when others give in?

these are mostly kids who come from a home where they feel safe and secure;

they feel and are told regularly that they are loved;

where members of their family readily and regularly show their acceptance, love and respect for each other in word and deed;

where children are encouraged and supported;

where the family enjoys each member's company;

where their self-esteem is actively built and strengthened, daily;

where they have been listened to, preferably since babyhood, and

have been given the opportunity to contribute ideas and to help carry out the plans of the family, feeling responsible and trusted;

where the members of the family work and play together, and remain actively busy with sport or hobbies, and especially

where family norms and values are modeled, and discussed, become established and confirmed, regularly.

When the parents succeed in revealing positive expectations of the future to the child, this creates an expectation in the child of a positive future that is beckoning and inviting him. His parent must perform what almost amounts to a prophetic role in the life of the child, eg. talking about going for tertiary training, and/or of becoming an entrepreneur, when the child is still in pre-school. Parents must reveal to the child

what he can expect to achieve with the talents he has, and be continually guiding and encouraging him to anticipate that he can indeed achieve the dreams and ideals that he has set for himself. See Personal stories: My life with drugs, See Personal Stories: My life with drugs, at the end of this section.

To have within the child a strong belief in the principles and values of a faith in a loving personal God who knows him, who cares and provides for him, can be a strong support in times of pressure. He must also come to believe in the adequacy of his own talents and abilities to achieve that to which he has been called. He must be led to realise that there is meaning in life and in the situations of life, but then only to the degree in which he himself gives them meaning, eg. by looking for positive lessons in everyday happenings. This is his responsibility towards life, just as it is the responsibility of his parent/s to model and to demonstrate these principles. This is a good lesson in life: It is a powerful example to a child, when a parent keeps living life meaningfully and positively, even in the face of serious setbacks.

One of the most powerful things that can help a child to feel safe and secure at home, is when spontaneous demonstrations of love flow freely amongst family members. Especially when parents show affection for each other. Hugs and smiles between Mom and Dad, even in the kitchen, in front of the children, leaves children feeling good, strong and secure in this home.

The above is not intended to be an exhaustive description of this vital topic. It indicates the indispensable role of the unitedness of the family or family bond in the development of a sense of belonging and of inner security, facilitating ethical and moral steadfastness, in the inner life of both the child and the parent, to encourage and to empower.

What then about single parent families, broken homes due to divorce, death, absence of one parent due to work or illness, children who grow up with surrogate parents (grannies, foster parents, etc) or who grow up in orphanages? These do indeed present a greater challenge, but even here, they can be overcome. It is not imperative that the family should consist of a traditional father, mother, two children, a stable income, living in a home in a middle class suburb. Just one parent or surrogate parent, with even only one child, living in a stable, loving relationship with each other, is sufficient to constitute a complete family. They will have all the potential needed to keep the child strong in the face of temptation, regardless of the form in which this may appear. The family bond plays a bigger role in preventing drug taking (and other waywardness) than the completeness of the family.

So what matters is the quality of the relationship between parent and child. Even if the family lives in a shack in the bundu, or in some lowly dwelling, even if they live on dry bread, as long as their relationship bears the quality of caring, loving guidance, acceptance, mutual respect,

trust and caring, the child will grow up feeling secure. He will develop the inner strength which will give him the best chance to withstand the seduction of peer pressure and other temptations.

What if your children are already nearly grown up, and you know your relationship with them isn't what it should be? It is never too late. You can still restore the relationship. Apply yourself to improve what you have. You love your children, and you really do want them to achieve their best potential in life.

Parenting today has become far more complicated than it was in earlier times. You will need to approach the demands of modern day parenthood, with different tools from those which were needed in the previous century.

Consider applying some of the suggestions in this CD, or get books on the topic, or attend a parenting course.

Clearly, you will have to begin doing some of the old things in new ways. What new ways? Here are a few suggestions:

Early mornings, meal times and bed time are perhaps the most important times of the day to build relationships. When your children arise in the morning, greet them in a caring manner, make eye contact and touch them with tenderness. Give them a smile, even a hug, ask how they slept or how they expect their day to be, and listen attentively and with understanding to what they say. Body language (eg. eye contact) and physical contact (eg. hugs or even a gentle touch on the shoulder) are essential.

Each day, find something you can do together. It doesn't have to be earthshaking stuff; just about anything will do, as long as you can enjoy being together whilst doing something together (homework doesn't count if it is seen as a punishment by either one of you!). It could mean eating together (without the TV in the background), or fixing something, or playing a game, joking and laughing together, etc. Use your combined imaginations. Use tasks that have to be done anyway. Share the task, don't delegate. Allow for mistakes.

At bed time, see them to bed, and wish them a loving goodnight. A short chat, sitting on the bed, about the highlights of the day (preferably no heavy stuff at bed time, unless you are sure the child wants to get something off his chest – then it can be the most important time of the day!), and maybe a story from a book, if the kids are still small, or even a short prayer together would be great. Then a quick back rub, and reaffirm their value to you (eg. with words or a smile and a kiss). Make this a little family ritual. They will love you for it, all their life!

Applaud your child for every genuine effort or attempt and let him know that you are proud to have him as your child. Do this no matter what age your child. Do not neglect this. Express your appreciation for the

ordinary things he does and entice him to talk about how he himself feels about it (eg. "I like the way you've done your hair. Did you comb it like that yourself? Is that the way you like to wear it now?" Or: "I really appreciate it when you take the plates to the kitchen, as it helps me to get done." Tell him you value him as part of your family ("It's really good to have you be part of our family." Or "I miss you when you are not here with us.")

If there is more than one child in your family, it would be necessary to use every opportunity for each child to get adequate recognition for whom he is, as well as for the things he attempts, whether it succeeds or not. Give acknowledgment for the attempt. It is the attempt, the effort, that is important. Remember, in principle there is no difference between a successful attempt, and a failure. They are both simply lessons along the way – either you learnt how to do something or you learnt how not to do things. It is an outcome, nothing more, nothing less. If he therefore makes a mistake, tell him how it will affect whomever it does affect, and the options of how it can be corrected, and consequences of each option, and assist him (if necessary) to do it correctly the next time. If you regard either the child or the activity as a burden to you, the relationship will become weakened, regardless of whether it looks strong enough to someone outside. Children are very sensitive to sincerity. They respond strongly to ambiguity, at first with confusion, later they may start to ignore you, and end up challenging what you say you stand for. Hope for change is near, however, if you can start enjoying your child, every day more and more.

These few hints are by no means exhaustive. Read up books, attend a parenting course. Not because you are a bad parent, but because you want to be a better parent. For the sake of your children. It is not a disgrace to look for help. It is an intelligent thing to do and can bring much relief. After all, we all just want the best for our children.

For more practical ideas to improve your relationship by your manner of communicating, read the rest of this Family Empowerment program.

Drugs and crime against property

According to a study carried out in Australia, 86% of adult male awaiting-trial prisoners who had been charged with crimes against property, tested positive for some or other illegal drug. While recent statistics in this regard are not available for South Africa, our statistics would probably be similarly high.

As soon as the drug taker's source of money supply, whether his own income, or from borrowing from friends and family, etc. comes to an end, the drug taker who has developed a dependency, could then start selling some drugs to friends who may or may not already be using drugs. The next step is very often stealing, at first where it is easiest, usually from their home. Someone with a drug habit to support may

even feel that he is not committing a crime by stealing or trading drugs. Often they argue that these friends are choosing to buy drugs from them, it is therefore their own fault, if they get addicted. Furthermore, their motive is seldom to enrich themselves by stealing, but is seen as a necessity to support their craving, to stay alive.

Those not living at home may also steal eg. chocolate bars for food, etc. When they go on to the harder more addictive and expensive drugs, such as heroin and cocaine, their dependency, addiction or their fear of withdrawal symptoms prompts them to become more risk taking, and they tend to steal any object that would bring them sufficient money to buy themselves a "fix". As they become more desperate, burglaries, housebreaking, car hi-jacking, or prostitution (both girls and boys), may become the only way to support their habit. In Britain in the mid 1980's more than 60% of crime was already drug related, with 50% of "speed" takers and most heroin takers having one or more criminal conviction against them.

Young drug takers tend to see drugs as a cleaner alternative to other stimulants or depressants such as tobacco or alcohol. They often regard drug taking as the equivalent to the adult world's use of cigarettes and social drinking. However, in the back of their minds they know that drug taking is a criminal offence, and that, technically, they are law breakers. Well then, "If you've got the name, you might as well have the game". The next step, into "real crime", is then a relatively small one.

Soon they may lose their self-respect and belief in themselves, and the vicious circle starts again. This can be a very trying time for the parents. The true challenge at this time is to change "nourishing" or hurting labels, from eg. my son/daughter is "impossible", "naughty", he's a "druggie" or "thief" to my "precious son/daughter" or something similarly positive.

All behaviour is either an act of love or a call for love. Acts of love come from a person who is feeling resourceful; calls for love come when they are feeling unresourceful. Help them to feel resourceful more of the time – acknowledge their abilities, the things they do right, the times they do help. Every time.

What illegal drugs cost our country

According to a recent estimate by the United Nations' Secretariat on Drugs and Crime, the usage of illegal drugs cost our national economy about R3 billion in 2002. This includes such things as absenteeism due to drugs, drug-related illness and deaths, accidents, reduced productivity, etc.

Much of the profit on the sale of illegal drugs ends up in the pockets of the drug lords overseas, tax free. This damages our country's economy.

Drugs are very expensive to use. One ecstasy pill costs R50 – R80 at present, while a single gram of heroin costs R100 and up. Some people use R2000 or more per day in order to get their addiction needs met.

You are not being kind to your children when you give them large amounts of pocket money. If they have too much surplus money, they may be tempted to use it on something "new".

Many drug users turn to shoplifting as a means of financing their habit. The public all pay the price for shoplifting.

Be alert for things going missing from your home, or if your child suddenly needs more and more money for needs of which you don't feel convinced.

Other ways of affording a drug habit are prostitution (boys and girls) and other forms of crime. In fact, statistics indicate that about 60% of all crime is related to drugs. In 50% of all murder cases in South Africa, it has been shown that the accused had smoked dagga shortly before committing the murder.

Date Rape

This is when a person gives drugs to someone (male or female), very often without their consent, with the purpose of raping them. Very often the victim has little or no recollection of the incident later on. This often takes place near where there are a lot of people so that the offender/s may not be identified so easily eg. at parties, especially at home parties.

Such a victim, if he/she suspects this has happened, must not wash, bath or change clothes. He/she must proceed immediately to the nearest district surgeon or to a medical practitioner, tell what he/she suspects has happened, and ask for a clinical examination and also for treatment against venereal disease and HIV/AIDS. Alternatively he/she can go to the police, make a statement and request their assistance regarding a medical examination and treatment.

In the eyes of the law, date rape is regarded as an "ordinary" rape, and treated as such. The parent, however, must regard such an event as extremely serious. This means that he must give his child all the necessary support and assistance, which may include professional counseling.

Some drugs such as ecstasy and rohypnol and also some common household products are tasteless and colourless and dissolve easily, and will not be noticed if added to someone's glass. The victim can thus be drugged without knowing it. Only sealed cold drinks or sealed bottles of water, should be taken at youth gatherings. Ice cubes, sweets and stickers must also be avoided.

Parents must inform children from an early age, that not everyone, not even "friends" will always have their best future at heart. They themselves must aim for and work towards their own best future, and take responsibility for that. They are worth it.

What then is parenting?

The end goal of any parent is "to work yourself out of a job", which means that, if you have done it right, your child eventually won't "need" you any more, at least, not as a guide and sustainer. If a person feels that he didn't get adequate parenting as a child, he will continue to search for it for the rest of his life, unless he is fortunate enough to be exposed to influences later in life that help him to grow up.

Nurturing and bonding of the infant, preferably with both the mother and the father, are of fundamental importance in the upbringing and development of the whole child, at least up to adulthood. It will set the scene for his entire future. If this proceeds successfully, what will ensue, is a lifelong relationship of great value, both to you, the parent, and to your child. Generally in society the essential duration of the parenting role continues for 16 - 18 years after birth for each child. Without doubt, the parent-child relationship is one of the single most important relationships in life, especially for the child, and one that continues to influence the "child" even after he has left home. Childhood is the time of opportunity to be grasped by the parent/s with both hands while it is still there, as it passes all too soon.

From birth to the age of about seven, a child is very busy learning new skills, most of which he learns, more so in his earlier years, from the model or example the parent presents the child. The rest is transferred via a continual circle of communication between the child and his parents, teachers, relatives, friends, etc. The learning rate in these early years is phenomenal, as is growth. A seven year old can: Speak at least one language, can do elementary mathematics, with eg. money, read basics, he knows a lot about "right" and "wrong" as modeled by his parent, can catch a bus alone, find his way around the neighbourhood, tell the time, operate eg. a washing machine, use a computer and TV, get himself up in the mornings, make a simple meal, care for a smaller child, etc. So, by the time a child is seven years old he can function fairly independently in almost every aspect of life, if he has had sufficient opportunity and guidance.

This solid base of new skills is then established and applied in the next phase between 7 and puberty. This is therefore an important period for practicing skills, and learning new ones, integrating them, and of developing intellectually.

Puberty is the next big step, with all the hormonal challenges that that brings. Ups and downs. Now is also the time that the teenager will test boundaries and value systems. Is your child strong enough to withstand

the pressures of his peer group? He will have a great need to be acceptable to his peer group, and to also be attractive to the opposite sex. Now it is particularly difficult for him to go against the stream. The world out there beckons.

However, present day society requires him to "tone down" and remain a "child" until at least 16 or 18 years of age, and therefore parents also tend to neglect a meaningful participation by the teenager in affairs concerning himself. The parents generally feel they need to remain in control at all times. We do not intend that parents should abdicate from their influential guiding role, but rather that they accept the child/teenager's inputs as important additional information, increasing the scope of possible solutions in search of the best outcomes for all.

Now you can identify for your children/teenagers the two opposing values of eg. the peer group and those of the family, evaluating and identifying both their good and bad points, and examining all the consequences of each of those, so that they can assess which holds the best future for them. A battle may take place in their inner selves, but generally they will acknowledge which value system would serve them best. Say/ask them if they could remain proud of themselves even if they are different from others, or have different values, eg. if they believe that it is wrong to damage or hurt others or themselves or the environment, while their friends believe it is OK to do such things. Make it clear that you are very proud of them whenever that have a difficult decision to make, one that requires of them to go "upstream" from the norm out there.

They must know that you are aware of the sacrifice it takes to not have certain friends, or not to be with friends sometimes, and not to experience some of the apparently exciting and fun things some of their peers are into. Tell them you believe in them and that they will find new friends who are as principled as they are. Such people are scarce, and they would have to be on the look out for such friends in places which are acceptable to their value system. Be exceptionally proud of your teenager. Say it, show it. His resistance to peer group pressure is really an accomplishment. Be there for your teenager to acknowledge the sorrow and heartache that will come if the peer group makes unpleasant remarks, or if they even get violent. If it is serious, one must look for new options with your teenager. It might even be necessary for him to change schools.

The more control/force the parent uses, even at an age younger than seven, the more the child will escape into one of three coping modes: Fight, flight or resignation (give up). These coping modes reflect the "survival type" behaviours. They are not necessarily always regulated by intellect or by feeling, but are the result of sensing danger, or a threat to the survival of his worthiness as a person. Fight may present itself as cheekiness, irritation, aggression, or violence, whereas flight may present itself as withdrawal either physical or psychological eg.

avoidance, go-slow-strikes, or daydreaming, etc. Resignation (or giving up) may be indicated by the "good child" picture, the one who, when the control is lifted, goes overboard and everyone says "I can't understand it, she was always such a good girl". (A statement like this can indicate that the speaker was lacking insight into the turmoil that was taking place in the child prior to "going overboard".)

The over-use of control by parents, who habitually use some form of physical and/or psychological force to control their child, may deprive him of opportunities to develop his self-image and to accept responsibility for his choices and actions. The more often the child needs to compensate for the parents' use of power, the more rebellious he may become, or withdrawn or frustrated, and the greater the likelihood that the child will not develop self-discipline but rather psychologically give up the responsibility of making choices, bowing instead to the choices of the parent. He becomes a follower of rules, instead of living by principles.

Causing change to happen

The next question that arises is "HOW?" "How can I do things differently so that I can bring about a change in my child?"

The following are key concepts in raising a child to become a responsible self-disciplined adult:

To attain more of their potential and retain emotional stability, the child of any age, needs unconditional acceptance of himself as a person, even if at times his actions are unacceptable ("wrong").

As a human being the child is entitled to his own feelings and emotions. It is a part of his humanness. His feelings or emotions need to be accepted as valid and genuine for him at any given time. Recognition and acknowledgment by others of his feelings brings a sense of relief to him, and helps him to disperse unpleasant feelings. Saying: "You don't have anything to cry about!" makes no sense, as this is a judgment made without any insight into the inner experience of the person who is crying.

A baby cannot be pig headed. His crying indicates a need, one which we have to learn to decipher, just as the baby has to learn to decipher our tone of voice, sounds, language, body language, facial expression, etc. No behaviour can truly be labeled "Nonsense" or "Stupid" as every single behaviour has a real reason behind it. It may not be conscious, but it is there, and is for that person, the best he can do, stemming from his level of resourcefulness at that moment. The very next moment he may discover his mistake, and change!

As a human being the child is entitled to his own thoughts, and is capable of thinking abstractly even at an early age. We tend to grossly

underestimate our children in this regard. Just remember how extremely intelligent you found your pre-school child to be.

The parent needs to apply his knowledge and experience in guiding the child, but at the same time allowing the child to develop his own insights and experiences. These must be recognized, nurtured and cherished. In being allowed to exercise these insights and experiences, the child will be applying himself (this is desirable) to the problem, but may still need guidance from the parent. As the child applies his own insights to a problem, he can rightfully take responsibility with pride for any solution that he finds. What a boost this gives to his self image!

This is the essence of self-discipline: Taking responsible decisions, carrying them out, and bearing the natural consequences of those decisions.

Responsible decision making means that each decisions does not only carry the natural consequences of the decision itself, but that we would avoid taking decisions that would – to our best knowledge – be harmful to either our fellow man, to ourselves, or to the environment.

Recognising and applying the above principles infers that the child will be treated with respect at all times as a complete human being, whether or not his/her actions are causing the parent/s distress. His real value lies in his "being", not in his "doing".

Unacceptable behaviour is evaluated by the norms, values and ethics the parents have each separately developed for themselves, mainly (but not exclusively) from those demonstrated by their parents, as well as from new attitudes etc., stemming from new knowledge through learning or experience. For example, the ten commandments are "right" and the opposite "wrong". Values and norms can change, and priorities will vary from person to person. Previously it was a disgrace to buy anything you could not afford. Nowadays it is the norm to have a credit card or a lay-by scheme.

As role models for our children we cannot over estimate the tremendous influence we have on their lives and the choices they make.

Communication is the process of transferring information from one person to another. In truth, we are NEVER NOT communicating. That means that every moment, every smile, every frown, every movement or lack of movement (eg. even in sleep), every sound, every action, every word, every criticism eg. of our child, is communicating something about us to whoever is around and aware of our presence. The child needs your assistance to see your behaviour as coming from you, as either an act of love, or a call for love, as a communication, rather than as a rejection of the child.

Therefore, communication does not consist only of words. Research has indicated that words form only some 7% of our total communication,

whereas our tone of voice and facial expression make out 23%. The rest is body language.

When whatever we do is done within the integrity of our values and our norms, our non-verbal communication will support our words, and we will be transmitting a message that others will pick up as "ringing true". For example, we could hold valuing our children as being important, but we might be constantly criticising and picking on them. This could cause him to regard us as being two-faced. To change this, the parent still needs to confront unacceptable behaviour, but rather in a manner that does not break down the child's sense of being of great value to the parent. See suggestions below on how to confront, as well as under How to confront our children if they are using drugs, elsewhere in this CD.

The more incongruous the messages we send, the more confused our "listeners" will be as to our real message. Children are so sensitive to the truth, they are continually listening for the real message. Their whole world depends on how we value them, as experienced by them. And they are so impressionable. Young children more easily learn that which we pass on with strong emotion, such as bad language, or anger.

Checking out whether we have heard correctly is very important in establishing whether we indeed got the right message. To do that we need to have "listened to" the tone of voice, gestures, and facial expression as well as the words.

It becomes clear that emotions are part of the messages we send and receive, yet we seldom put our emotions or feelings into words, so that our "listeners" have to guess at how we are feeling or "listen" to our non-verbal communication. Their guess could be correct or it could be wrong. If you are the sender of the message, it is therefore important to put your feelings into words, as accurately as possible.

Very often false assumptions are the "truths" on which we base our judgment of a person.

"Don't be so stupid!"

"Stop your nonsense!,"

"Why didn't you do it differently"

"Don't worry, you'll feel better tomorrow!"

"How could you be so (*#^@!#*) stupid !" etc.

These are not helpful statements, in fact they can destroy relationships. People cannot easily feel close to someone uttering such judgmental statements about them.

True understanding helps to remove tension between people. When the tension is removed, a confrontation is less likely to stir strong emotions of resistance in the other person, particularly if the message is stated as clearly as possible.

A typical three-part confrontational or assertive message could be formulated like this: State you feeling about what happened, describe the offending action in non-blameful terms, and point out what the tangible effects thereof are on you, on someone else or on the environment.

For example: "I feel (eg. upset, concerned etc) when you (eg. you don't feed the dog), because... (I would have to stop what I am doing to go and feed him because you are not here during the day)" . Or, if what he does only offends your beliefs, but you are concerned about his welfare: "I am really strongly concerned (feeling) when you smoke dagga (non-blameful description of the behaviour), because, although it may make you feel better for a while, the effects on your health in the long run will be really bad for you. (tangible effects on the person being addressed)" .

NB. Then one must give them a fair chance to explain themselves, even if their anxious attempt causes them to say it strangely. "Listen" to them without judgment. "Hear" the whole message, the words, the feelings behind the message (this might be the most important message), and give this back in your own words, to demonstrate your most complete understanding of what they were saying. Do this without recriminations, without judgment, without preaching. Listen whether there is distress in his message, listen whether he is confused, or feeling unworthy, or whether he is perhaps trying to punish himself by taking drugs, or whether he lacks hope or vision for the future. This is more likely to help you uncover the true reason for his taking drugs. The underlying message is more likely to be the truth.

If people were more assertive, there would be less aggression in this world.

"I'm just doing what I was told to do" . Often the result is a lack of a strong sense of moral choice.

Parents generally recognise the child's behaviour as good or bad, but are unaware of how it came about. When guided to recall memories of their own feelings of impotence when they were small children faced with overwhelming parental power or force, they often recognize that the same process occurred within themselves when they were children.

Preventative actions to keep your children from taking drugs

Too many children today who start taking drugs regularly are in their pre-teen or young teen years. Drug taking tends to hide itself from others, eg. the parents, and frequently parents don't believe tell tale

signs that teachers or others notice. But the parent and the child's family are in the best position to be able to influence the child against taking drugs in the first place. Family eg. parents are also in the position to give the kind of sustained support needed by someone who has left off taking drugs, in order for the child to stay clean over the long term.

The most effective protection against drug abuse amongst youngsters, is from within the family. This means parents and children who enjoy being with each other, doing things together as a family. This also implies parents who are committed to spending time with, and giving loving attention to their children from babyhood, within a mutually respectful relationship of trust, understanding and responsibility.

Listen to, and hear what your children have to say, without prejudice, as they speak of their friends, their school, their sport and their interests. Encourage them to speak to and confide in you. This will help you to understand their world better and to build stronger relationships with them.

This requires that you spend time with your children. This is time well spent, and you will be amply rewarded.

The more all the members of the family are lovingly involved in each others' lives, as a family, with enjoyment, fun, yet with commitment, the more positive these youngsters will feel about themselves and about their home, and the more they will be inclined to accept and uphold the values and norms of the family, even when away from home.

Especially with older children or teenagers, when you want to change your way of communicating with them, or of handling situations, inform them that you want to do things differently from now on, because you care. Make a consistent effort to stay with your decision, even if you slip up sometimes (we are allowed to make mistakes while we learn new things). Be believable.

Take an interest in what your child is doing, because you care. For example, the family members must know about each others' movements when any of them go out. Set the example, by informing the family members when you are to go out, where you are going and when you will be returning.

If the teenagers have arranged to spend an evening out with friends, there should be an agreement as to what time they are to be in (in general, and also for special occasions). Arrange (do not pressurise), but set a clear expectation about the agreement being honoured. Where are they going, and with whom? Who will be driving, to the venue, and again on the way back? Lead them to make sure the driver doesn't drink or drug, and if he does, not to come home with him, but phone home to be fetched. And fetch them you will, willingly and without

complaining. This phase in their lives will soon be over; do whatever it takes to get them through it safely.

Organise or plan a limited but fair amount of money which they may need for the evening. Too much money can lead them into the temptation of trying out some or other "new" thing.

From now on you must arrange how you can contact each other in an emergency. Let them know that you are available, and that you care – in fact, if you are concerned about the evening's activities, plan to phone each other once or twice during the evening anyway.

That does not mean that you do not trust them, but rather that you care enough to be involved. The attitude with which you say and do this will determine whether it is accepted as fair by the teenager. Hear his objections and take them into consideration, without foregoing your need to be reassured. Seek new solutions if necessary.

EVERY person who visits a club, disco, "rave" or similar place for young people these days, WILL GET TO DO WITH DRUGS. There are very few exceptions.

Frequently the first half tablet is given away free with the words: "Come on. Everyone is popping, so what are you afraid of?" (Help your child to have an acceptable answer to such a put down/manipulation.) Even at school functions, camps and sporting activities the danger is very real, no matter what the staff do to prevent such things. Drugs and the effects of drugs are mostly very easy to hide from the uninformed. Remember, things are NO LONGER what they were when you were young. Just one person with bad intentions could ruin your child's life forever.

The kinds of situations in which your child may find himself in the youth culture of today, will at times be extremely foreign to you as a parent. You will often find things to be so strange and hard to understand, that you could in no way identify them with any of your own experiences as a youngster, and you would find it very difficult to give positive guidance.

You therefore are very often not in a position to prepare him for the kinds of situations he is going to encounter (and will have to handle) in the way that parents a few generations ago were able to do for their children. Your task is to educate your children as to what your family's values and principles are, and why they are such. You then need to assist him to look at options and to evaluate them in terms of their consequences, and then to choose the best option based on solid values and norms that will not harm others, the environment, nor himself.

You can help them to develop / design the techniques or tools they will need to handle the pressures and temptations, - as well as the good and

beautiful things – that they will be meeting up with. What these techniques and tools will be, you should discuss together. Talk about "What to do when.....", and consider different scenarios. Look at sections of this CD together, discuss these with the child (and in parent groups). Stimulate your child and his friends to discuss amongst themselves any positive solutions they may come up with, to handle even the invisible dangers and temptations they may meet with.

The basic principle is: He must have "tools" with which he can withstand the forces of temptation, no matter where he is. He must be prepared!

It is unrealistic to think you can protect your child from all harm. You can only guide and support him in developing the power to resist temptation and pressure in all its forms, including drugs. Your strongest weapon is having a positive, trusting relationship with your child. Children are strongly motivated to do or not to do things so that they won't harm a relationship with a person who is important to them, and to whom they are important. Be that person, and have that kind of relationship, for their sake. Make it obvious that you enjoy and value the warmth of such a relationship, without suffocating them.

Give your child the correct information about drugs from babyhood, and always at his level of understanding. Teach him that drugs are wrong, bad, and harmful (they damage body, mind and soul), that it is wrong to become enslaved to anything at all, including tobacco and alcohol (also overuse of medication, even if it is an ordinary pain killer). Teach him that drugs are illegal. When he is big enough, you can read parts of this CD together, or get books on the subject and have discussions with him about drugs, at his own level of development, of course.

Do not show material that could teach him how to use drugs, or that could make him interested in trying them. There is such material out there. First study it yourself, and reject anything that shows explicit pictures or gives detailed descriptions of drug use, or of what "kicks" they can expect from each drug.

Teach him the facts about drugs. There are many kinds of drugs available presently, and new ones are continuously being added. The effects of the various drugs differ from each other. Some, such as heroin and cocaine and in lesser degrees, ecstasy and dagga (marijuana), are highly addictive, and for some persons, especially those who have a genetic predisposition, addiction can occur after only one or two experiments. Most people taking heroin become addicted in under three months.

Drugs leave you with a permanent danger of becoming hooked again after stopping. Similar to the problem of alcohol abuse, people who stop

taking drugs have to abstain from drugs after their rehabilitation, for the rest of their lives.

Drug abuse can do permanent damage to, among others, his liver, his brain, his lungs, kidneys, heart and circulatory system, so that he would later become a very sick person. Drugs can befuddle his mind so that he is no longer able to think correctly, memory becomes poor, making it more difficult to learn, so that his (school) work would suffer as a result. He can begin to suffer from insomnia, become nervous and tense, and some days he might wonder if he is going mad.

Still worse, drugs alter one's perception, so that one sees the world differently to the way others see it. It is as if you are living in a strange world, and it can cause confusion and insecurity. Drugs also change one's emotions, causing one to become highly irritable, moody, or very depressed, or very excited and then, when the effect has worn off, feeling let down and flat. However, cravings for the drug can also produce anything from irritability, poor sleeping patterns and aggression, to being seriously ill, vomiting, sweating/freezing, diarrhoea, shaking violently, feeling weak, or particularly crazed.

Drugs also alienate people from their family and their good friends. They can cause youngsters to get into trouble with their parents, teachers and the

law. Very often, taking drugs makes youngsters feel very bad about themselves, because they know it is wrong. This could cause them to take more, in order to feel better, but it doesn't last long, and they fall right back to where they were, and they end up taking another dose, and so on. This can lead to despondency, hopelessness and suicide.

Drugs are very expensive, and they would have to start stealing and defrauding or manipulating people, in order to maintain the habit. They can, as a result, land in difficulties with the police, either for taking drugs, or for other offences like dealing in drugs or stealing. Some people go so far as to become a prostitute (both boys and girls, and prostitution is often for a pimp), hijack or commit murder (not frequent, but possible) in order to obtain what they need for their drugs. It is well known that people spend R200 – R2000 per day on drugs, without which they are convinced they can no longer live.

Due to their criminal activities (which they do in order to "survive") they would then feel even more guilty, especially as young people usually start by stealing from their own parents and friends to be able to buy their drugs. This can cause their family and friends to become very angry, disappointed and terribly saddened, and to want to have nothing more to do with them.

Drugs damage all the most important relationships in your life - those with the people whom you love – your parents, brothers/sisters and

other persons that mean a lot to you. But worse still, drugs destroy your relationship with yourself. And they destroy your future.

Using drugs causes people to become different, to the extent that their whole future changes. In fact, they very often become afraid of the future, and anxious about what will become of them.

Once addicted, the drugs become a force that wishes to destroy them, against whom they feel powerless. Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and a sort of deadness begin to come into their lives. "You die a little every day". They lose their respect for themselves, they feel guilty, so they have to deaden that feeling. Their range of choices in life becomes limited. The drugs become both their greatest enemy and their god, who rules without love or compassion, and they start seeing themselves slowly sinking.

The best is, never to try drugs – simply banish the thought from your mind!

It is possible to come off drugs, but it is a process that is never-ending. The first step is for the drug addict to -

Stop: Acknowledge that he has a problem, and that what he is doing is ruining his life, destroying his future.

Think: He must want a future. He must want to change.

Change direction: He must make a determined decision to stop taking drugs. He must decide that he is worth more than the kind of life he has been living. Then he needs to change direction, with the support of his family.

Go / Do: Move away from the drug friends and move into new relationships, new activities, a new lifestyle and a new life.

Detoxification is really unpleasant, but basically easy. What is difficult is to stay off drugs, for the rest of their lives, particularly when under stress or experiencing some emotional turmoil. Try not to add unnecessarily to any stress. "I told you so!" doesn't help anyone.

Stop, think, change direction, and go / do. A handy concept for changing behaviour, it is what you normally do, even if only when you take a wrong turn, landing in the wrong street.

So speak to your child about drugs. Let him hear it from you. He must know that in your family, none of you ever want to have anything to do with drugs. You are worth more than that. You are valued highly for being you. You are above drugs. You choose to be different. You can be proud of your decision/choice, even if it means you have fewer

friends. You are building your own healthy future. You expect more than that of yourself. You strive to attain high standards and are a person of strong principles.

You as a family choose to distinguish between actions that are destructive, and those that are helpful, toward yourselves, others and the environment. You strongly choose that which is constructive and which uplifts. You choose to be committed to keeping your lives pure, and you are not afraid to say NO clearly and plainly to ANYONE whenever necessary. And you stand together as a family, through thick and thin. If anyone of you should ever land in difficulties, the rest will support and assist (but will not pay debts or loans to finance the drug taking – as it is not in his best interests – he must bear that responsibility himself). Your family is an umbrella under which you all can take refuge, and that is where you choose to be.

In your house you do not believe the lie about drugs, because it is a lie. And this is the lie: That drugs are only cool, "lekker", that they offer a way out of emotional pain, that they won't harm you, that they are worth all the money that you pay for them, that you can stop whenever you please, that the risk isn't as big as people say, despite the fact that it is dangerous (even kills people), and it is illegal even to have drugs in your possession.

Because some drugs are injected, and needles being expensive, the same needle is often used by a group of people. This could lead to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Because so many persons become prostitutes to pay for their drugs, and having many partners, they could end up getting HIV/AIDS and spreading HIV/AIDS. Besides this the girl could become pregnant and the baby could have HIV and/or other defects due to substance abuse by the mother.

Women abusing alcohol whilst pregnant have a high risk of giving birth to a baby with a Foetal Alcoholic Syndrome (FAS). Such babies are virtually alcoholic from birth.

Persons on drugs or alcohol are also more likely to have driving and other accidents, due to impaired perception. Many are killed in such accidents, and often kill others in the process. It is such a tragedy when young children die of such an error, so teach your child never to get into a car driven by someone who is drunk or drugged.

The truth is: DRUGS STEAL / DESTROY / DEVASTATE
YOUR RELATIONSHIPS,
YOUR DREAMS,
YOUR HEALTH,

YOUR FUTURE.

Drugs affect not only yourself, but all those that know and love you, and all those whom you love. Drugs will catch you in their trap, and you will have become another victim, albeit by a misjudgment on your part. So choose NOW not to have anything to do with drugs! And then stay with it.

This must be engraved in the young child's soul, that drugs are never an option. He is more worthy than drugs. He must get the correct information from you so that he never has a need to find out somewhere else, nor to experiment. He must know he can make better choices than to choose drugs, nicotine or alcohol! He is someone whom others respect. His integrity is worth more than any illegal adventure, and no-one can shake his foundations. Let them be founded on the Rock.

Repeat this information, whenever the opportunity is there, throughout his babyhood, pre-school, primary school and teenage days and into his young adulthood. Confirm it whenever it is appropriate, but don't start lecturing and don't nag. Sometimes a single word is sufficient, eg. when watching TV together and an incident occurs where someone resists doing wrong, you can say: "That's great!" The principle is: "In our family, we make better choices, we will not choose damaging actions! We choose not to give in to temptation, even if it presents itself as harmless. We know drugs are wrong. We stick to our decisions against harmful actions."

Teach your child (girl or boy) never to take sweets, other snacks, food or drink or body stickers from strangers (and never to get into a vehicle with a stranger). When they are older, they must preferably not go to a disco or rave, but at any club or similar social gathering they must not accept anything to drink in an opened bottle, can or glass, nor take ice cubes or cookies as they could all have some drug mixed in. This could also happen at home parties, with or without parental supervision. Most date rapes occur in homes. Warn him/her to be wary.

This does not mean that there is necessarily evil lurking around every corner, but at times one is exposed to temptations which can be harmful – we just don't always know beforehand which they are. Therefore it is better to be prepared and armoured. We and our children must be thoroughly informed and go through life with open eyes!

Make sure that you as a parent are sufficiently well informed when you speak to your child about drugs. You will better be able to speak with greater authority and self-confidence, and not to make rash or incorrect statements. If your child suspects that you don't know what you are talking about, he will be inclined to distrust your advice, about drugs, but also about other things. If you don't have the answer to, or knowledge about a certain subject, then rather say that you don't know, and that both of you should make the effort to find out. All the

information you need is on this CD, you can study it together if the child is old enough.

You don't have to be a total know-all about drugs before you are able to be in a position to influence him in his choice never to take drugs. Your genuine concern for his welfare is a stronger motivator.

Pray for your child. Pray for yourself, too, that you may have the necessary insights to be able to give the correct guidance. Also pray with your child. Pray aloud for him, in his presence. Pray for Love to descend like a cloak over your child, that covers and protects against the unseen enemy, against the spirit of drugs.

Proverbs 22:6 - "Teach a child to choose the right path, and when he is old, he will remain on it".

The family, the family's healthy values, and the loving relationships between parents and children are your child's anchors, his firm point of reference. Even though he may at times be misled or upset, this is his magnetic North Pole to which his compass will always return.

As children are so sensitive to the truth, and to ambiguity, or double standards. Live by the same high standards. If you do not model what you are talking about to your child, all your words will have little meaning. Actions speak louder than words.

Keep in mind that any and all contact with illegal drugs carries the danger of a heavy criminal penalty and probably also a permanent criminal record.

Why would your children listen to you?

"What will my parents think?"

When children are tempted to take drugs, an important consideration for them is: "What will my parents think?" Therefore it is extremely important that you state clearly what your attitude is towards drugs. They must know beyond any doubt, that you would never want them to take drugs.

If you are involved in your children's lives, in their friendships and their school and sport activities, etc., they will tend to seek your advice and to follow it. They will experience your caring, and they will feel worthy because of it. Their self-image will be strengthened, so that they will be better able to resist any pressure or temptation to use drugs.

Children will listen to you when you set the example by listening to them without criticism, nagging, lecturing, anger, denials or avoiding them when they speak to you. If you can listen with acceptance of them and their feelings, preferably from an early age (but any age would do), they will learn from you how to listen to you without criticism, anger, temper tantrums, avoiding you, lying, etc. This means you have to separate them from their actions. They are worthy of respect, but their actions may be unacceptable and may need to change. This applies to anyone including yourself.

All behaviour, every action, has a reason. If they are feeling unresourceful, experiencing some emotional pain, they are more likely to make wrong choices of behaviour. One of our tasks as parents, is to help them deal with their emotional pain before it blocks their clear thinking, and at all times to strengthen their resourcefulness.

Your children expect you to speak to them about drugs (and other things such as cigarettes, alcohol abuse, date rape, prostitution, satanism, HIV/Aids, etc.) Do it and do it regularly. State your attitude simply but clearly and repeat it from time to time, as the occasion permits. It is their right that you do not allow misunderstandings to develop.

Draw up house rules which also cover drugs. Many parents do this during regular family meetings where parents (mother and /or father) and the children can take part. Get the children to actively contribute toward the setting up of the rules. This can already be done from pre-school age.

Children will be more inclined to keep to rules which they have helped to establish, knowing that they (together with their parents), when setting the rules, made the best choices that they could, in the interest of everyone. Children on whom rules are autocratically enforced, by parents or teachers, will be more inclined to test the rules or avoid them.

Youngsters appreciate it when you are involved positively in their lives, when you give constructive guidance. They will be inclined to look for your guidance on anything about which they feel uncertain. Just see to it that you remain up to date with your information, and be transparent and completely honest with them.

The role of the family in keeping youngsters out of drugs, and also in the support of those who have already fallen into the trap, but want to get out, cannot be over-emphasized. If parents were to just keep this fact in mind, the fight against drugs would be half won.

What else must you know about drugs?

The following are a few basic facts:

All illegal drugs carry health risks, and are dangerous. There is no safe dosage. There is no indication nor guarantee of the strength of a drug bought on the street. Just the drug pusher's word.

There is no such thing as a safe dosage of drugs. There is always a risk, even if you have taken it before.

Street drugs are frequently mixed with other cheaper things such as baking powder, washing powder or teething powder, etc. which makes them weaker. (These added substances carry their own risk of harm to the drug taker, especially if injected.) He gets used to the dosage he needs for a "fix". Then one day he may buy a stronger or purer drug mix, and now the usual dose could be an overdose. You can never be sure of what you buy on the street. Sometimes it could be deadly.

No one can say with certainty in advance how anyone would react to any particular drug, even if they had used it before. Everyone is different from day to day. Body mass (which can change from day to day) and one's mental state before one takes a drug, whether "friends" are enticing them to take more, all play a role in how it would affect one that day.

It also depends on where the person is when he/she takes the drug – whether alone at home, with friends, or at a "rave", etc. Being among friends tends to make one take a bigger dosage, or try something "new".

The mixture of drugs and other substances including alcohol and certain prescription drugs, can be life threatening.

Usually the onset of using heroin comes long after the person has started using other drugs.

Statistics indicate that early experiences of being drunk from alcohol, and the early use of ordinary cigarettes, are the most common starting point of a heroin career later on. Heroin is one of the most highly addictive drugs known.

Unemployment and idleness are factors which must be strongly considered. Inactivity, boredom, loneliness and the feeling of being a burden, can all contribute toward a youngster's sense of worthlessness and the lack of meaning in life. It may cause him to (re-)start taking drugs. Idleness leads to boredom and just about anything is better than boredom.

Remember that persons taking drugs are still people, most often lovely people, despite their errors of judgment and action. They still have good potential, they can still recover, even if it means they are under a life-long threat of relapse. They are still people created in God's image, and

worthy of receiving respect and respectful treatment, and not made out to be some kind of scum of the earth.

Why youngsters start taking drugs

The reasons for starting to use drugs will differ from person to person, but all too often would indicate some underlying painful situation in their personal lives, and then often in the relationship with their parents or other important people in their lives.

Some say they do it because drugs offer a quick relief from emotional pain (for as long as the drug works). Others may even consider that they use drugs to punish their parents (retaliation or revenge).

There are some who say they do drugs because they have lost hope for their future, or as a result of loneliness eg. after a disappointment in love, or due to boredom and even depression, eg. as a result of unemployment.

Some are just seeking excitement, and are not unwilling to act outside the law. Reasons?

Many young people think they will live forever. They feel as if their future stretches ahead of them forever. Often they make the mistake of believing that they, while still young, can take all kinds of risks, whether to reduce inner pain, or even just for fun and pleasure. They seem to believe there is going to be plenty of time in the future to make up for the consequences of their present behaviour.

From the moment that the child discovers himself as an individual, as "I", he begins exercising his wings. He wants to take decisions himself. We know their sayings: But I want to do it MYSELF! He also wants to be involved in decisions that concern him. His purpose is not just to permissively get everything that he desires; he wants to experience that his ideas make a difference and are considered, that he is respected and valued, and he wants to practice new-found skills and decision-making. Yet so often children are too restricted and controlled in the decisions that they are allowed to make, even on a straightforward issue like when to bath. The parent considers the child with the idea: "I am the parent, I have more experience, I know better, and I want to guide and protect my child." This is part of the normal protective and responsible function of a parent. Unfortunately this all too often goes together with an overly authoritarian attitude that says: "Do as I say, because I say so."

Together with sentences of caring, a parent often sends ambiguous messages simultaneously of lack of caring of how the child feels, such as:

"Stop crying immediately, it's your own fault that you fell! I told you not to climb up there! You have nothing to cry about, it wasn't sore!" (Compare that with: "Wow, you must have had a big fright! And now you're scared your leg may really have broken?")

Over the years the growing child experiences a lack of recognition of his feelings, and abilities. His attempts to help himself are met with put-downs, and rejection of his growing need to be, and to become his own person, in his own right.

Recall how you yourself felt as a child, when you were put down as being stupid, naughty or undeserving and unworthy, while at the same time, you knew it was untrue. Or even worse, perhaps you were afraid that this grown-up's judgment of you might possibly be true!

The parent doesn't mean his put-down messages to be a rejection, but all too often the child experiences it as such, of himself and his needs. These feelings of rejection will continue if not corrected by the parent. Children can be very sensitive, for both the negative as well as the positive in their lives.

The intensity and frequency of these negative experiences, toward which he, as a small child, stands powerless, leaves him few choices, yet he feels rebellious. Outbursts of anger, crying bouts, the silent treatment, go-slow-strikes, etc, are the only tools he has to handle the excess of power the parent wields over him. These "tools" that he uses are most often in response to the way in which he was treated.

Children "listen" more with their hearts than with their ears. They learn from our moods and attitudes. What they receive is the measure of their value as a person, and they learn how to interact, by following the model they are given.

As he grows older, he discovers that there are indeed some things about which he can make decisions, without his parent's control, or even his knowledge. If the feeling of rejection has not been removed by way of the parent communicating acceptance of him in all his dealings with the child, the child might then say:

"It is MY life, and I will do with it as I please. "

At that moment he stands before a choice: He can choose (if feeling accepted and resourceful), a positive direction for his life, and accept responsibility for this choice eg. "I want to do what is right." As alternative, he can choose (particularly if feeling unaccepted and unresourceful) something which he already knows is bad for him. He could even decide to do something that would be in conflict with his parents' wishes, or could even hurt them if they knew. It makes him feel empowered and in control of his own life. He feels guilty but free.

If drugs etc. come his way, it suits him, because by then he believes the lie, that it won't harm him, or that harm only comes after many years, and that he has enough time to stop. And he believes he will stop, as soon as the inner pain he is experiencing is over. What he does not know, however, is that something so compelling, so overpowering as drugs can spell the end of his "freedom", his independence, his control over his future, and even of his life. When drugs have him in their iron claws, he becomes a "slave" of the drug pushers, who now have attained a grip over his life far worse than anything from which he has "fled". Thankfully, this doesn't have to mean a dead end. There is a way to get out, but it calls for a decision on the part of the child himself, and it will be enhanced if he can rely on the support of his parent/s, and family members.

One fact remains sticking out like a sore thumb, however:

The statistics of the drug abuse problem in our country tell their own story. All the actions which parents, schools, the community and the powers that be have taken in the past to combat drugs, have not been enough. Despite all these efforts, the drug problem has simply mushroomed!

If we keep on doing as we have always done, we will keep on getting what we have always got. If we want something different, we will urgently need to start doing something different. Something that works. Something within the parents' power to do.

We cannot stop the inflow of drugs into our society. Not even the police can do that. The best we can do is to make our children strong and prepared to withstand the temptations of the seductive power of the drug sub-culture. (Refer to John 17 :15) We can and must increase their inner strength, so that the enemy can find no hold on them. This enemy is not an enemy of flesh and blood. This fight is a fight of the spirit, against a spirit. The only way to fight a spirit is with another spirit - or Spirit!

We will have to concentrate on our children's inner experiences, both the gaps and the strengths, so that we can better meet their need for recognition and acceptance. We must anticipate our children's physical, emotional and spiritual needs, understand them, and meet them, before it becomes a struggle for them.

In many homes there is strife in the marriage. Stormy scenes may be played out in front of the children, by quarrelling parents. This document is not the place to discuss the whole issue of divorce. What we must point out though, is that the child, even if already a teenager, does not understand what is happening. He doesn't even know whether he is the reason of the quarrel. And even if he is partly the reason of the conflict, he has no idea what he could possibly do to change it. All he knows is that he is experiencing an anxiety and a pain which he cannot put into

words. He gets the feeling of: "I can hurt my loved ones, without even trying, and see what I've done now!" It can place him in a higher risk category for later drug abuse, if the parents don't anticipate his needs for security in their love, and make sure that he gets it, in spite of their personal conflict.

If we can concentrate on understanding our child's inner needs, and communicating that understanding to him, so that he knows that we know how he feels, then we will have happier children, happier parents, and happier families.

We must confirm and strengthen the "oneness" of our family. It has now become a matter of life and death!

Joy of life is better than any drug, and where can a child experience it more safely than in the "oneness" of a loving family, even if that family has only one parent.

All fathers should take note of the content of this CD as well. They should not remain as absent ghosts in their children's memories. Be there for your children. Take the lead, show the way. Model what is right. Remember the people you are working for are waiting for you at home! Don't give your work 95% - 120% and your family only 5% or the scraps! Get a proper balance. Show them that they are important to you, by being there for them, wanting to be with them, talking with them, playing with them. Make it clear that you want a good future for them. Apply the suggestions in this CD. Life will improve!

Discipline, self-discipline and responsibility

In any society there must be order and discipline or there is chaos. Good order implies the co-operation of each individual. As there are always people who will disregard the law, there are measures built in to oblige the offender to return to order.

Every home also has its rules, even if they were never formally declared. It is in the family that the child learns to take rules into account. To get the children to conform to the house rules, disciplinary measures are applied by the parents. The purpose is to educate the child to personally accept and abide by the rules, so that he will ultimately learn to obey the country's laws. The world has become far more complex than it has ever been, however, and so there are now many more rules.

However, discipline is not an end in itself. The application of discipline is meaningless if it does not also have as its purpose to encourage the child to develop self-discipline. The child must accept more and more responsibility as time progresses, not only for his own behaviour, but also for the consequences of his behaviour on the well being of his family, and later also of the community.

Where this transition from external to internal discipline does not take place adequately, that is, when the child does not take up responsibility according to his developmental stage, the parent usually feels obliged to apply disciplinary measures to get the child to become "obedient". If it appears to the parent that the child is not reacting as required, or if the child resists ("is wilful, cheeky"), the parent will be inclined to increase the disciplinary measures by using greater force. The parent's attitude is that he carries the responsibility of bringing up his child "correctly". "The child must learn to listen! Otherwise what will become of him when he is an adult?" is his concern.

The child however, frequently considers the parent's actions as put-downs, unfair, and possibly extreme. His self-image is also at stake. If the parent doesn't notice or hear the deeper need of the child, then an emotional distancing of parent and child can start taking place. The unfortunate end of this can be that the child refuses to take up responsibility, even if only in some aspects. In the child's eyes, the person who enforces those rules, bears the responsibility, the child is just carrying out orders, whether or not he agrees with what they are. (This is how an army functions, not a family!).

The only meaningful end result of any form of discipline should be self-discipline. It is the parent's task to educate the child unto self-discipline.

The better he succeeds in motivating the child to accept self-discipline and responsibility, the better the child will be able to withstand wrongdoing, temptations, and any negative pressure of his peer group, even in the absence of the parent. It will also tend to lead him into the choice of a positive lifestyle.

In many communities a strong achievement-orientation is upheld. There the child is not recognised or rewarded for his effort, but only for the results, for his successes. A mistake is as bad as an offence. Only the single winner of any contest gets the prize; the others are all losers, no matter whether their personal effort or achievement had greatly improved. Frequently fear is used as the primary motivator ("If you don't eat up all your food now, I'll call a policeman", or when the child is bigger "If you go on using drugs, we won't want to have anything to do with you!" etc). Threats are simply not effective in changing people's behaviour. Children (even adults in similar situations eg. speeding) just don't believe the threat, they don't believe it will happen to them. The rules are not theirs, they belong to the people who made them.

It is therefore understandable that some youngsters, due to unreasonable demands and over-strict disciplining by the parents, teachers and others, fall along the wayside and choose to leave the battle against power, force, punishment and pressure, to others willing to take the punishment. They choose rather to join a sub-group, where they experience unconditional acceptance, without judgment, without

punishment, without perceived demands.... until they land in the trap that drugs and the drug pushers set.. or in the hands of the law.

The more intimate and endearing the relationship is between a parent and his/her child, the more mutual trust will be built between them, and the more the parent can temper his/her use of authority with compassion and understanding of the beingness-of-the-child. The stronger he will be when he has to take up the battle against drugs. A child who is treated with respect, even while being "disciplined", will also show respect to his parent.

It is human nature for a child (anyone) to want to be truly loved and accepted, and to want to honour his parents and to follow their guidance. Just so a parent wants to bring up his child so that he can develop optimally, in body, mind and soul. Seen in principle, both the stage and the players are very favourably set up for a successful conclusion of their main purpose, namely achieving responsible adulthood for the child. If only parents could learn how to co-operate with nature in bringing up their children, how to employ the God-given powers to reach the goal, then less and less of our children would land in the trap of drugs, sex, crime and other self-destructive behaviour.

**Read up elsewhere in this Family Empowerment programmer:
"Preventive action to keep your child out of drugs" to get a greater understanding of the development of self-discipline, which by definition is the acceptance of responsibility. See also: "What then in parenting?"**

Reasons teenagers give for taking illicit drugs

See also the section on "How to confront your child if he is on drugs."

"Someone had some stuff with him, and so I thought I'd just try it."

Say you are very concerned about his taking drugs.

Say that you understand that he was curious and ask whether the experience was as he expected it to be. Allow him to answer without interrupting.

Listen attentively to his hidden feelings (body language, tone of voice, and facial expression). Respond by telling him what you have understood him to say and including how you thought he was feeling.

Try to find out whether he was pressured to take the drug/s. It will give you the opportunity to guide him to a more steadfast handling of similar situations in the future.

Ask whether he still thinks it was a good choice or decision. Again listen for feelings. Give feedback.

Discuss the risks (effects and consequences) related to drug usage. Make use of the information on this CD. In case you are of the opinion that it would not be wise to discuss drugs at this moment, arrange for another, more convenient time and place.

In this, as in other cases, the child must in time be guided to realise that the final decision about taking drugs is his own responsibility. There are two clear paths from which to choose. One of them will seriously restrict his future. It will leave him few choices. The other will enable him to direct his future, toward a desirable goal.

He must be clear that, while he himself is acceptable to you, his behaviour is not. That you would strongly prefer him not to be involved in drugs. .

Help him to feel valued: "I really care a lot about you, you are very precious/ important to me in my life, and I really only want the best future for you." (Only say this if it is truly how you feel.)

"Everyone does it, why can't I?"

Say that you are very concerned about his taking drugs.

Say/ask: "It seems to me you feel drugs are safe to use because others are doing it, and apparently nothing bad happens to them?"

Listen without criticism to his answer.

Listen for cues and clues that tell you about his feelings in the matter
Say/ask: "Everyone does it and you don't want to feel out?" Listen attentively to what he has to say, and "hear" the underlying feelings expressed through his body language, tone of voice and facial expression.

Acknowledge what you understand his feelings to be, even if you misunderstood. He will correct you if he feels you didn't hear it correctly. Don't simply parrot his words, rephrase in your own words.

Ask if he knows why his friends use it.

Ask if he knows what the risks are in using drugs. Refer to the section on drugs in this CD with him, if you feel it is a good time to do so. Otherwise arrange for another time and place.

If the opportunity seems right, it can develop into a discussion about the freedom one has to take decisions in life, even if that decision is to follow what the group does. At the same time we have to be conscious that we must make responsible decisions because we have to bear the consequences, good or bad

In this, as in other cases, the child must in time be guided to realise that the final decision about taking drugs is his own responsibility. There are two clear paths from which to choose. One of them will seriously restrict his future. It will leave him few choices. The other will enable him to direct his future, toward a desirable goal.

He must be clear that, while he himself is acceptable to you, his behaviour is not. That you would strongly prefer him not to be involved in drugs.

Help him to feel valued: "I really care a lot about you, you are very important to me in my life, and I really only want the best future for you." (Only say this if it is truly how you feel.)

"I always wanted to try that stuff out."

Say that you are very concerned about his taking drugs.

Say that you understand that he was curious about that specific drug and ask whether it was as he expected.

Ask why he wanted to try that specific drug, it might lead to a discussion of other drugs which he may have tried, and if so, why.

In this, as in other cases, the child must in time be guided to realise that the final decision about taking drugs is his own responsibility. There are two clear paths from which to choose. One of them will seriously restrict his future. It will leave him few choices. The other will enable him to direct his future, toward a desirable goal.

He must be clear that, while he himself is acceptable to you, his behaviour is not. That you would strongly prefer him not to be involved in drugs.

Help him to feel valued: "I really care a lot about you, you are very important to me in my life, and I really only want the best future for you." (Only say this if it is truly how you feel.)

"It felt so good when I used it!"

Ask him how he felt before using it.

This is a golden opportunity for him to tell you how he feels about things that are troubling him, listen with an open mind. Show your acceptance of him. This will help you to understand him better.

Offer him your help and support in solving his problems without drugs. Point out to him that he owns the problems, and that it is his

responsibility to choose a solution and to carry it out. Discuss less risky ways to feel good. Don't preach.

In this, as in other cases, the child must in time be guided to realise that the final decision about taking drugs is his own responsibility. There are two clear paths from which to choose. One of them will seriously restrict his future. It will leave him few choices. The other will enable him to direct his future, toward a desirable goal.

He must be clear that, while he himself is acceptable to you, his behaviour is not. That you would strongly prefer him not to be involved in drugs.

Help him to feel valued: "I really care a lot about you, you are very important to me in my life, and I really only want the best future for you." (Only say this if it is truly how you feel.)

"It made me feel full of self-confidence."

Tell him that you feel very concerned that he needs drugs to feel good about himself.

Understand that he has a need to improve his self-confidence.

Acknowledge the importance of his need to feel more self-assured.

Discuss manners of improving his self-confidence and his self-image without drugs. Regard him with respect, this will already improve his self-image.

In this, as in other cases, the child must in time be guided to realise that the final decision about taking drugs is his own responsibility. There are two clear paths from which to choose. One of them will seriously restrict his future. It will leave him few choices. The other will enable him to direct his future, toward a desirable goal.

He must be clear that, while he himself is acceptable to you, his behaviour is not. That you would strongly prefer him not to be involved in drugs.

Help him to feel valued: "I really care a lot about you, you are very important to me in my life, and I really only want the best future for you." (Only say this if it is truly how you feel.)

"All my problems simply left me!"

Tell him that you are concerned because he uses drugs as an aid to handle his problems.

Ask him if his worries returned after the drug wore off. Don't preach. Listen. This is an opportunity to help him address some of his other worries without criticism.

Let him know that if he so wishes, you would like to help him address his problems and you will support him as he works at solving them. Do not fall into the trap of taking his problems and solving them for him – this will only leave him feeling weaker and less able to handle his own problems. Make a time for the two of you to discuss his problems more fully if it is not convenient now. Ask him if he has thought of any solutions. Acknowledge any solutions he comes up with even if not suitable. They are a contribution, from a person who is probably feeling unresourceful at that moment. Accept the ideas. Help him find solutions to his own problems, if necessary.

He must be clear that, while he himself is acceptable to you, his behaviour is not. That you would strongly prefer him not to be involved in drugs.

Help him to feel valued: "I really care a lot about you, you are very important to me in my life, and I really only want the best future for you." (Only say this if it is truly how you feel.)

"But you used drugs!"

If it is true, you need to be prepared for this. Be honest with him. Admit you now realise that drugs are wrong and dangerous, and that you would decide differently now if you had the opportunity again.

Tell him that you wouldn't like to see him making the same mistakes as you did. Tell him that you would be deeply troubled if your mistakes of the past would result in someone you love landing in such deep trouble. Realise that if you are indeed still using drugs (or alcohol excessively) you are misguiding your child and that it can ruin his life. So choose now to stop! Go for help if you need it.

In this, as in other cases, the child must in time be guided to realise that the final decision about taking drugs is his own responsibility. There are two clear paths from which to choose. One of them will seriously restrict his future. It will leave him few choices. The other will enable him to direct his future, toward a desirable goal.

He must be clear that, while he himself is acceptable to you, his behaviour is not. That you would strongly prefer him not to be involved in drugs.

Help him to feel valued: "I really care a lot about you, you are very important to me in my life, and I really only want the best future for you." (Only say this if it is truly how you feel.)

How can I encourage my child to talk to me about drugs

Drugs are a problem of national importance. Yet it is in the child's home, or a friend's home that most children (the target market) are introduced to drugs by their friends. The parents are therefore the ones who need to do something to stop or prevent drug abuse among the users. The results of drug use are however very, very personal for the drug user. The best solution we have for the drug issue is seated in the family, where parents are in a relationship of loving guidance with their children, and where, at the same time, the children experience their parents as authority to be trusted.

Here are a number of hints for parents:

Become a vital part of your child's life

Make time for your children in your daily program (at least 15 min. per day or more). Prepare something to do together in that time. Plan it together and don't let anything or anyone distract you from this goal. It is the child's proof that he/she is precious to you, especially if time is set apart every now and again for personal one-to-one attention. You will be surprised at your reward!

It is extremely important to spend time together as a family daily. Develop some pleasant family rituals such as an early morning cup of coffee together, family worship, family prayers, or to at least eat together once a day. Discuss other opportunities to be together with enjoyment. Holidays, outings into nature, play table games, build a puzzle, attend to the pets, wash up dishes together, walk around the block together at sunset, or lie on the lawn and look up at the stars, the clouds, etc.

Pay interest in your teenagers' outings. Where are they going and with whom. Preferably invite his friends to your home, and let them feel welcome. Give them attention as well. Make your house attractive for your child's friends, be there yourself as far as is possible. Let the friends know what your house rules are, eg. "We don't do. at our home, we don't like that", "We don't like it when (describe the behaviour)." Most children, even teenagers, will learn quickly, and respect your house rules.

If unacceptable behaviour of a visiting child continues, then it may be necessary to address him clearly, either in a private one-to-one, on the behaviour that is unacceptable to you and why, or immediately the behaviour occurs or when you discover it. Don't wait for it to become a crisis. Give him positive guidelines as to how he could behave that would be acceptable to you. Get the visitor a chance to give input, listen to his feelings and thoughts, take them into consideration, but don't let go of your initial need. Get agreement from the friend about his future behaviour. Keep your child informed that you have spoken to the friend, but not to the extent that it becomes juicy gossip. Advise your child anyway, to keep it confidential.

On the rare occasion that the unacceptable behaviour continues thereafter, you may need to tell the child who has acted in this way, that you don't feel comfortable anymore when he visits, and that you really don't want him to visit your house for that reason. Be factual, but firm. Your motive is not to punish. Be an example to your child in this way for him to learn how to deal with continued unacceptable behaviour of his friends.

At times, watch their TV programmes with them, and discuss the content afterwards. It is an opportunity for your child from an early age, to learn about the values system of your family, how to use it as a yardstick to decide whether some thing is right or wrong

Give guidance in regard to the internet web pages and chat rooms for any child who uses the internet. Access to certain websites etc. can be blocked.

Be a parent who is present. Give guidance and discuss issues of importance before they become a crisis. Let you child experience that his healthy future is very important to you.

Let children of a young age, understand that all their deeds are choices (based on their needs), and that as a result, that they are also responsible for the natural consequences of that behaviour eg. if you play with a sharp knife, you can cut yourself. Obviously the parent is there to instruct and prevent harm to the child or anyone else, but learning also comes from experience.

Just as you might consider yourself neglectful as a parent not to warn your child of the dangers of a sharp knife, so you must also warn your child of other dangers, crime, drugs, promiscuous sexual relations, HIV/AIDS, satanism, etc. In these cases it would be better not to learn from experience. Do the best teaching job you can do.

Actively listen to your children...

Listen to your child, without prejudice, and with acceptance of the child (though not necessarily of the child's behaviour), without interrupting. This is one of the most powerful means to strengthen a trusting relationship

Listen to the deeper, inner meaning of your child's messages.

Behind the child's (or anyone else's) every message there is a deeper emotional message that is mostly hidden. No matter whether you consider his statement is right or wrong, for him it is reality at that moment. Try to grasp that reality - it is the key to his trust in you.

Your willingness to listen to your child without criticism, will help them to be willing to listen to you.

Get their input when family decisions have to be made. Make it clear that you really appreciate their ideas, even if they suggest unrealistic solutions. If their solutions are acceptable and feasible, give them full positive acknowledgement for their contribution, also, at times, in front of their friends.

Encourage them to come freely to you with their problems and their successes, and then be open minded and pay attention!

Handle your children of any age with respect. Avoid destructive or negative comments. Avoid avoiding the child or his problem.

On occasion your child might tell a lie. Lies always have a purpose, to get something which he thinks will be denied him, or to avoid something that would be unpleasant for him. Recognise and acknowledge his anxiety, and his need. Confront by saying clearly that you are saddened and feel misled or confused (whichever, or other similar feeling you might be feeling) by his telling you something that is not true (do not call it lying, describe the behaviour). It causes you to feel unsure about your belief in his word, and that affects your trust in him. Let him know that for you to be able to trust him (and he you), is very valuable to you. A child that can trust you willingly, without hesitation, will be able to come to you spontaneously, even with his deepest secrets.

You ARE your child's role model

Decide what model you want your child to follow, and act accordingly

Don't underestimate the influence of your behaviour on your child. It includes the use and abuse of tobacco, the use or abuse of alcohol, and of prescribed medication (even excessive use of headache tablets), your respect of the property of others, the environment, your driving style, and your attitude toward the opposite sex, respect of the country's laws, etc.

If you want your child to use clean language, then you must not use dirty language.

If you want your child to respect you, you must set the example, and show respect to him/her at all times, even when disciplining him/her. Belittling him/her would show a lack of respect.

If you believe people can solve their problems without resorting to coercion or force, you will need to live it out in front of him, even when you might find out that he/she is on drugs. Refer to the section entitled "Reduce conflict by handling it correctly" as well as " Discipline, Self-discipline and Responsibility" elsewhere in this programme..

If you want your child to be honest, to show you respect, to live a life without drugs, etc., you have to set the example.

Values learnt by experiencing someone living out those values, makes a very strong impression on the child, especially if those values are later also verbalised.

Be honest

Young children are often exposed to incongruity (experienced by the child as dishonesty) from babyhood, by parents unknowingly making ambiguous messages or half truths eg.

"If you let those plates fall, I'll take you out and sell you in a shop!" (You want to protect the plates and the child from harm yet in this sentence the plates are valued more than the child). Compare that with "When you carry the plates like that, they could fall and break and you might get cut".

Another example is: "Don't climb up there, you will fall and break your neck!" and he doesn't fall at all, or he falls and his neck is not broken. Compare with: "I'm concerned when you climb up there, as you could fall and really hurt yourself badly" (after all, he could break an arm instead!).

With the first messages the child could feel confused: "Does my mother really love me, or are the plates more important to her than my life?"

With the second message, the child could wonder: "Can I really believe my mother when she wants to teach me something? See, that was a lie that she told me about breaking my leg if I climb up here! She thinks I'm stupid, O.K., then I'll show her, I can climb up here again and again, and I can do other things that she also doesn't like. Whê!"

This might sound a bit far fetched. However, if we listen carefully, we will hear them copying us with the same words, the same tone of voice, or they challenge us by repeating the behaviour we had just tried to stop.

Children learn to distrust parents when they use ambiguous messages, or force the child to do something against his will (manipulation) and the children begin to believe in power struggles as the only means to get what they need or want (they become rebellious), or they do things in an underhand manner. They learn to manipulate.

If they are not listened to in the family setup when they express their real needs and opinions, then they learn it is not useful to expose their real selves to their parents, and they also learn to do things behind the parents' back, even if they know that it would upset them, or that it would be self-defeating, eg. smoking or alcohol at a young age, or taking drugs. Despite this, the parent-child relationship remains the most important relationship to each child, and the one which he really desires to be warm, loving, accepting and strong.

Stay informed about drugs and other important matters, but don't try to pretend that you know everything. If you don't know something, say: "I don't know, but I'll find out" and then find out and get back to the child with the information, or you can both look for the information together.

Be sincere and clear about where you stand in relation to drugs and other matters. Your children will then find it easier to be open and honest toward you. Choose the right moment. If you discover that your child is experimenting with drugs, it is wise not to come to the conclusion immediately that your child is already addicted to drugs, or that he/she is in immediate danger. It is a normal part of growing up to take risks to discover one's limits. It doesn't mean however, that you must do nothing about it. Refer to part in this programme under the heading: Reasons youngsters give for taking illicit drugs and how you can respond and How you can speak to your child if you suspect he may be taking drugs

Be on the lookout for and use, or create the right moment for discussing drugs (or other similar subjects), eg. directly after a TV programme where drugs were an issue, or in response to a news item, etc.

Stay calm

Don't over react to your child's involvement in drugs or anything else that may disgust you or turn you off.

Don't under react or ignore the problem. Show your concern. Take courage. Speak out loud. Say you are concerned. Then listen.

Keep lines of communication open.

Don't ridicule him or preach.

Anger usually closes the door to further discussions.

Don't be impulsive or act in fury if you discover your child is doing things that are unacceptable to you. Things which go against your values and beliefs. Things which are wrong eg. damaging or harmful to someone or the environment. If necessary, wait until you/ you and the child, have calmed down enough until you are able to confront the child with the unacceptable behaviour, in a respectful and loving manner.

If you have difficulty confronting your child face to face without getting angry or judgmental, try writing a letter to your child about your very personal concern about his/her behaviour. Try to identify how strongly you feel about the situation (probably strong to very strong), write that down, describe the behaviour in a non-blameful way, then how you feel it might affect his/her in the long run, and/or even how it has already affected him/her so far (eg. stealing, avoiding you, or telling lies. Say

for example, you suspect he/she might be telling lies, and that that undermines your trust in him/her. Tell them you have him/her best future at heart. Tell him/her how much he/she mean to you, and invite him/her to either write back to you or to speak to you. But don't just leave things to carry on as they are. Take action.

Get examples from various places in this CD, but also from What then is parenting? and How to confront your child if he is on drugs.

Reduce conflict by handling it correctly

It is difficult to solve problems while a power struggle is in progress. A decision must rather be made to look for a solution to the problem that both of you can believe in.

Learn to solve conflicts so that no-one feels like a loser at the end. Losers always feel resentful or vengeful, and start looking for multiple opportunities to demonstrate their unhappiness, like go-slow-strikes "I'll do it just now" and then the task is not done, or only done much later after more cajoling. What we need to be striving for is more than just a win-win situation. None of the participants must feel that they have experienced a defeat, no one must feel they have to win at all costs, to be in control. Exert yourself to understand his point of view, and let him know how you understand it, and he will tend to do the same with you.

If a power struggle is developing, recognise it for what it is, stop the discussion, and begin over, even if it is only later. Throughout the discussion of the conflict, the attitude must be that of finding a solution within a relationship of caring respect.

A useful tool in dealing with problems is: Stop, think, change course, go/do.

Your standpoint must be: All conflicts can be resolved satisfactorily. The solution must always be such that all persons in the conflict can feel satisfied about the solution. It may take time. Take the time. The benefits are worth it, long-term! See also sub-sections "Become a vital part of your child's life", and "Set clear boundaries" under the heading: "How can I encourage my child to talk about drugs."

Keep communication lines open

Follow up every discussion with another discussion at a good time, later.

Decide now that you will discuss drugs with your children and start while they are still young, in the nursery school age, if possible.

To turn a child away, is to cut the lines of communication. Always keep the "door" open for your child to come to you. Let him then feel welcome, and respected. Hear him out. Listen. You don't need to

necessarily agree with him, but at least hear him out. To him, how he experiences an issue, and how he feels and thinks about it, is genuine, and it is his right to be allowed to have a personal opinion and feelings about matters. It is an important lesson in life that he can say his say, to anyone, provided he does it respectfully.

It is important to talk to your child. Even just talking to him about certain issues will increase his self-esteem, as you are valuing him by expressing your thoughts to him, and listening to his responses.

Set clear boundaries

Without boundaries, chaos reigns.

Youngsters expect and appreciate rules and limits. It creates a feeling of security and shows him that the parent cares.

Let all your children, even from an early age, participate in the setting up of house rules, then they will be more inclined to take responsibility for keeping their "own" rules.

Discuss and decide together with your children, on the best method of handling various situations where your children could be exposed to drugs. Get their inputs, their agreement that the rules are acceptable to them, and their commitment that this will be the method whereby they will resist the pressure of drug related issues in the future. Design a slogan with them that they feel would work for them, to answer to people offering them drugs. One they can use over and over. See suggestions in How to confront your child if he is on drugs and How to avoid a relapse.

It may be necessary to review this agreement if it turns out that there are better ways of handling the situation. If this is so, get them to re-confirm their commitment to the new guidelines. Review and reconfirm the rules and the reasons for the rules on a regular basis. Circumstances change, people's abilities, insights and requirements change, and so the rules require a flexibility that can still keep an eye on the true goal of the rules, but adapt them to still be the best solution for all.

The onus of the successful execution of this agreement does not lie only with the child. You as a parent have a responsibility to strengthen and support him through thick and thin.

Your children must know that you will always fetch them if they need you, even late at night. Without reproach. Put it clearly to them that you expect them not to get themselves into situations where they know they will be exposed to drugs or other unacceptable behaviours. And also that if they do land in such a situation they will carry out your agreement. Reconfirm every time they go out and seal it with a hug.

Remain positive

You as a parent must believe that what you do, will make the difference in your child's life to know how to remain standing. Your belief in this must be visible to the child. Your inputs are vital to your child. He wants your inputs. He will believe that you know how to guide him correctly, because he is precious and valuable to you.

Give positive acknowledgment to your child's active avoidance of drugs and drug situations. Let them talk about it, get excited about it. Give them the honour. Reconfirm this regularly and repeatedly.

Accentuate the things they can do well. Acknowledge their efforts if their attempts at handling various situations at times don't succeed. People may make mistakes, especially while they are learning. Express appreciation and pleasure for every little thing they have done which will help you.

Give appreciation for faithfulness, honesty, and generally "good" or acceptable behaviour. Make a fuss about it.

The more you value, appreciate, respect, trust, understand and give loving guidance, the better their self-esteem will be, and the less they will need drugs in their lives. And you can make that difference!

All your communication with your child must confirm your respect of his human dignity. It increases their self-respect, and makes them stronger, more able to resist negative peer pressure.

This is no permissive approach, even though it may appear to some people to be too soft. To persevere with this approach in the face of the pressure on you as a parent, calls for courage, determination, and stick-to-it-iveness, and a quiet mind

If your child is already on drugs, then you need to believe firmly, and express this belief often, that one day they will be free of drugs, because you trust the power and the Power within them. They have the power for good. Because you trust the Power of God to strengthen them. They are beautiful people who have made a mistake, but who have it within them to change -- to acknowledge the mistake, and to turn from drugs. Emphasize your belief in them, that they can be strong enough to break any hold they may feel the drugs have on them. Live for the day they will be free of drugs. Live for each day that they are free of drugs, and celebrate it with them by encouraging them.

How will you know if your children are experimenting with drugs?

There are definite physical, behavioural, and environmental signs which you can observe. Drug symptoms in the child himself will not be noticed easily by someone who is not informed. If you know however, what to look out for, it is relatively easy to spot the signs and symptoms. If your child knows that you know, he will think twice before he walks around

with red eyes and dark glasses in the evening, or to look at you with constricted pupils when they should be dilated.

For more complete information about the signs of drugs. Read the enlightening portion in the Drug information programme in this CD.

What to do when you suspect your child is taking drugs

Firstly, make sure that your suspicions are correct. To accuse a child, whilst he is innocent, can do no end of damage to the relationship. Notice the physical signs (eg. red eyes, or dilated pupils etc), the behavioural signs (eg. fidgetiness or nervousness, frequent need for more money), as well as perhaps drug paraphernalia (eg. thin copper wire that is twisted and bundled into a small ball). Do not rely on cheap over the counter urine tests, as they are not accurate enough. If at all possible, have the urine testing done professionally, as a wrong positive test result could do a lot of damage to your relationship with your child, making the problem more difficult to handle in the future. Speak to a professional, or to someone with experience.

Respect the child's privacy by not discussing the problem indiscriminately. He probably feels guilty and bad enough already.

Stay calm. Heightened emotions can lead to errors, over-hastiness and confusion. Stay in control of yourself and of the situation.

Recognise your own shock, disappointment, anger, feelings of discouragement, and fear and shame. These are genuinely human feelings and applicable to the situation, but can complicate the problem if they are your only guideline.

Express your concern, firstly to your spouse, or to a good friend whom you can trust, if possible. He/she will probably be feeling the same way as you do, and you can support each other. You could go together to see a professional (See Rehabilitation Resource Directory).

As soon as you feel you have a firmer footing, it becomes important to speak to the child himself. This is no blameful confrontation or power struggle. You, the parent are acting in the best interests of your child, and so you express your concern that his involvement with drugs constitutes a serious threat to his personal welfare. Treat him/her with respect. Be firm, honest and supportive. Don't threaten. Encourage him/her to talk freely and openly to you. This is the only way to find out what is going on. See below How to confront your child if he is taking drugs for additional descriptions.

If your child does not have the freedom to talk to you, to whom can he/she talk? To his drug friends? And with what results? Bear in mind that research has shown that the larger percentage of children who had landed in drug related problems with the law, preferred that their parents above anyone else should assist them in this time of trouble. In

the majority of cases, children want their parents to be involved with them to help them with this problem.

Show understanding for your child's point of view, even though you cannot always agree with it. Find out from him what he regards as the advantages and consequences of his drug use.

Give clear information of the consequences of drug abuse to him personally, in relation to the drug/s in use. Make a suggestion as to what the next step could be toward a normal life.

Hear what he/she has to say, without interruption. Acknowledge his feelings towards the drugs, and towards you. It is imperative to maintain a relationship of trust at this time, if you want to remain a factor in your child's rehabilitation. This does not mean that you need to be weak or undecided in what you do, only that you must remain open to your child.

A very important factor in your child's rehabilitation (and indeed in keeping him/her from drugs in the first place) is that he will have at least one special, trusting relationship with someone of his choice (be cautious if it is another drug friend!) Let that someone preferably be you.

A very important factor in your child's rehabilitation is that he will have at least one special, trusting relationship with someone of his choice. Let that someone preferably be you.

If it cannot be you, then support your child in finding someone of his choice for this purpose. It can be his therapist, or a teacher, a mentor, or pastor, or a good friend. (Rehabilitated drug addicts who are definitely abstaining could be of particular value, especially within a support group, because they have been through it themselves.) Or he can discover a special relationship with God, and with himself.

If your child is into drugs, you need to do something today. Depending of the severity of his drug problem, tomorrow might be too late.

Anyway, it would always be wise to attempt to reduce any physical damage the drugs could do to your child, so the sooner the child is off drugs the better for him, but you cannot force him to stop. Remember drug taking is a social activity at first. He would have to give up the drugs and the place where he feels he belongs – among his friends. There may well be a deeper reason for his behaviour than the superficial reasons he is prepared to express to you. This is not necessarily a conscious withholding of information, he might not even be aware of the links between his drug taking and pain that he was already experiencing when deciding to "try" drugs. You will have to earn your child's trust with his inner thoughts and feelings. Much has been said about the power and quality of listening in this Family Empowerment programme. Apply it. It is crucial.

So your child is in trouble and needs assistance. You can ask your child whether he is prepared to stop. Always listen carefully to what they say, and hear any hidden feelings. If he is prepared to try to stop, ask whether he needs assistance. Seek help. Find out what stopping would mean to your child, depending on the withdrawal symptoms of the drug/s. Be prepared. It will probably be a long haul.

There are degrees of drug involvement, depending on the length of time that the child has been taking them, and the type of drug he uses, and how much experimenting he is willing to do. Try to determine his status regarding his drug usage. Plan a specific strategy together with your child to address his particular need.

If your child is still under-age you could be held responsible for not getting the child adequate treatment. As a last resort you could force your child to take eg. a urine or blood test or be admitted to a rehabilitation centre. This forceful action reduces chances of success of the child's rehabilitation, so do whatever is in your ability to assist your child develop insight into his situation, so that he might be able to make a firm decision to want to stop taking drugs. There must be mutual trust and acceptance in your relationship as well as loving guidance from you, the parent.

When contacting the rehabilitation centre, ask any of the questions listed there that you feel apply to your situation, or make up your own set of questions. You are trying to match your child's needs (eg. age and sex, severity of the drug abuse) and your needs, to the facilities offered.

If there is no help near you, take heart, as a British survey on drug abuse in the mid 1980's indicated that more than 70% of people who left off using drugs of their own accord, did so without professional assistance, and that the highest percentage of all the respondents who did not have a relapse, were from this group. The secret of this success rate can only lie in the personal decision of the drug abuser/addict not to continue taking drugs, to have to rely on his own word, not to let himself down, and therefore his commitment to himself. Obviously, if the child is heavily into a hard drug such as heroin, he might prefer to have professional assistance, as going cold turkey could be very unpleasant. However, detoxifying is relatively easy, and certainly far easier than creating a new life for oneself, and keeping off drugs. Here the child needs your long term support.

It is no disgrace nor even a sign of weakness, to seek professional assistance if you need it. There is no need for you to stand alone.

Join a parent support group in your area, or start one if necessary. Use the information in this CD as a guide for your discussions. Your child's future and maybe his life, is at stake. Regard this extremely

seriously. Don't panic. Give full co-operation to whatever rehabilitation programme is being followed. At this time, your positive support is imperative. Be there for him. Your willingness to retain your relationship and quality of the time spent with him is more important than the amount of time you are available to him. You are in a long term relationship with your child, and what he now needs is long term support, and strengthening. This you can give.

Persevere with building a strong relationship. Your support will be reflected in your caring actions, which of course, will not include financing his drugs. If you have to handle extortion by drug dealers threatening your child's life for payment of drug debts, first phone Crisis-on-Call at (012) 335 3776, or use the national emergency number 10177, or speak to someone at your local SA Police Service office.

The behaviour of drug dependant people can be extremely trying at times. It can vary from mood swings, shouting and violence, to absenteeism, or stealing your household goods to sell for money, and many other very, very unacceptable behaviours, until you are nearly out of your mind with worry and frustration. Get counselling for yourself before you reach breaking point. Avoid any show of violence/aggression on your part. If you do resort to violence, it gives him a precedence, and then allows him also to be violent in righteous anger. Listening actively to the other person can help to calm him down. Listen whenever the occasion arises, it keeps tensions lowered. Speak in confidence to a trusted friend.

Keep your eye fixed upon the future, upon the day when he will once more be a balanced, healthy and functional member of society. Pray for your child; pray for yourself. Pray together with your child if possible.

Your child will need to take the decision himself to stop, if he is to recover from drugs. You can be the reason why he makes this decision, if he regards his relationship with you as more important to him than the drugs. Above all, he must make the choice for himself, because he values himself, but this might be a growing concept which you can encourage. If, in spite of all the above, he still chooses not to keep off drugs, you cannot truly force him to stop. That will merely drive him to become secretive, and you will lose your influence over him. Whether he recovers or not will remain his choice, his responsibility, and he will bear the consequences, good or bad. Your position is to still care for him and let him know that you still accept him as a person, as your valued child, and that his decision to change is not in your hands. You are not guilty of the choice that he made for his life.

If your relationship with your child fails, you lose your influence in his life. If you still wish to be a factor in his recovery then the doors toward each other must remain open.

Parents of today have the special responsibility to actively fight the scourge of drugs in our society. At the same time our sons and daughters must be made aware (by us, the parents) of the life threatening dangers of the possible serious consequences of continued use of drugs. We also need to actively support our children in their own personal battle against drugs.

It is more a battle of the heart and soul than of the mind.

Blood & Urinetest centres for Drugs of Abuse

The Clinical Diagnostic Laboratories of Drs Du Buisson, Bruinette and Kramer Inc, Drs Boucher and Partners Inc. and Drs Swart, Maré and Partners are fully equipped, with ISO certification, to test for substance abuse.

The Pathology practices are represented throughout South Africa. The collection facilities and telephone numbers are listed below. The facilities, providing a 24-hour 7-day per week service, are highlighted.

Wherever drug abuse is suspected by tell tale physical and psychological effects, professional help must be sought from persons or institutions listed by US or from any medical practitioner.

To ensure that the costs of the drug tests are paid by Medical Aids, the referral to the laboratory must be made by a Board of Healthcare Funders registered person. This will normally be a family doctor or specialist. Most results will be available to this referring doctor within 24 hours.

Urine is the preferred sample type for the following reasons:

Blood levels are often difficult to measure, partly because of the low concentrations that are present.

Drugs disappear rapidly from the blood and are excreted in the urine. The effect may be a negative blood test and positive urine test.

Blood screenings tests for the majority of drugs of abuse are not readily available.

Urine samples offer sufficient sample volume to perform the tests. Twenty millilitres of urine is sufficient to do all of the under mentioned tests.

Drugs of abuse	Type of specimen	Approximate duration of detect ability.
Alcohol	Blood	6 hours
Urine	Less than 2 days	Amphetamine
Urine	2 -3 days	Benzodiazepines

Blood	3 hours - 3days	7 hours - 7 days
Cannabis(dagga)	Urine	1 - 5 days(single use)
30 days (chronic use)	Cocaine	Urine
2 - 3 days	Metamphetamine (ecstasy)	Urine
2 - 3 days	LSD	Urine
5 days	Opiates (codeine, morphine, heroin)	Urine
2 days	Propoxyphene	Urine
2 - 4 days	Methcathinone ("CAT")	Urine
2 - 3 days	Methadone	Urine
1 - 4 days	Phencyclidine	Urine
8 days	Methaqualone (Mandrax)	Urine
7 days		

How to confront your child who is taking drugs

If after you have studied the drugs section of this CD, you may come upon some items in your rubbish bin that you recognise as drug paraphernalia, or you see some signs in your child, then you would feel the need to speak to your child about it. There are signs, but not proof as such. It remains a suspicion until proven.

This is always a dilemma. Should you confront by accusing, should you start asking questions, should you rush your child off for a urine test, should you call the police, should you scream at him "What a rotten junkie you are. God didn't make you to take drugs!" to make him feel guilty? Or should you do nothing at all?

Perhaps you are afraid he will lie to you, if you ask him outright, or he may respond in an extreme manner, like threatening to leave home.

If he does admit to taking drugs, how should you handle his answer?

The following are some suggestions as to how to confront your child while at the same time reducing the risk of losing him during the confrontation:

"Joe, I found this stuff in the rubbish bin, and I'm very concerned because it has to do with drugs."

Or

"Joe, I've noticed your eyes have been red lately, and I've noticed other signs which make me very concerned, as they could be as the result of drugs."

Possible replies:

A denial, eg. "It's not mine, I don't know where it comes from."

"My eyes are red from studying. You always want me to study, now you're cross when I do!"

A partial admission: "I got it from so and so, and I threw it away, but I didn't use it".

Anger: "How dare you accuse me! Don't you dare sniff around my stuff, it's private!"

Admission (woefully): "I only tried it once, but I won't do it again."

Or

(defiantly): "Everybody is doing it! Why can't I?!"

or

"I've been doing it since June and I'm still O.K.!"

"Why shouldn't I, Dad's drunk every night!"

"When did you last worry about me!"

(Avoiding): With downcast eyes and hanging head, but says nothing.

Or any number of other responses but give the child an opportunity to explain his situation. Hear him out, take what he says into consideration. Try to hear the real message behind each message.

Listen to the whole message. How was his tone of voice? Did he sound sure of himself or unsure? Could he look you in the eye? How genuine or honest would you consider his message to be? Was his tone of voice, his facial expression and his words compatible? Do you have any reason to doubt his story? Did he speak faster than normal? Was his tone of voice convincing, did his face show surprise or perhaps confusion? Did he try to get you off the subject? Was he trying to defend himself very strongly?

Your possible answer could be: "You're really afraid I'd think that stuff was yours, and it is difficult for you to say from where it came?" A possible answer from him could be:

"Ma, you know I'd never do a thing like that, and I really don't know where it came from" "Ma, you can come and check me out, there is nothing like that stuff with me."

With the written word here it is difficult to indicate the fine nuances for which one can listen. The above ideas could help if applied.

What is still important, is that one should not jump to conclusions. Each message must be heard in it's own right, and only the complete "picture" /message of what you have heard and observed, must be referred back to him. Your purpose is to hear his message, to try to understand it, and to refer that understanding back to the child. To this he can answer again, and by listening and observing carefully, you refer your understanding of his message back to him. Once you understand each other the next step is often clear.

If however, you feel he is really trying to tell you lies, you can confront him by saying something similar to this example: "I really feel confused, because I hear your words saying that you know nothing about this stuff, but your attitude and tone of voice are giving me a different message. Now I don't know what to believe, and it is a big problem to me, as I would really like to be able to believe you, without a doubt". Listen to his answer.

Try calmly, to determine for what period the child has been taking drugs, and if so, which drug, and how many drugs, one or more. Does he feel addicted?

Would he like to stop? What are his fears about stopping? Listen carefully, and acknowledge his feelings. Would he be prepared to make a decision to stop taking drugs? Listen carefully again and acknowledge his consideration and his feelings.

If he is unwilling to stop, complete the conversation by letting him know that you care, and that you are there for him, to support him, and that you would like only the best future for him (if necessary, say that you are not prepared to pay to supply his habit as it would not be helping him to have a better future).

You can bring up this conversation again in a day or so "Peter, do you remember when we were talking about drugs yesterday, you didn't feel ready then to stop taking drugs.?" Let him answer and listen well to his thoughts and feelings. Which way is it going?

If again no, say you are interested in his well-being but you don't want to nag. Invite him once more to come to you if he at any time is more prepared to come off drugs. If irritated, or if he feels you are nagging, listen to his feelings of being pressured or nagged, and acknowledge them to him. Then repeat that you don't want to nag, but would it be O.K. to speak to him again in about a week's time, because it is of great importance to you that he have a good future?

Find an opportunity to talk to him about his future. Make it positive. Relate to things you know about him and his dreams for his future. Find an opportune moment when you can appreciate him again, and tell him how important he is to you and what he means to you. Do

this often, but don't overdo it. It must be genuine, not a new tool with which to manipulate him.

"What people coming off drugs need most is someone who will stand by them, care for them and believe that one day they will stop. That's how it was for me, my family was wonderfully supportive, and now I've stopped!" Natasha, aged 25

If he is willing to stop, find a time, if not now, to discuss his strategy with him.

Does he want to go off cold turkey (an abrupt change with the resultant withdrawal symptoms)? This may need the supervision of a professional, but is not necessary if the child is not a heavy user, and particularly if only recently on small quantities.

Does he want to diminish his present usage so that he develops either few or no withdrawal symptoms?

How long does he want to take for this phase? What safeguards is he going to build in to his day so that he makes sure he sticks to his drug withdrawal plans? How can you assist?

Has he got a slogan that he can use to reaffirm his decision to withdraw from drugs, to say to himself, or to anyone wanting to sell him any drugs? eg. "It's my life, I don't need to waste it!" or "I won't let anyone or anything destroy my life!" "I just say No, that's it!" "I don't need drugs in MY life!" "I know about drugs, and I choose NOT to use them!" etc. (other suggestions elsewhere, but let him create his own, he is more likely to stick to it).

What additional support does he need to stay off the drugs? Does he have a special need in terms of supportive action from you? eg. could you assist him visualise new goals, new activities, new places to make friends? How, and what changes is he going to make to his lifestyle which will break his contact with his drug taking friends, and help to fill his life with meaning, friends and with activity. Any of these suggestions above may require of him to change or to add to them at any time. They can be written down.

Be supportive and appreciative in particular of the positive steps he takes to move away from drugs, no matter how small. As one parent put it: "I celebrate each day he stays off drugs. Each day free of drugs is like putting a candle on a cake to celebrate another day of his life!"

Acknowledge the effort he is taking to get off drugs and say how proud that makes you of him.

Let him feel welcome to come back to you about any new successes, eg. he could find an ecstasy tablet lying on the ground at his feet on the

street, and have the will power to crush it with his foot into nothingness into the dust!

See the section, "Reasons teenagers give for taking illicit drugs" as well as "How to help prevent a relapse".

The child who is into drugs, wants to, and should decide about his own future. There are various factors playing a role in his making the choice to kick the habit. His relationship with someone who matters to him, and to whom he is important; the dreams he previously held of his future (in which you also played a part); his discovery of his personal dignity and worthiness; a new relationship with God; his vision of a new future for himself, and his will to survive, will all play a part. These will make a difference. The use of force won't help.

Don'ts

Don't act in anger.

Don't blame your child's friends or other persons (or yourself) for your child's problems. He made his own choices.

Don't at first try to find out where he got the drugs. Concentrate on the fact that he is in trouble and needs assistance. Later you can try to discover the source.

Don't accept promises to stop.

Don't preach, judge, criticise, blame, punish or throw him out of the house.

Don't try to solve his problems for him.

Don't demand that he stop because you say so.

Don't increase his feelings of guilt with the age old game of "How could you have done this to me!" It will only make matters worse.

Don't lapse into self-pity.

Don't launch into lectures on the melodramatic dangers of drugs and of hell fire. It will have no effect.

Don't say he doesn't deserve treatment because his condition is self-inflicted. Many other conditions exist which are also self-inflicted for which treatment is given. For example, lung cancer as a result of smoking, a broken bone after having fallen on a cliff whilst mountaineering, etc.

Don't take threats to commit suicide, lightly. Listen to him, be near him, stay with him. Assess the danger. How were you told about his wish to

end his life? Did any ideas or reasons of depression surface? Inform a doctor or therapist, get further advice. Continue to be by him or near him if possible, until the feeling lifts. Feelings do change. If the threat remains serious, get help. Make sure there are no implements around with which he could injure himself eg. razor blades, tablets, rope, gun, etc. The fact that you spend time with him is proof of his value to you. Be there for him, but not because you are feeling guilty. It was not your choice. He has to take responsibility for his choices, but you can assist and support.

If he goes through withdrawal symptoms you may need to be prepared. Know what to expect.

How to avoid a relapse

Sometimes someone who has left off taking drugs, has a relapse. A relapse is not the end, it can always be overcome again.

However, drug abusers who have become abstainers, remain under a lifelong threat of a relapse. They must make the choice to absolutely avoid drugs for ever!

Parents must be very aware of the needs of a child who has recently returned home from a rehabilitation centre. This is a crucial time. All too often those who fall back, do so within the first few days or weeks at home. Consult his therapist for guidelines on how best to support him from the start.

See it through your child's eyes. He comes back home, possibly feeling fragile, unworthy, guilty and unsure of his welcome – also in regard to his brothers and sisters. The past hangs over him and over his relationships like a dark cloud. This is when parent/s must take action and welcome him back like the prodigal son, regardless of the past. Celebrate with joy, his return, and continue to do so over the days, weeks, months, and years that follow.

Inactivity and loneliness, or if he feels that his parents are just tolerating him out of a sense of duty, make it more likely for him to land back in the drug trap. He has the right to be busy, and to be with others who accept him and consider him "normal". Parents and child together will have to look for a solution to his dilemma of being inactive, possibly without friends and without income. It must be a solution with which they can all feel happy. Refer freely to his therapist for guidance in this regard.

Someone who has just come off of drugs, has received/chosen a new future. He must apply himself to develop his future, and his parents must be involved. He also needs the support of the rest of his family. All this support may be the determining factor that keeps him permanently off drugs.

He must begin to dream again. He must dream of a future that is calling him, that has good things to offer him, and that will receive him as it will any other person and put his past aside. The role of his parent in revealing the future to him is discussed under the topic "What you can do as a family to keep your children out of drugs" elsewhere in this CD.

A new relationship must be built between parents and children, one in which there is plenty of forgiveness on both sides for painful things that happened between them in the past. This would mean eg. no reproach or accusations, not even referral to unpleasant incidents. Nothing like: "I wish I still had that pendant with the flower on it that you stole for your bloody drugs!" Or: "You and your mood swings. You're still just as irresponsible as ever." Give your child a clean page, let him begin over, without rubbing salt in his wounds.

SUPPORT

A new Drug Support group, The DRUG STOP ACTION GROUP (DSAG) has been brought about by a group of committed pastors, ministers and interdenominational Christians.

If you need help, please call the chairperson, GEORGE PAPPAS, on 083 458 2238.