

DARE

REDUCING THE HARM

PARENT/CAREGIVER WORKBOOK

An Action Plan to help Secondary Schools
and their Communities Reduce Illicit Drug Harm



**THE DARE
FOUNDATION**
SKILLS FOR LIFE

Introduction

Adolescence is a time for experimentation, exploration, curiosity and a search for identity. This search often involves some risk taking, part of which may involve the use of drugs. Most young people who experiment with drugs do not, however, continue to use them or develop significant problems with them. Often young people use drugs as a solution to problems that they have. They use drugs because of the positive things that they think the drugs will do for them. They don't always think about the negative consequences. Some reasons young people have given for their use of drugs include because they are bored or curious, they want to feel good or better, to be rebellious, to be accepted by their peers or for physical reasons such as to sleep or stay awake, or to relieve pain.

Parents and caregivers should not panic and think the worst if they find their child has been using drugs. It does not necessarily mean that the young person has a drug problem. Nor should they be treated as a criminal. What is important is to build trust within your family, have open lines of communication and to set firm but fair guidelines about drug use as a family, with clear consequences for any family member who breaches these.

What are Drugs?

A drug can be defined as any chemical substance that alters the way a person's body or mind works. This excludes food, water and oxygen needed to maintain normal health. Drugs can be both beneficial and harmful.

Almost everyone takes some drugs. A lot of people depend on taking drugs to keep healthy, but drugs can be harmful if misused.

Because misusing drugs can be harmful, laws have been passed restricting their manufacture, distribution or use.

The above definition was based on material from The Centre for Education and Information on Drugs and Alcohol, New South Wales, Australia.

What is My Stand on Drugs?

Put a mark on each line to indicate your level of agreement with the statement given.

1. It is okay for teenagers of any age to drink alcohol when they are out with friends.

Strongly agree *Strongly disagree*
2. The best way to deal with a headache is to take a painkiller.

Strongly agree *Strongly disagree*
3. All the hype about methamphetamine in the media just excites young people's interest.

Strongly agree *Strongly disagree*
4. The drinking age should be lowered to 16.

Strongly agree *Strongly disagree*
5. The law should be changed to allow people to take cannabis for medicinal purposes.

Strongly agree *Strongly disagree*
6. Teenagers will use party drugs like ecstasy anyway, so we might as well tell them how to do it with the least risk.

Strongly agree *Strongly disagree*
7. It's okay for parents to provide alcohol for a teenage party.

Strongly agree *Strongly disagree*
8. It is important to help young people have natural highs so they don't need to resort to drugs.

Strongly agree *Strongly disagree*
9. It is only young people with social problems who turn to drugs.

Strongly agree *Strongly disagree*
10. If a parent drinks alcohol it has no effect on their child's drug use behaviour.

Strongly agree *Strongly disagree*
11. Smoking and drinking on popular TV shows does affect young people's attitudes to drugs.

Strongly agree *Strongly disagree*

Signs *and Symptoms*

Some of the signs and symptoms listed here are quite normal behaviour for young people and need not be related to drug use. Experts working in the drug field say that parents and caregivers should be concerned if their child shows a **sudden change to quite uncharacteristic behaviour or moods.**

Possible behavioural signs and symptoms of general drug use.

- Personality changes (moodiness, bursts of anger, withdrawn)
- Get frustrated quickly (restless, agitated, aggressive)
- Not reliable
- Behave in an unexpected way
- Cancelled appointments
- Blaming others
- Secrecy
- Lying
- Missing meals or other family activities
- Attitudes to things change
- Absence from schools, especially after a weekend
- Wagging during school hours
- Less respect for authority than usual
- Sudden changes in school interest and achievement
- Lack of interest in sport and other activities
- Altered or delayed emotional development
- Lack of energy or drive
- An inability to get out of bed in the morning
- Not up front about friends and where they have been
- A sudden change in friends
- Money of other family members starts disappearing
- Can't explain how they have spent their money
- Unexplained frequent illness (colds, 'flu)
- Can't concentrate for long
- Less aware or has less common sense (especially while intoxicated)
- Very long periods without sleep
- Bruises (due to nutritional deficits or accidents while intoxicated)
- Abrasions (due to accidents)
- Unkempt appearance
- Acne of the face
- General tiredness and listlessness
- Staggering walk (intoxicated)
- Slurred speech (intoxicated)

Family

Risk Factors

(Material taken from a presentation by Dr Stephen Rollin, EdD Professor of Psychological Services in Education at Florida State University)

Parents use or misuse drugs, especially alcohol and cigarettes.

Older brothers or sisters, especially brothers, use drugs.

Parents seem not to mind if their young people use drugs.

The family doesn't listen to each and often shouts.

Young people are disciplined very harshly or not consistently.

Parents don't often praise their children for good behaviour.

Lack of warmth and support within the family.

Young person is not invited to be part of family tasks, decisions or activities.

Parents want their children to achieve unrealistic things.

Don't expect the young person to do well at school.

One parent is very close to the young person and one is distant.

Parents don't notice how the young person is behaving.

Poor maternal-child relationships, such as a cold, unresponsive under protective mother.

Lots of family arguments.

Physical abuse and/or neglect.

If a number of these factors are present in the family, the young people are more likely to misuse drugs.

Family

Protective Factors

(Material taken from a presentation by Dr Stephen Rollin, EdD Professor of Psychological Services in Education at Florida State University)

A warm, happy home between ages 1-5 years.

Parents know, and check, where their children are and who they are with.

Family members talk and listen to each other.

Clear behaviour guidelines are set and young people know what will happen if they break them.

Often praise good behaviour and hardly ever criticise behaviour.

Parents expect their young person to do well.

Quality time for shared family activities.

Enough money.

Parents model sensible use of legal drugs and non-use of illicit drugs.

Knowing what your children like to do in their spare time.

Knowing your child's friends.

Telling your young people about dangers of underage drinking, drugs and other harmful substances.

Teaching your children right from wrong and always doing the right thing yourself.

If a number of these factors are present in the family, the young people are less likely to misuse drugs.

Making *a Change*

Risk Factor

Scenario

Behaviours that contribute to the risk factor

You might:



How this makes you feel

Your son/daughter might:



How this makes your son/daughter feel

How could you handle the situation positively?

You could:



**How this makes you feel
your son/daughter feel**

How this makes

What protective factor/s have I just put in place?

How can I make sure I behave this way next time?

Something

to Think About

If the teacher arrives late for class they are teaching students that lateness is okay.

If a parent drives after drinking their children probably will too.

If a teacher takes three weeks to get an assignment back, they are teaching that there is no rush to get things in.

If you get your child to refill your glass or open the bottle don't be surprised if they grow up with alcohol as an important part of their lives.

If rugby players are violent on the field does this make it acceptable?

REDUCING THE HARM
TO MAKE A CHOICE
TO BE YOUR
TĒNĀ KŌWHIRIA
TO SUPPORT YOUR KIDS