



Falling Through the Cracks

Victoria's Story

As Ms. Allen walked into the school building for the first day of classes, she felt a rush of adrenaline. It was her first day as the new guidance counselor, and she was so excited to begin her career. She figured it would be an easy job as many of the students came from affluent families and she'd be busy helping them choose between colleges and prepare for SATs. Weeks had gone by, and for the most part, all of her students had all been welcoming and receptive to her help...that is, until Victoria walked through her office door.

Victoria looked like a complete zombie. Her hair was unwashed, she had large, dark bags under her eyes, and she walked as if in a haze. After looking in her file, Ms. Allen noticed that Victoria's grades had once been almost perfect when she was a freshman and sophomore, but now she was practically failing every class. Ms. Allen thought she smelled marijuana on Victoria's clothes and had to report it to the principal after their meeting was finished.

The police dogs found a large bag of marijuana in her locker, as well as Vicodin and some syringes. As Ms. Allen sat in the background while the police questioned Victoria, her parents, and the principal, she could only wonder to herself, "What happened to this girl to make her go down this path? She used to be such a good student with such a bright future." Her parents only seemed annoyed that Victoria had caused them to miss work, and her father barely put down his phone the entire time. Before she could stop herself, Ms. Allen blurted out, "Did you two ever talk about the dangers of drugs to Victoria? Do you even care?"

Victoria's mother coldly responded, "Of course we didn't. We're not the sort of people who do drugs."

Perhaps if they had warned Victoria of the dangers of drugs and actually were concerned with what was going on in her life, her whole future could've been different. Instead of going to college, Victoria was going to jail.

Test Yourself

See how prepared you are to give your teen the tools for success against drugs!

1. It's all right to follow the "Do as I say but not as I do" motto when it comes to teaching teens about drug use.
a. True b. False
2. There are plenty of ways to have a fun and fulfilling life without ever using drugs.
a. True b. False
3. Which of the following is an inhalant?
a. Cocaine b. Marijuana
c. Aerosol d. Barbiturate
4. Which of the following is NOT a behavioral change that could indicate drug use?
a. Mood Swings b. Irritability
c. Slurred Speech d. Unusual hyperactivity
e. None of the above
5. All drugs are illegal.
a. True b. False

Answers: 1. b, 2. a, 3. c, 4. e, 5. b



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HOW TO KEEP KIDS DRUG FREE



Talk to Your Teen!

What Can I Do?

It can often feel overwhelming to teach kids and teens the importance of staying away from drugs, whether you're a parent, teacher, or just an adult in their life. You may think that your child would never be pressured to try drugs, especially "hard" drugs like cocaine or heroin. However, prescription drugs are becoming the most commonly abused drugs, practically to the point of being an epidemic. Marijuana is also becoming more socially accepted, even though it's commonly associated with being a gateway drug. It's your job, therefore, to educate your teens on the true hazards of all types of drugs and to give them the tools to say, "NO!"

Know Your Stuff

Types of Drugs

See below for different types of drugs as well as various examples.

Cannabinoids: Hash, Marijuana

Depressants: Alcohol, Benzodiazepines, Barbiturates, Rohypnol, GHB

Inhalants: Adhesives, Solvents, Aerosols Sprays, Medical Gases, Nitrous Oxide

Hallucinogens: Ketamine, LSD, PCP, Mescaline, Mushrooms

Anabolic Steroids: Anadrol, Depo-Testosterone, Equipoise

Stimulants: Cocaine/Crack, Amphetamines, Methamphetamine, MDMA, Nicotine, Ritalin

Narcotics/Opiates: Heroin, Morphine, Prescription Painkillers, Analgesics

Over the Counter Drugs: DXM, Meclizine, Caffeine Pills

Not all drugs are illegal, but they can all be dangerous or even deadly if abused. It's important to know what kind of drugs are out there, so you can help your teen be prepared to make smart choices and to say, "No."



Tips for Keeping Kids Drug Free

- Establish a two-way dialogue with your children about drugs, whether you've used drugs in the past or not. Don't just talk at or lecture them. Let them ask questions, and keep the conversation open and honest.
- Be involved in their day to day activities and lives and have a sincere interest in what's going on in their lives. Ask your teen questions that go beyond "how was your day?"
- Know the facts about drug abuse and discuss them with your children. Since teens tend to already believe their parents are over-exaggerating, try your best to remain objective and factual when discussing the consequences.
- Reduce availability. Lock your prescription and over-the-counter drugs away, and keep an idea of how much aerosol sprays you have.
- Do not joke about drug abuse or drug users. Drug use is a serious issue, and it should not be taken lightly by your children or you.
- Make note of physical or behavioral changes in your teen like mood swings, irritability, unusually hyperactivity, or severe depression. Also keep an eye out for physical evidence like drug paraphernalia, smell of tobacco or marijuana on clothing on your teen's clothes or breath, and small bags of white powder or green herbs.



Fun and Healthy Alternatives

Some people believe that they can't have fun without drugs, and that living sober must be miserable and boring. However, the truth is that there are millions of ways to have fun and still be drug free. Here are some suggestions and activities you can encourage your teen to try:

- Make others laugh. If your teen thinks they're funny while they're high, encourage them to try making others laugh by telling jokes or playing pranks without drugs.
- Listen to music or play an instrument. Many people that once found solace in drugs will appreciate how music can make them feel, even when they're sober. Whether it's listening to a small local band, going to a big concert, or playing their own guitar, music is a great way for teens to have fun without drugs or alcohol.
- Learn to bake or cook. Give your teen the creative freedom to experiment with different ingredients and recipes.
- Volunteer in the community. Some of the happiest people in the world are those who donate their time, not just their money, to their communities. Go spend time at the animal shelter or hospital, or spend your afternoon cleaning up your local park. Doing something will give your teen a sense of accomplishment that no drug could ever give them.
- Have a movie marathon. Whether your teen enjoys funny or scary movies, let them have a marathon with their friends.
- Exercise. Want to feel naturally high? Endorphins, which are released during exercise, are often described as "feel-good" chemicals in the brain, and they're natural pain-killers. So lift weights, run, or ride your bike to get those endorphins going!