

## Manitoba Addictions Awareness Week

### Take the Road to Effective Communication with Your Kids.....

#### Need Help on Navigating Unfamiliar Roads?

#### Making decisions on drugs: Strategies for parents and kids.

##### ⇒ Lead by Example

Show self-respect in taking care of your health, and in your use of leisure time and drugs, especially alcohol. Discuss your own challenges and struggles to make healthy choices. Self-respect is closely tied to life skills. The more skills we have to handle life's challenges, the greater our self-esteem.

##### ⇒ Communicate

Talk with your kids, not at them. Talk honestly and openly, encourage them to express their views, and actively listen.

##### ⇒ Get the Facts

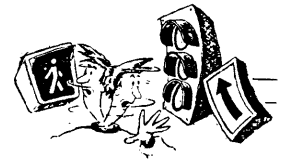
Get accurate, current facts on drugs and objectively help your kids understand them. Don't bluff or employ scare tactics. Learn from the experiences of other parents by talking to them and by reading.

##### ⇒ Express Values

Help your kids make sense of lifestyles that they see on television, and on the news, and the community. Discuss the meaningful, realistic and important values that you share.

##### ⇒ Make Choices

Give them the chance to make choices suitable to their age level, and let them know it's normal to have problems, and make choices to solve them. Ensure that they consider the consequences of their choices.



##### ⇒ Focus on Learning

Help your children develop learning skills so they can apply their successes and failures to new goals that are neither too tough, nor too easy. Be an active learner yourself, and avoid acting like you know all there is to know. Where you can, work to find answers together.

##### ⇒ Make Rules

Establish clear, reasonable, and safe rules in consultation with your kids, follow up on them, and be ready to overhaul the rules as your children mature. Be clear and allow logical and natural consequences of both appropriate and inappropriate behaviour to occur.

##### ⇒ Be There

Encourage and participate in a variety of activities with them, and help them reflect on their learning experiences, difficulties and achievements, and benefits. Positive reinforcement is always good practice.

##### ⇒ Be Reasonable

Put yourself in your kids' shoes when dealing with them. Remember how you felt back when you were in their position. This could allow you insight on their behaviour and feelings and enable you to address the issue reasonably.

## Road to Effective Communication with Your Kids.....

### CROSSROADS: Approach with Caution

While illegal drug use cannot be condoned, curiosity and risk-taking are part of development, and may lead young people to experiment with drugs. If your child becomes involved, your reaction is important. Merely riding out the drug use is no help, nor is exiting from your child's life.

How can you tell if your kids may be harmfully involved with other drugs? No one symptom is conclusive, but several can start the red lights flashing. You should be careful here, as each of them may indicate other, non-drug problems common to teenagers.

If you detect a number of signs, you should discuss your concern with your son or daughter. This meets the issue head-on, and can increase the chances of resolving the situation.

### WARNING SIGNS: Pay Attention

- √ Changes in school performance
  - lower grades, frequent tardiness and absenteeism, falling asleep in class, and discipline problems.
- √ Changes in physical appearance
  - red eyes, less cleanliness, and general deterioration.
- √ Changes in eating or sleeping habits
  - insomnia, napping at inappropriate times, weight loss, or sudden increase or decrease in appetite.
- √ Changes in friends
  - new or different friends who are very different in appearance, behaviour, and goals.
- √ Changes in behaviour
  - moodiness, depression, hostility, hypersensitivity, loss of interest in previous hobbies and activities; familiarity with drug culture and hangouts, and lying.
- √ Finding drug paraphernalia (e.g. hash pipes, burnt knives, syringes), strange odours, or cover-up odours.



### BUMPY ROADS: Dealing with Problems

If you become aware of drug use, stop and think carefully. How you react and deal with it is very important. Consider these steps.

#### Prepare your approach

Plan your discussion and wait until you are calm, and for an appropriate moment to do so. If your teen is under the influence, it's best to wait until the effects wear off.

#### Address the problem

Begin by calmly, but firmly expressing your awareness of the drug use and your concern. Ask how your teen feels about it. Reject the behaviour, not the child. Deal with the real point of the conflict.



#### Respect the consequences

If the established rules have been violated, proceed with the prearranged consequences or allow natural consequences to happen. Ensure that the consequences are logically linked to drug use.

Choices made with knowledge of the consequences pave the way to responsibility. Seeing that kids should be held responsible for their actions, they should justify any unauthorized absences from school or poor grades; pay or work off their own debts, and otherwise make good any loss that they caused, to the extent possible.

