

Parenting

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For Colorado Parents

Media Education Can Be A Powerful Prevention Tool

By Olivia Frazee

Popular culture and the media play powerful roles in young people's lives. Through movies, television, advertisements, and other mediums, children are exposed to a wide range of messages about tobacco use.

Tobacco advertising increases young people's risk of smoking by using themes that appeal to them, such as fun times, action, and being popular and

good-looking. What's usually missing from these messages, however, are the life-threatening risks associated with tobacco use. That's where media education can be an important tool to help prevent tobacco use.

Through media education, children can learn to view media messages more critically and understand how and

why those messages are created.

Once children can see that media messages are created to get them to buy a certain product or think a certain way, they become more critical of the messages they see and hear. It has been shown that children are less likely to be influenced by media messages if they have developed skills to debate and reject such messages. These skills can help them resist the temptation to become tobacco users.



Serious About Drugs

Inhalants are chemicals that can be breathed in. Most of these drugs depress the nervous system, causing effects much like alcohol's. They can include aerosols like hair spray, gases like nitrous oxide, solvents like glue, or any other chemicals that can be inhaled. Since most inhalants depress the nervous system, excitement, light-headedness, numbness, and temporary sensations of well-being often accompany their use. In addition, the alcohol-like effects include a loss of inhibitions, slurred speech, lack of coordination, weakness, giddiness, and slowed reflexes.

Some inhalants cause pseudohallucinations, which are distortions of sensory perception during which the user is still able to distinguish fantasy from reality. Some solvents, however, cause genuine hallucinations in which the user cannot tell fantasy from reality. Users may have delusions of grandeur and indulge in reckless behavior, yet suffer from exaggerated fear and anxiety. Using inhalants for any extended period of time can cause brain damage, weight loss, tremors, depression, chromosomal abnormalities, paranoia, poor memory and coordination,

liver and lung damage. Some of these effects are reversible, but others can cause permanent damage. Long-term effects of inhalant use can include brain damage, chromosomal abnormalities, confusion, depression, fatigue, hostility, irritability, kidney damage, liver damage, lung damage, mood swings, pale skin tone, paranoia, poor coordination, poor memory, tremors and weight loss. If you or someone you know is using inhalants, it's time to stop and get help! Start with your family doctor, your local mental health center, or the phone book. Look for listings like "drug abuse."



**Focus on...
Inhalants**

Recipe for Making a Successful Youth

1. Take one boy or girl in elementary school (or perhaps younger):

2. Add one or more of the following:

- swift and consistent discipline
- positive parental involvement
- quality monitoring and supervision of activities
- positive family communication
- clear family boundaries and expectations

3. Let simmer for a few years with the following interventions:

- teaching the child academic and social skills
- parent-training
- counseling

4. In late elementary or junior high years, check to be sure that:

- the child is succeeding in school
- the child is experiencing acceptance by peers

5. Let simmer just a little longer to give time for child to join a peer

group that will provide:

- friendship
- support
- safe fun

6. In late high school years, check to be sure that the child exhibits the following characteristics and values:

- Honesty
- Integrity



- Responsibility
- Resistance skills/Personal Restraint
- Interpersonal competence
- Cultural competence
- High Self-esteem
- Peaceful conflict resolution
- Positive view of personal future

7. If you have followed all the steps, you can help your child avoid all of the following problems in adulthood:

- School dropout
- Substance abuse/alcoholism
- Employment problems
- Marital difficulties/divorce
- Multiple offenses
- Jail or prison sentences
- Institutionalization
- Physical and/or psychiatric illnesses
- Need for welfare services

Middle Schoolers Especially Need Your Involvement

By Olivia Frazee

Although middle schoolers often complain about their parents, the truth is that they really need and want their parents' involvement and support. So here is a list of some things parents can do to support middle-schoolers.

1. Tell your child often you care about her education.

2. Let him know you expect him to do well.

3. Find out about homework, discipline, and other school policies and rules.

4. Keep up-to-date with your child's school-work.

5. Talk with your child about school on a regular basis.

6. Know your child's school schedule.

7. Be aware of what your middle schooler is learning.

8. Listen to your child's concerns and help him through them.

9. Stay in contact with teachers and others at school.

10. Limit your child's television and telephone time.

11. Provide adequate after-school supervision.

12. Promote good study habits.

Keeping up with your child's schoolwork tells her that you care about her future. A parent's involvement in school activities is a great confidence booster for kids and it will show.

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Questions or comments?
Call us at (800) 457-2736

Drugs and Your Kids

What Parents Should Say and Do From Infancy to Adolescence



Infants and Toddlers

Even before you can talk to your kids about drugs, you can begin to build a strong, trusting relationship that will help smooth the way for communication in the future. As soon as your child can move around, consistent discipline (not punishment) is important. The first time she unrolls the toilet paper, firmly say, "No. Let's go find something else to play with." The second time, say "No" again, then move her away from the temptation. Teach her to take turns with a sibling, or to wait if you're busy. These skills are the building blocks of problem-solving and self-control in adulthood.



Preschoolers

Although it's too early to talk in detail about drugs, you can still say that smoking is bad for people. It is important, however, to make sure your child knows which substances in the house to stay away from such as household chemicals. And then you should tell kids what they can do to stay healthy, such as eating balanced meals and getting enough exercise as well as sleep. It is essential for you to be a good role model of these behaviors because kids at this age learn mostly by imitating the people around them.

Ages 6-9

Begin to talk specifically about drugs and their consequences in a way your child understands. For instance, explain that the reason Uncle Jim is out of breath when he walks up the stairs is because he smokes cigarettes. Encourage your child to ask questions, so you can find out what he really wants to know. It's very important that your child knows that it's always okay to ask you questions about drugs and alcohol.

By Nancy W. Hall

Ages 10-13

Adolescence is a critical time. Unfortunately, 70 percent of adolescents believe that marijuana isn't that risky, according to a University of Michigan survey. So it's crucial that you deliver an unequivocal "no use" message in the context of how much you care for your child: "I love you, and I'm concerned that you may be exposed to drugs as you get older. I want you to know that it is never okay with me for you to use drugs."

Be willing to be the bad guy: Kids are often secretly relieved and comforted by being able to say, "I can't. My parents find out everything. They'll kill me if they catch me smoking." Giving kids an easy way to say no means that they'll do it more often.



Smoke-Free--The New EVOLUTION

By Tracy Weidel, 8th grade student at Conrad Ball Middle School, Loveland, CO

Being cool is living your life to your full potential," the four members of the R&B singing group, Boyz II Men, confess. "The way we see it, becoming ill or risking an early death from cigarette smoking is the farthest thing from cool." Boyz II Men, in conjunction with the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) are taking part in a smoking-free campaign to encourage youth to steer away from smoking, or to quit smoking.

Nearly four million adolescents smoke cigarettes in the United States alone. According to the CDC, 6,000 young people try a cigarette each day. More than 3,000 of these adolescents eventually become regular smokers--

that's more than one million new smokers a year!



"...Singing is so important for us. We couldn't do what we do if we smoked." The members of Boyz II Men claim that they don't and never have.

"Once you start smoking, quitting can be a challenge." How true! Seventy-five percent of the people that were daily smokers in high school who planned to quit smoking were still smoking five or six years later.

Peer pressure, though common, is not the only cause of teen smoking. Cigarette and tobacco products are among the most heavily advertised and pro-

moted products in the United States. Tobacco companies spent an estimated \$5 billion (that's more than \$13 million a day) to promote and advertise cigarettes in 1994 alone. Teen smokers are three times as likely as nonsmokers to use alcohol, eight times as likely to use marijuana, and 22 times as likely to use cocaine. Boyz II Men believe that "teens who smoke risk missing out on a full, healthy, and productive life."

While smoking may seem cool now, you will surely regret it later in life. So listen to the advice of Boyz II Men--focus your energy towards something you want to be successful at and use common sense. You can achieve anything--all you need is a little confidence and a lot of hard work...you definitely do not need cigarettes.

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