

The Truth About Drugs

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Ten point plan for the Government - extract from book The Truth about Drugs

1. Toughen penalties against all those making profits from drug trade

There should be tough penalties against all those making profits from the drugs trade. While it is true that law enforcement against producers and traffickers has only a marginal effect on total availability, it is important that a powerful message is sent out from every government in the world that drug profiteering is an international crime that will be severely punished. This also reinforces a prevention message. Every time the media reports another seizure of cocaine, heroin or LSD it reinforces the public perception that involvement in the drugs business is a crime of which almost the whole world disapproves. Fortunately, there is close agreement on these principles in almost all countries.

Further investment in intelligence / arrests

Border controls are the weakest form of law enforcement on drug traffickers because the volumes of traded goods are now so overwhelming. The future lies in highly sophisticated intelligence gathering and this is where money should be spent. Every trick learned in cold war espionage needs to be used, including covert surveillance, infiltration and sting operations where government agencies run groups who look to buy large amounts of drugs and capture whole networks. These operations by definition will invade privacy and personal freedoms, but are essential if the war against drugs is to be waged as effectively as possible.

Further international co-operation

Drugs operations at present are severely hampered by lack of international co-operation. One reason for this, as in every other area of intelligence work, is trust. Even within nations different agencies are often extremely reluctant to work together. As a result operation after operation is all but destroyed. For example, British intelligence may hear that a container lorry full of Marijuana is due to arrive on the Eurotunnel shuttle in three days time. They would be foolish to intercept it on arrival. The aim is always to observe and follow, leaving interception as late as possible so an entire drugs ring can be smashed.

All too often trigger-happy police forces have got wind of the deal and swooped in, either in France or in Britain. Their reward was high profile publicity from a big haul, but at the same time their haste blew months or even years of undercover work, and may even have exposed an agent on the inside.

Then there is inter-agency competition. Intense rivalry damages drugs operations. Agencies are too secretive, too slow to ask for help. An example might be a surveillance operation run by a drugs squad, which is spiralling upwards into a highly complex operation requiring ten times as many observers. Instead of calling in the intelligence services, the chiefs decide to make arrests, and boost their own success ratings. All these issues need sorting out urgently. Leak-proof co-operation is vital at every level.

Crop destruction also requires international co-operation, between producing nations and nations which have the intelligence including satellite data, the equipment, personnel and the funding to deal with it.

New funding for replacement industries / crops in emerging economies

Crop destruction programmes are necessary and should be expanded with extensions of the certification process for countries agreeing to cooperate. As many nations as possible should agree sanctions against countries which are known to be major production sources, and where the government is taking little or no action to deal with the situation.

However such programmes will fail unless coupled with crop replacement programs and development funding for new industries. If a subsistence farmer can quadruple his annual income growing poppies it's no good destroying the poppies and telling him to grow wheat or rice instead. However subsidies are expensive and further distort the local economy. For example some farmers who might have drifted away from the land to seek work in the cities may, with subsidies, decide to stay where they can grow crops the market does not need at grossly inflated prices.

2. Schools and parents - new campaign Prevention in schools - new campaigns

Spending on drugs prevention in schools is one of the most effective things a government can do. After all, there is no other place in society where you can have a captive and well organised audience. Only some go on to college and adults are notoriously difficult to reach en masse with face to face prevention programs. The teenage years are the risk years so schools programs also get the most intensive efforts where they are most urgently needed.

The emphasis on use of illegal drugs in schools must be broadened to deal more fully with alcohol. It requires a separate educational approach - more available, widely used by parents, legal over 18, widely advertised and big funder of sport.

Normalizing abstinence

The most important part of any schools prevention programme is normalising abstinence: helping pupils understand that when they say no to all illegal drugs, they are in the large majority. This is the best way of all to reduce peer pressure, because it deals with the lie that they are being left out.

Assertiveness training

Assertiveness training very important, helping pupils stand up for their own values without feeling intimidated. Skills they learn here will help them throughout their lives, whether in the

workplace, or when facing other pressures at school, for example to have sex before they want to or to do things that risk getting them into trouble.

Building self-confidence and self-worth

Building self-confidence and self-worth helps strike a blow at one of the most common reasons why teenagers land up doing things they know they don't really want to. It helps pupils overcome some of the normal adolescent insecurities.

Severe sanctions for trade / consumption in grounds

Schools need to take a tough anti-drugs stance, making it absolutely clear in their prospectus information that parents and children choosing that school are choosing one with a strong line on drugs.

Schools need to spell out clearly what this means: absolute ban on any illegal drugs in the school grounds and especially in dealing. Severe sanctions for pupils bringing drugs onto the premises or turning up intoxicated from alcohol or illegal drugs including solvents.

Drug testing - random in school

Schools that wish to could go a stage further and create a "drug-free zone", a voluntary contract with pupils, parents and teachers.

This has already been proposed by some in the US, where parents and governors agree and with results being given only to parents of tests taken by their children on a voluntary basis. British independent schools are already testing pupils they suspect of taking drugs, including Eton, St Paul's, Harrow and Rugby. State schools are beginning to follow, including at least one which is experimenting with random testing.

Pupils can be given special privileges if they agree to sign up to a drug-free agreement. Part of the deal is that they agree that hairs can be taken at any time for [drug testing](#), with immediate loss of privileges if the test is positive (indicating use in the last few weeks or months). Special privileges might include permission to go on extra school trips for example.

Fee-paying schools could make it an absolute rule that all pupils test negative throughout their time at school on random testing, as a condition of remaining there. There could be warnings before expulsion.

These measures may seem draconian, but it is a ridiculous situation when many pupils in America are allowed to turn up to classes despite taking drugs on a daily basis, with no action at all being taken. The same pupils would fail routine pre-employment drug tests and would have difficulty getting a job.

Parental education

Parents also need help in how to tackle these issues at home. With drug testing kits for home use becoming widely available many parents will need advice on how to handle a situation where a suspicion has suddenly been confirmed with a test done without the knowledge or consent of the child. Many may argue that it is very unwise to test in such circumstances in the first place. However parents with a wayward twelve year old behaving in a bizarre way may welcome knowing the real reason is Marijuana and cocaine. At least the problem can then be tackled. The only alternative in the face of flat denials is to bury your head in the sand and hope the child, if becoming addicted, will ask for help soon enough.

But testing at home is just one of a bewildering number of issues that parents of teenagers now face in a drugs age.

Your example is important

Example is important. As Edmund Burke once said, "Example is the school of mankind and they will learn at no other." If that is so in general, it is even more so of children.

Getting drunk

Children who see their parents getting drunk cannot be expected to listen to sermons from mum or dad about keeping away from Marijuana or about not getting drunk themselves.

Smoking

Children of smokers are facing an example which is dangerous to their health every hour of every day, not to mention the direct risks as we have seen from passive smoking. Parents who smoke are telling their children that addiction is okay - and actions speak far more powerfully than any words.

Children of smokers are living with addiction every day. Addiction becomes a part of normal, acceptable life. Smoking is okay, and so is alcohol abuse and so is Marijuana and Ecstasy. Prevention is more difficult.

Communication at home

As we have seen, one of the best ways to protect children from addiction is to talk to them. Communication is vital and takes time. The trouble is that many parents only wake up when there is already a problem with deviant behaviour, insolent attitudes and unwillingness to talk. Communication takes time, on a regular basis. Time to listen, time to understand, time to be. Communication problems in teenage years can often be traced to an earlier stage in life.

Parents need help, support and advice on how to prevent communication problems and keep the channels open.

3. Drug-free workplace testing

Legislation should be passed enabling employers to be able to randomly test their staff for drug use without difficulty. It should be law that all workers in occupations where public safety could

be at risk or the safety of others at work are subject to random testing and disciplinary action if testing positive. This will cover a significant element of the workforce. Car mechanics, drivers of cars, lorries, cabs, motorbikes, pilots, surgeons, doctors, dentists and nurses, train drivers, air traffic controllers, assembly line workers, chefs and catering workers are all just a few examples.

Performance

It should be made possible without difficulty to sack a worker who is intoxicated in the workplace on several occasions despite written warnings, on the basis that the person is unable to fulfil their contract of employment in such a condition, and might act in a way which damages the interests of the employer.

4. Child welfare

Many drug users are excellent parents living in fear every day that their children will be taken away. Yet some children are also at great risk, especially where they are young and the only adults in the home are struggling with cocaine or heroin addiction. Punitive measure push problem underground

Child-centred support can have the reverse effect from that intended. Punitive measures just push the problem underground. If mothers think that asking for help will mean their children are taken into care, then they will struggle on against addiction in secret and the children could land up in a far worse position. This is a real dilemma. For the sake of other children in future it may be right therefore to continue to allow a fairly risky situation to continue.

We should also be under no illusions about what happens to many children in care. Far from being in a protective environment, many children land up among many others with severe emotional problems, in situations where those who are younger are corrupted by those who are older. Drug-taking and prostitution among 15 year olds has been the result on several occasions while the scandal of sex abuse by staff has been repeated many times.

Yet young children need monitoring

The answer is to strive in every way possible to keep children with their parents in the community, with every support possible. The key is regular monitoring. There does need to be an understanding that the ultimate sanction will be removal of the children.

One social worker told me recently of a mother who kept her crying baby quiet by breathing out Marijuana smoke over her face as she cradled her in her arms. Abuse - yes. Serious enough to warrant taking her baby away?

Those involved in monitoring children at risk because of addicted adults should have the power to test for drugs and alcohol at any time, if a court decides as an absolute final warning that the children can remain only if the drug user agrees to keep to a rehabilitation programme.

5. Road safety

Expect roadside skin surface testing for illegal drugs to become common by 2005. 25% of all people killed in British road accidents carry traces of drugs, illegal in 8 out of ten cases, the rest are medication.

619 deaths (drivers, riders, passengers, pedestrians)

16% illegal drugs - mainly Marijuana

34% alcohol - 23% over 80mg per 100ml

6% medicinal drugs

284 deaths of drivers alone

18% illegal drugs - mainly Marijuana

30% alcohol - 22% over 80mg per 100ml

4% medicinal drugs

However Marijuana figures represent use up to four weeks previously, not just being "high" at the time of death.

Laws are in place to deal with drivers under the influence of drugs but there are no measures in place to detect them. Yet in Britain there are around 200,000 people addicted to controlled drugs and perhaps a million other users of other substances (excluding alcohol). How many of them drive?

While breath tests for alcohol have been used by police for 30 years there is still no parallel testing in wide use for illegal drugs. To make matters worse, while officers are well trained to recognise classic signs of alcohol intoxication, there is no structured programme of training to help officers recognise drug intoxication. In one recent example a man was stopped by police in Glasgow and breathalysed because of his erratic driving. He tested negative and was allowed to carry on his journey. He was later stopped a second time by other officers for dangerous driving and arrested. A blood test showed that he had been "high" on Marijuana.

Routine drug testing at roadside

In 1995 25% of drivers said that they had drunk alcohol before driving in the last week, while one in 25 said they had driven after drinking more than six units. Statistics show that selective targeting of younger male motorists with random road-side tests will be particularly effective in preventing deaths.

Stiff penalties for drug intoxication at the wheel

Penalties should be severe and consistently applied for drink-driving, with treatment for offenders where alcohol dependency is suspected or proven. In exchange for a shorter spell of disqualification, the offender should be permitted to pay for his or her own treatment programme. There needs to be more education given to help people understand that a given dose of alcohol can result in wide variations in blood levels depending on many different factors.

Lowering of blood alcohol limit to 50mg

The legal limit for alcohol in drivers should be reduced to 50mg for several reasons. Firstly many drivers have impaired reaction times at the level 50-80mg, so the current limit is unsafe. Secondly, people tend to misjudge the limit and so a significant number may be driving with 90-120mg levels. A 50mg level will ensure that even in people who have made a misjudgement, the level they drive at is less dangerous. Thirdly, it sends out a message that society is taking alcohol abuse (drinking and driving is a form of abuse) more seriously, rather than less.

But what about prescribed medicines which can also impair judgment? In Australia a new law has been passed covering "driving while impaired", which also means driving under the influence of medicines. Expect fierce debate over how exactly one decides what the permitted blood levels should be of a wide variety of commonly prescribed substances. However the issue will not go away.

6. Expansion of Residential Treatment Programmes

It is a disgrace that people who have addiction but have had the courage to seek help are being turned away because of the lack of residential rehabilitation units.

New national network

A greatly expanded national network of residential rehab programs is needed now.

Different centres for addiction types

Different kinds of treatment centres are needed to reflect different kinds of addictions and the preferences of people for the type of programs they want. It is unreasonable to expect a high flying city executive with a severe alcohol problem to become an effective community member alongside a majority of crack addicts. Far more effective it will be to bring him into a community of other business people drying out from alcohol.

6b. Compulsory treatment for offenders

There should be more widespread random testing in prisons with rewards for those who stay drug-free. Whole prison wings should be set up as drug free zones with extra privileges for those who live in them. New partnerships should be explored between the prison service and rehabilitation agencies.

Alcohol information and education as well as access to treatment should be available throughout the criminal justice system - from caution to prison. Therefore police, probation officers, magistrates, prison officers and others should all receive training in recognising and managing alcohol-related problems. The same approach should be taken for dependency on illegal drugs.

A condition of parole or probation orders should be agreement to participate in a rehabilitation programme. Exclusion orders should also be used, for example forbidding someone from going near a favourite pub or club.

7. Further investment in harm reduction schemes

Harm reduction schemes save lives and more are needed. America in particular needs to learn from British experience and create a national network of [needle exchange](#) s.

Opiate prescription

Opiate prescribing cuts out the racketeers, destroys drug-related crime and saves lives by providing heroin addicts with a constant source of pure methadone. Clinic access should be improved, especially for those from ethnic minorities who have their own cultural needs.

8. Tighten up laws on selling / promoting smoking / tobacco and alcohol

The licensing laws for sale of tobacco and alcohol need tightening up.

Smoking

Ban on advertising for tobacco

There should be a complete ban on all tobacco advertising in Britain. In practice this will be extremely hard to achieve now that television has become a completely global medium. A few years ago governments were able to regulate what was shown on British television but those days have almost died,

Billboard hoardings, newspapers, magazines and most radio stations are relatively easy to

control and an absolute ban should be implemented on them without delay, as well as on domestic television stations. The difficulty is with satellite TV, which can originate in countries with whom there is no agreement on advertising.

An example is sport. Motor racing takes place in many different countries with relaxed advertising rules. The images are broadcast by a satellite company based in Britain or elsewhere in Europe. But drivers and cars carry banners promoting cigarettes. What is the satellite or cable company to do? The advertising breaks conform to the rules but the actual race coverage does not. The only way to enforce a complete ban therefore is to censor all sports coverage in such situations, clearly unacceptable to most people.

And then many satellite companies are based in one country yet broadcast over a huge footprint from a single transmitter. So 40 million people in China receive Western TV, despite Communist Party policy to ensure that all broadcasts in China conform to Party standards on culture and decency.

Stricter licensing laws

Licensing laws for tobacco should be made far stricter, in line with a growing understanding of the dangers of this highly addictive habit. For a start, the legal age for buying cigarettes should be increased to 18. This will reduce the availability to those under the age of sixteen and discourage 16-18 year olds. A less drastic measure would be to make it an offence to sell cigarettes to a 16-18 year old without seeing an identity card with proof of age.

It should be a criminal offence to supply someone under age with tobacco with very strict maximum penalties for supplying those under the age of sixteen. It is wicked to give cigarettes to a twelve year old and those who do so should be severely punished. There is no point in having licensing laws if the law takes a blind eye to an army of older teenagers who take money from under 16 year olds and use it to buy them cigarettes.

At the same time, nicotine treatment centres should be set up, especially aimed at teenagers. They should be licensed to issue limited numbers of cigarettes on a reducing basis to teenagers wanting to give up, perhaps refunding the tax-free purchase costs entirely to those who can show they have been nicotine free for six months.

Increased duties in Europe

There is strong evidence that consumption of alcohol and cigarettes is influenced by retail cost, which effectively regulates availability. If the person can't afford a certain level of consumption they will be more likely to cut down or go without altogether.

Tobacco duty should be increased sharply in annual stages aiming to double the cost of smoking in real terms over a five to ten year period. Agreement should be made to do the same in all European countries. In addition all duty-free allowances for tobacco should be abolished. Why should we reward those with money to travel by giving them cut price cigarettes? Regular business travellers can keep themselves constantly supplied with tax free stock. This is not right and should stop.

Alcohol

Stricter advertising for alcohol

£189.5 million was spent persuading people to drink alcohol in 1996, much of it linked to sport or sports personalities. This is an effective way to target the young and should be more strictly controlled. Sponsorship of sport by alcoholic drink companies should be banned. Alcohol advertising should be subject to a health tax used to fund all year round awareness raising of the problems alcohol can cause. Alcohol advertising should carry government health warnings.

Stricter licensing laws

Licensing laws for alcohol need urgent review. Many variations exist between areas according to local magistrates and the action they take. There is a need for consistently tough action.

Licenses should be taken away from premises which are a regular focus for alcohol-related violence or other crimes. It should be made far riskier for someone to sell alcohol to anyone under 18, with tougher penalties and more checks by teenagers working for law enforcement agencies. This double strategy has worked well with the tightening up of laws relating to adult video sales and hire. The same covert methods should be used against retailers who sell tobacco to minors.

Toughened drinking glasses help prevent some of the 5,000 "glassings" a year in which a broken glass is used as an offensive weapon. Their use should be insisted on as a condition of a licence.

Increase duties in Europe

As with tobacco, alcohol duties should be increased throughout Europe. Alcohol prices have fallen in real terms throughout the last twenty years. The price in real terms should be restored immediately with further increases above the level of inflation. Duty free allowances for drink should be abolished for the same reasons as tobacco. If France and other nations insist on ridiculously low tax rates, then we should go it alone, blocking imports in lorries, vans or the cars of people who are currently crossing to France simply to avoid British tax on alcohol. Raising taxes will reduce consumption. That's why the French have campaigned so aggressively for low British tax on wine.

Of course, in current EC law it is almost impossible for a national government to vary tax rates on products such as wine or beer. The trend is to convergence with the aim of abolishing all trade barriers inside the EU. If the current EU trade structures survive, then the only way to achieve satisfactory price regulation will be by EU agreement.

Caffeine

Pregnant mothers should be warned that heavy caffeine intake places the health of the unborn at risk. Tea, [coffee](#) and cola in large doses should be avoided.

Medical use of Marijuana

9. Encourage drug-free culture

Every possible means should be taken to encourage a drug-free culture. There has been a recent rash of films showing heroes smoking, sometimes in many shots. This is totally irresponsible, and directly undermines efforts to persuade teenagers that smoking is undesirable.

Not only should there be a complete ban on promotion of brands of tobacco in advertising, but also on the promotion of smoking itself. That means a ban on covert advertising such as photos in newspapers of [supermodels](#) on catwalks smoking or characters in TV soaps smoking, except in exceptional circumstances when the habit is relevant to the plot - for example if the person develops smoking-related problems.

Media support

Active attempts should be made to enlist positive media support in the anti-abuse campaign, on a much greater scale than that seen until now. Anti-drug heroes should be developed.

10. Tackle other preventable risk factors

Drugs prevention programmes in isolation will never work without tackling some of the underlying factors which encourage abuse. These include the growing underclass, long term unemployment and family breakdown. Each of these helps create a climate of hopelessness and depression where drug use and dealing becomes increasingly attractive. These are complex issues but must be addressed.

Ten point plan for parents

1. Invest in relationship

As we have seen, parents have a central role to play in raising a drug-free family. Research clearly shows that parental influence is powerful, especially through role models and boundary setting. Discipline and character formation in early years is important as well as encouraging children so that they feel valued, loved and appreciated, with the self-confidence to be themselves in the face of conflicting peer pressures.

From the earliest years

Communication is vital. The trouble is that many parents only get serious about this when problems start developing. "I hardly understand her any more". By then it is often far too late to do anything but contain the situation. Parents who often spend time talking to their children have a 30% less risk of children who take illegal drugs (37% versus 26%).

Communication is more than an occasional intense heart-to-heart conversation at a time of crisis. Communication is an ongoing process, a part of a warm, open relationship, based on mutual respect. The rewards are not just more harmonious home life and reduced risk of drug abuse, but also reduced risk of teenage pregnancy and a whole host of other problem behaviours that are also associated with unhappiness at home.

Parents who take care over their own relationship will also find they are helping their children stay free of drugs. Teenagers who are traumatised by constant rows between their parents or by a messy divorce, or by other parental relationships starting and ending are far more likely to stay out, to find other outlets for their unhappiness and to distance themselves emotionally from their parents.

2. Be a good example

It is very hard for a parent who used to smoke Marijuana to make convincing arguments why their own children should not now do the same. It is even harder if the same parents are still abusing illegal drugs or alcohol or tobacco.

Smoking is an invitation to experiment

Nothing destroys trust and respect faster than double standards when it comes to older people encouraging teenagers to avoid risk. Parents who smoke can hardly blame their children for copying them. Example is the best possible way to teach.

As we have seen, teenagers who smoke are far more likely to go on to take Marijuana and other drugs. Therefore one of the most effective steps parents can take in helping to build a drug-free future for their children is to give up smoking or other drug use, with the exception of moderate intake of alcohol. Children who see their parents get drunk find it particularly hard to listen to sermons from them about the dangers of Marijuana or Ecstasy.

3. Encourage wide interests and activities

Parents can help keep their children out of trouble by encouraging active participation in a wide range of activities outside and inside school. Time spent fetching and carrying children and their friends is time well spent.

Research shows a strong relationship between involvement in school activities and illicit drug use. 41% of those in US high schools who never participated took drugs compared to 23 who did. The same protective effect is seen from involvement in community activities. The rate of drug use was twice (40%) in those not involved at all compared to those involved heavily.

4. Encourage self-esteem and self-worth

There has never been an age where the image of a young person has been so under pressure from high-level media advertising. The message is that without designer trainers and jeans, a fast car, the right kind of hair, the right shaped body, the right kind of friends, you're a freak, a loser. The pressures to conform are intense and follow teenagers throughout their school years and into adult life.

Child psychologists describe an epidemic of low self-worth, high numbers of depressed adolescents, many with eating disorders or other stress-related medical and emotional problems. What can be done to help?

Encouraging self-esteem and self-worth directly reduces the risk that a child will feel under pressure to follow the crowd. Praise, encouragement, turning up to the school concert or end of term play, taking time to help with homework, helping each child find his or her areas of interest and fulfilment - these kind of things directly help the development of a well-rounded, balanced, self-confident individual.

A strong personal faith can be a real strength, especially when backed by a supportive peer group from a church. Those never attending church are two and a half times more likely to take drugs than those that do so often (45% versus 19%). And the stronger the commitment, the lower the risk of drug addiction.

5. Discourage smoking and overuse of alcohol

It's not enough just to present a good example when it comes to smoking and alcohol abuse. These things need to be talked about - often - as part of everyday life. So many parents are scared of making a position clear because they fear that their children will rebel - or worse still perhaps stop talking to them altogether or even leave home. But this is pure defeatism. A family faced with such a situation is in serious problems, with a history probably going back several years. The time to address teenage drug-taking is when children are pre-school, in the decisions we make then and every day following, the atmosphere in the home, the boundaries we set, the discipline we set (and keep to), the love, care and affection we show. We reap what we sow.

It is near criminal nonsense to suggest that parental opinion can't be a positive influence. Most people looking back will admit that they were profoundly influenced by their upbringing, even if they rebelled against parts of it for a while. Children need to hear the arguments. For example, if a child comes home saying "What are the reasons why I shouldn't smoke dope?" we do the child

a great disservice by abandoning them to work it all out themselves. Far better for the child to be able to go back into the school the following morning armed with four or five strong arguments that you have talked through together, than with the impression that you don't seem to mind (or care).

6. Firm but fair boundaries for expected conduct

Setting boundaries for children is essential for their development and safety. We accept this for toddlers, yet many parents cave in as soon as their children start getting as tall as they are, yet that can be the stage when they need boundaries most. 50% of teenagers who never have clear rules from their parents are likely to take illegal drugs compared to only 22% of those whose parents have many clear rules.

Take a practical example of a party. One of our own younger teenage children was invited recently to a party in a church hall run by parents we knew who we assumed would be present throughout. We discovered afterwards that no food and very little (non-alcoholic) drink had been provided.

The host's parents disappeared soon after the start leaving the front doors open to gatecrashers and to guests piling in with their own alcohol despite the fact that the majority were under age. Of course, drugs were not far away. Leaving the party unsupervised was in my view an act of gross irresponsibility. A similar event in a house unsupervised is a recipe not only for drunkenness and drug-taking but also for unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted disease.

Mutually agreed

Dictatorship doesn't work for long, yet many teenagers respond well to agreeing their own ground rules with their parents, including their own self-imposed scale of sanctions, which can often turn out to be more severe than the parents would have set themselves.

Consistent

Rules are made to be broken, but there is a difference between humane adjustments of rules, and inconsistency through laziness, neglect or impatience.

Rational

Rules need to make sense to win respect.

7. Watch for signs of possible abuse

The following should raise the possibility that a teenager is abusing drugs. However they can also be a normal part of adolescent growing up or of depression or other personal problems. The key issue is change: in appearance, personality, attitude or behaviour.

- Loss of appetite, increase in appetite, changes in eating habits, unexplained weight loss or gain
- Slowed or staggering walk, poor co-ordination
- Inability to sleep, awake at night, unusual lethargy
- Red watery eyes, pupils larger or smaller than usual, blank stare
- Cold, sweaty or shaking hands, puffy face, blushing or pale
- Unusual smell on breath, body or clothes
- Extreme hyperactivity, excessive talkativeness
- Running nose, hacking cough
- Needle marks on lower arms, leg

- Nausea, vomiting. Excessive sweating

Change in attitude or personality, in friends, sudden avoidance of old friends, won't talk about new friends, friends take drugs

- Changes in activities or hobbies, falling back at school academically, loss of interest in family or family activities.

- Difficulty concentrating, forgetful, low self-esteem and apathetic

- Moodiness, irritability, silliness, paranoia, excessive need for privacy

- Withdrawn, secretive and stealing.

- Car accidents, needing lots of money for unclear reasons, possession of needles and syringes

None of the above proves anything but a combination may give rise to high suspicion. It may be tempting to carry out a secret test on hair but the big question is what are you going to do with the information? Are you sure you are going to be able to handle the result? Will your aim be to confront or is the information just for you alone? And if your child does find out that you have sneaked into their room and stolen hairs for testing, how is that going to affect your relationship? Whether one opts for a secret test or not, or one after a conversation with a child will depend on many factors such as the age of the child and the seriousness of the situation.

One has to balance these things up. How would you feel if you missed the fact that for two vital years your adolescent son had been a cocaine and heroin addict, living under your roof, needing your help but unable to tell you the truth, while all the while you had been blaming his emotional ups and downs on growing up?

8. Keep in touch with the school about your concerns

Parents and teachers can and should work together. Home and school only see part of the picture which is why cooperation is so essential.

Those getting good grades at school are far less likely to take drugs. Of course, drug use may damage academic performance, but commitment to studying is also strongly protective. This effect is also seen in sexual behaviour. A British survey of 19,000 people found that those dropping out of school early are far more likely to have multiple partners as teenagers. Only 25% of those staying on to take final grades (A levels) at the age of 18 had lost their virginity. The reason seems to be that those committed to study are more likely to have a mature approach to their future.

10. Confront where necessary but in the context of commitment to working things out

Impact on society of global drug trade

Individual users and families are devastated by addiction - but so are whole communities. Crime and prostitution soar to help addicts survive with expensive habits. Productivity falls and health and welfare costs rise. Law enforcement costs rise, in attempts to contain individual and organised crime.

Russia becomes a drug-driven economy

The collapse of the Iron Curtain opened up new routes from opium growing areas to Europe, and every step along the way people were paid off with cheap heroin. Drug use soared in a nation with a history of alcohol abuse on a monumental scale.

The Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs estimates that by 1993 there were 1.5 million drug users, committing some 53,000 drug-related crimes. This is likely to be a huge underestimate. Large syndicates have formed with networks to Russian communities all over the world, laundering money through legitimate businesses. Similar networks have formed in Europe, North America, Jamaica, Southern China and Hong Kong.

Mexico economy high on drugs

Law and order forces are being subverted with border guards carrying large quantities in their own vehicles. Mexico's narco-profits are conservatively estimated at \$15 billion a year, 5% of GDP. The unfenced 2,000 mile border with the US is so scantily policed that there is virtually free-flow. Up to 2,000 lorries a day pass through check points manned by a single customs officer so inspections are rare.

The Truth About Drugs - free book by Patrick Dixon, published by Hodder in 1998

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