

Concerned Your Child May Be Using Alcohol or Other Drugs?

Parents – What’s next if you have a concern?

1. Don’t freeze up – doing nothing is not an option.
2. Don’t overreact and don’t underreact.
3. Identify the stakeholders. Who should be involved? It takes a village. Examples:
 - Parents
 - Siblings
 - Friends
 - School
 - Probation officer
 - Coaches
4. Focus on emotional regulation. Don’t freak out and don’t go to extreme emotions.
 - Calm your body – use breathing, grounding, or mindful techniques.
 - Practice journaling.
 - Go for walk.
 - Identify the feelings and give a name to them.
 - Focus on how to not act out on feelings.
 - Use “I” statements when talking about what you’re concerned about.
 - I think...
 - I hope...
 - I expect...
 - Take time to gain emotional regulation before talking to your teen.
5. Collect more information. Examples of warning signs include:
 - Behavioral indicators
 - a. Not coming to dinner
 - b. Gone a lot
 - c. Friends have changed
 - d. Curfews not being met
 - e. Not being responsible
 - f. Skipping School
 - g. Asking for money all the time
 - h. Grades dropping
 - i. Abrupt temper outbursts
 - j. Unusual mood changes
 - k. Damaged relationships
 - Physical indicators
 - a. Poor hygiene
 - b. Glazed or red eyes
 - c. Unexplained bruises or marks

- d. Pupils larger or smaller than usual, blank stare
 - e. Cold, sweaty palms or shaking hands
 - f. Puffy face, blushing or paleness
 - g. Unusual odors
 - h. Tired or hyperactivity
 - i. Rapid weight gain or loss
6. Get support to talk through concerns.
 - Other family members
 - Family therapist for couple or individual therapy
 - Alanon
 - Spiritual leader
 - Friends
 - Support groups through mental health provider – Parents Recovery Group and Caring Families Group
 7. Parents need to be involved in their kid's lives. Don't let them push you out.
 8. Make an appointment for an assessment.
 - If teen not willing, get professional help for yourself to learn how to set boundaries, and use privileges (money, car and cell phone use, curfew and any other leverage) to enforce expected behaviors.
 9. Conversation starts with the observation.
 - I feel concerned because...
 - Think about the goal of what the conversation is about. Stay focused. Don't let the conversation go sideways. Don't let defensiveness get in the way – yours or theirs.
 - Have a respectful interaction.
 - Talk about your values and the values of the young person and how they may be compromised.
 - You may not have a clear outcome from the conversation, but keep the channels of communication open. There's always an opportunity to set a boundary with clear consequences.
 - Set clear expectations about what's acceptable and what's not in your home.
 - Rectify the misdeeds (i.e. bring stolen items back, apologize to those affected by the action(s)).
 - Remember – you can't control their behavior but you can control yours. You didn't cause it, you can't control it and you can't cure it.
 10. Other resources
 - Monitoring programs - HazeldenBettyFord.org/Connection
 - Online social communities – TheDailyPledge.org
 - Family Tool Kit HazeldenBettyFord.org/Families
 - TopSecretProject.org