



# Points for Parents

## Youth and Addiction

### Signs of Drug and Alcohol Use Problem

- Craving - a strong need or compulsion to drink
- Impaired Control - the inability to limit one's drinking on any given occasion
- Physical Dependence - withdrawal symptoms such as nausea, sweating, shakiness, and anxiety when alcohol use is stopped after a period of heavy drinking
- Tolerance - the need for increasing amounts of alcohol in order to feel its effects

### Resources

- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health  
[www.camh.net](http://www.camh.net)
- Addictions Ontario  
[www.addictionsontario.ca](http://www.addictionsontario.ca)
- Drug and Alcohol Registry of Treatment  
[www.dart.on.ca](http://www.dart.on.ca)
- Kids Help Phone  
[www.kidshelpphone.ca/informed/sub\\_drugs.asp?sec=3&sb=2](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca/informed/sub_drugs.asp?sec=3&sb=2)
- Drugs & Addiction: facts you need to know  
[www.dafacts.com](http://www.dafacts.com)

### Why People Use Drugs or Alcohol

- Curiosity
- Experimentation
- Celebration
- Pleasurable effects
- Loss of inhibitions
- Pain relief
- To relieve various emotional issues (i.e., anger, stress, anxiety)
- To boost confidence
- As a way of rebelling or to express alienation from mainstream society
- To help cope with traumatic life experiences
- Social pressures
- Following a parent's example
- Dependency

### Talking to Youth About Substance Use

1. Inform your youth you have something you would like to discuss with them. Ask your youth where they would like to have this discussion.
2. Approach the conversation with a sense of curiosity and interest, rather than accusation and fear.
3. Know the facts of the drug(s) you plan to discuss **BEFORE** talking with your youth.
4. Use impartial literature, approved by youth addiction workers, to gather your facts.
5. Ask your youth about **THEIR** concerns regarding drugs and alcohol. Discuss and address those issues. Let your youth know that they can be open and honest with you and let them know that you have their safety in mind.
6. Take time to understand and address your greatest fears regarding your youth. Discuss these with a friend, partner or therapist.
7. Honesty (about what you do and don't know), courage (about having the discussion in the first place) and faith (that your youth will make mistakes, but with a loving and supportive family, will turn out all right) is the spirit in which you want to engage your youth.
8. Think carefully before rifling through your youth's journals, emails, etc., searching for clues of substance use. The potential gains, in most cases, are far outweighed by the potential damage it would do to your relationship with your youth.
9. Make your position clear when it comes to substances like alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Don't assume that your youth knows where you stand.
10. At times, having this discussion with a qualified youth and/or addiction therapist can be very helpful. If your youth is not interested, you may still benefit in a meeting for support and suggestions.
11. It is never too late to start talking about drugs and alcohol.



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