

WORRIED ABOUT SOMEONE?

Worried that a young person you care about may be using drugs?

Many people have good reason to worry about young people they care for, especially given the stories we hear about drugs through the media. Sometimes this fear is exaggerated, while other times it is justified. You may worry that a young person you know may be arrested, hurt or even be at risk of death. You may also feel ashamed or guilty, but this does not help them.

Getting help can sometimes be really hard so we have put together a list of tips using expert research and advice.

TIPS FOR PARENTS, FAMILY, FRIENDS & CARERS

Be calm and try not to overreact. Many 'signs' of drug use may be due to other things. Remember, although many young people experiment with drugs, research shows that much fewer use drugs regularly.

Get hold of information about drugs and educate yourself. Leave information lying around for the young person to find. Talk to them about something neutral like finding out information about drugs. Ask them what they think about how drug use is portrayed by the media. Doing these things can be a good way of initiating a conversation about drugs.

Pick a good time to talk. Approach the young person at a time when they are in a receptive mood and are free to talk, rather than cornering them while they are watching their favourite television program.

Express concern, be open and listen. Keep communication channels open by expressing concern for the young person in a non-confrontational and non-judgmental way. They will be more likely to talk to you if they know you will be supportive. Let the young person know that you care about them and are worried. Use a caring and supportive tone of voice and avoid using threatening language - for example, use "I feel that ..." rather than "You ...".

Be patient. Remember that change is possible but can often be really difficult. Ask the young person what they think may be possible solutions.

Avoid blaming yourself. Focus on what you can do for the young person rather than what you have done.

Be a good role model. Check your own drug use. This includes alcohol, cigarettes and prescription drugs.

Talk about safer drug use. While you may prefer the young person to stop using completely, it is the ultimately their decision. If they are still using drugs, give them information about safer use.

Encourage the young person to seek help. Remember support is available for both the young person and yourself. Information, advice, counselling, referrals for treatment and other forms of assistance are available from various organisations.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT DRUGS?

More information about drugs is available from the following organisations:

Centre for Education & Information on Drugs & Alcohol (CEIDA)

www.ceida.net.au

Australian Drug Foundation

www.druginfo.adf.org.au

National Institute on Drug Abuse (US-based)

www.nida.nih.gov

Reach Out

www.reachout.com.au

Family Drug Support

www.fds.org.au

Drugs: A Western Australian Government Funded Website

www.dotu.wa.gov.au/drugs/index.html

Australian Drug Information Network

www.adin.asn.au

Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia

www.adca.org.au