

TOMORROW'S NEWS

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Are You 100% Positive?

BEING 99 PERCENT SURE IS NOT AN OPTION WHEN IT COMES TO OUR CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Adolescence can lead to sudden changes in a child's moods and behaviors, making it hard to spot the signs of alcohol or other drug use. But according to Lea Goldstein, a licensed psychologist who specializes in working with teens and families struggling with substance abuse, observing more than a few of the following signs means that it's time to take action:

- the smell of alcohol or odor of marijuana
- stealing or borrowing money
- defensiveness about activities and possessions
- unusual mood changes or temper outbursts
- marked changes in eating or sleeping habits
- decline in academic performance
- heavy use of perfumes, mouthwash or other scents to hide drug use

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UMA Stats

Alcohol, including beer, wine and hard liquor, is the drug used most often by adolescents today. According to the Pennsylvania Youth Survey taken during the 2007-2008 school year, 1,105 UMA students report the following behaviors:

	6th	8th	10th	12th
Lifetime use of alcohol	15.9%	45.1%	70.6%	78.6%
Past 30- day use of alcohol	2.1%	11.0%	31.5%	41.8%



What can you do to help youth take responsibility for their own behavior?

You Want Me To Do What?!

Responsibility may have the reputation of a four letter word, but in reality, well-disciplined students acknowledge and embrace responsibility. They do not have to be nagged about their homework, permissions slip, or attending school- because they are self- motivated and self- directed.

Well- disciplined student do not make excuses and blame others for their problems. They understand the value and importance of making appropriate and healthy choices. Choices are powerful and they wield their power in conscientious, wise, and resourceful ways. Well- disciplined youth do not give up easily.

Do you think these qualities just appear in particular youth? Taking responsibility for your actions is an important step in normal development, but it must be learned. Because parents are the most

influential adults in a child's life, a parent role modeling, discussing, and experiencing taking responsibility for your actions is paramount. A child's teacher, mentor, youth pastor, and adult neighbor could also example the power and freedom in taking responsibility for your own actions.

Responsible students learn how to set goals for themselves in their academics as well as personal goals. Does your child want to learn how to play the piano? Responsible students use a problem solving process from issues with math homework to a bully approaching them at school. Utilizing a problem solving process is useful to curtail conflict and develop essential reasoning skills useful later in life. A responsible student will succeed academically and in every area of life- without drugs and alcohol!

Adapted from The Parent Institute Stock No. 331A Fairfax Station, VA (800) 756 5525

Teaching youth responsibility for their learning and behavior is a life- long gift a parent or concerned adult can offer.

Hello, Neighbor!

Building community is as simple as saying "Hello". Try it next time you rack the leaves, have a Wawa coffee run, or jog around the neighborhood. Saying hello may seem elementary, but acknowledging a person's presence can make a radical difference in that person's day. Maybe your neighbor had a bad day and needs a refreshing dose of kindness. Acknowledgment is the first step of acceptance in realizing that another individual is in the same space. And who knows, you may learn that you have much more in common with that person than assumed from a distance.

Results from the 2007- 2008 Pennsylvania Youth Survey indicate a lack of neighborhood attachment as a

risk factor for unhealthy behaviors like drugs, alcohol, and bullying. The survey asked youth if they would feel sorrow or regret if they moved outside of the Upper Merion Area. An appalling number of students felt no attachment to the community! A 21st Century lifestyle is fast-paced, but it does not have to be void of community. If youth in the community see adults in the community modeling this small step toward togetherness, it will spread to the schools, playgrounds, athletic fields, and workplaces- everywhere we call UMA!



Can you name all of your neighbors on your street, block, or apartment floor? Challenge yourself to move beyond names and build at least one connection with a neighbor.

After all, you know where they live!

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- a bedroom littered with burned matches, pipes or other drug paraphernalia
- changes in friend groups
- significant change in personal appearance or hygiene
- loss of interest in usual activities and hobbies
- difficulty with concentration

The earlier you respond to such signs, the better. Goldstein offers the following guidelines:

Talk about it. Share your observations with your child, while avoiding direct accusations. Stick to the facts and stay calm during this discussion.

Help your child create a plan for refusing drugs.

The key is to come up with a plan that your teenager will actually use in a social setting where kids are using drugs. "If you're in that situation," Borowiak says to teenagers, "go to the bathroom--wherever it is--and sit in there for five minutes and time it. Then come out and tell your friends that you're

sick and that you need to go home. Call home and have a parent pick you up."

Enforce a zero-tolerance rule. Research indicates that parental disapproval does deter adolescent drug use. Set clear rules and expectations around alcohol and other drug use and establish reasonable consequences if those rules are broken.

Involve other people. You don't have to do this alone. Many people can help you intervene with your child--for example, the school counselor, psychologist, clergy, or family doctor.

Focus on prevention. Get to know your child's friends and their parents. Set and enforce curfews. Encourage participation in school and after-school activities. Also take time each week to ask what your child is thinking, feeling, and doing--and listen to the answers without interrupting.

Adapted from http://www.hazelden.org/OA_HTML/ibeCCtpItnDspRte.jsp?a=b&item=7722

The New Weed: Methadone

THE 40 YEAR OLD TREATMENT FOR OPIOID ADDICTION POSING NEW CONCERNS FOR USERS

Fatalities have been observed in individuals using methadone as a treatment for opioid addiction when taken in combination with other drugs. Experts continue to vouch for methadone and its effectiveness against opioid addiction, but only when used safely. The US Department of Health and Human Services and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment has recognized an increase in deaths related to methadone, particularly taken in combination with other drugs.

Methadone is typically used for

pain relief associated with addictions, but over the past ten years its use has become more and more questionable. Statistics also show an increase in use of this drug because of increased availability. Methadone comes in many forms- liquid, tablet, or dispensable tablet- making it an appealing drug.

With all of the news of prescription drug abuse, prevention efforts for those recovering from drug abuse is a must. SAMHSA recommends the following procedures to be followed to use methadone safely: educating medical staff members in opioid treatment programs, monitoring

patient's health while in treatment, improving procedures for take-home medications, carefully assessing every patent for other drugs that may interact, and reevaluating patient education procedures. Prevention is a critical ideal for the federal government, county health departments, and local coalitions. Spread the word to others who may have a loved one in a rehabilitation center to make sure their medications are being closely monitored for dosage and interactions with other drugs.

For more information see the Substance Abuse Treatment Advisory (Vol 8 Issue 1, 2009)

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Community Alliance for a Safer Tomorrow (CAST) is a risk and protective factor focused approach to reducing problem behaviors in youth through community mobilization, awareness, and planning. Upper Merion Area residents work together with representatives from all sectors of the community to decrease and prevent substance abuse and violence. The risk factors for the UMA are neighborhood attachment, family management, and precursors to youth depression. For the next two years, CAST will focus our efforts on decreasing these risk factors and increasing the protective factors that already exist.

Today is the day we make choices about tomorrow!