

Making an Intervention November 2010

Do any of the following statements sound familiar to you? Have you heard yourself saying something like this or thinking this way?

- "The first time I found out my son was using drugs, I was shocked because he and I were really close."
- "Not my kid."
- "My gut tells me that my child is using drugs, but I don't want to talk about it without concrete evidence."
- "With the signs of alcohol/drug use, I want to hide it. I don't want anybody to know. I want to keep it a secret because it's shameful."
- "I don't want anyone to think badly about my son/daughter."
- "What will people think of me if they find out about my son/daughter?"
- "I am a recovering alcohol/addict. I would know if my kid was using."
- "I know where my son/daughter is every minute and who they are with."
- "I did that and I turned out okay."
- "All kids do that."

These statements or thoughts are all in the realm of helping a parent not see what may be happening before their very eyes. As a parent, we want to believe our child when he/she tells us they aren't drinking or using drugs. But parents also need to remember that sometimes kids aren't completely truthful. It's a nice fit, isn't it? You want to believe your child, he/she tells you what you want to hear, so then you are assured they aren't using. Have you ever heard the saying: **"D-E-N-I-A-L is not a river in Egypt"**?

That's funny, but denial is a strong feeling/action that is easy to fall into when alcohol or drug use or mental health concerns affect someone we love, especially a child. These issues are way too important to deny, look the other way or sweep under the carpet as "normal adolescent behavior." Not only do parents need to recognize the seriousness of these issues, but their children need to know where their parents stand.

An intervention need not be a scary idea. It can be as simple as a conversation in which you express your concern to someone about his or her drug use or behaviors. This may be an uncomfortable chat to start, but you can never be too safe or intervene too early. Research shows that kids do listen to their parents and the messages their parents send are powerful; in fact, sometimes kids are looking to their parents for advice and guidance and even an excuse as to why they can't use alcohol or drugs. The sooner you intervene, the more pain and danger you may save your child, yourself, and other family members.

Make sure the time is right. You want the discussion to be productive. DON'T attempt the conversation if:

- Your child is drunk or high.
- You are angry.
- You aren't prepared.

Your intuition is your best parenting tool. And give yourself permission to parent. Kids have lots of friends; they need a parent. It's okay to ask questions, provide rules and restrictions, and even "snoop" on your kids. It is called being a responsible and loving parent.

For more information and answers to your questions, please visit The Partnership for a Drug-Free America, www.drugfree.org and review the Intervention eBook, Time to Act. There are lots of tips and suggestions as well as conversation starters and what to say if your child reacts defensively.

(Source: www.drugfree.org/intervene)