

Words Can Work offers information, communication strategies and the words to help keep kids safe.

Ask open-ended questions to start conversations about drug use.

You can start with a general question such as, “What are you learning in school about the impact of drugs?” You can then be more specific with a question like, “What would you do if you felt pressure from friends to use drugs?” **Dr. Benson**

If addiction is in your family, have ongoing conversations about increased risk.

You can say, “Some families are at a higher risk for diabetes or heart disease. Our family is at increased risk for addiction. It’s important to remember that drug use is always risky. It would be extra risky for you.” **Dr. Johnson**

Help young people practice resisting drugs.

You can say, “Suppose someone says, ‘Everyone else is trying drugs; you should too.’ What would you say?” You can suggest answers: “No thanks, I like to think clearly.” Or “Drugs would mess up my body.” **Dr. Johnson**

Read more communication strategies in this *Words Can Work* booklet.

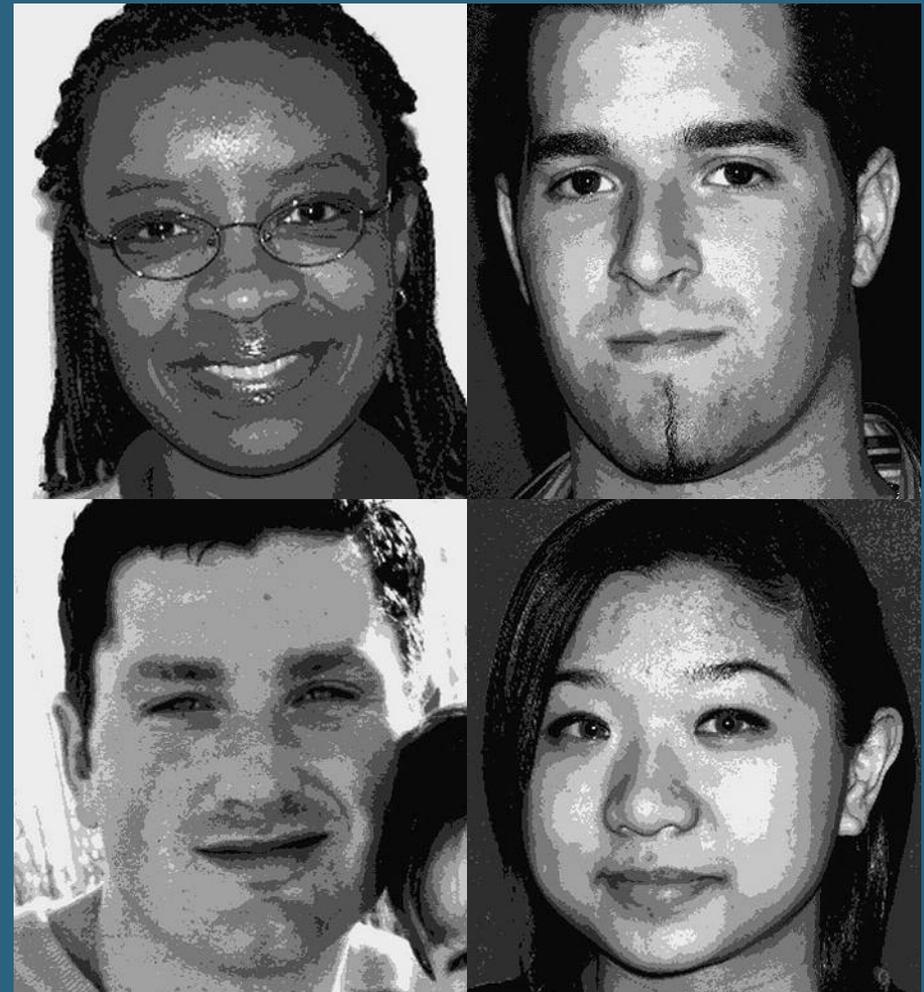


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Words Can Work: When Talking About Drugs



A guide for young people, parents, and other caregivers



About Us

WORDS CAN WORK® *When Talking About Drugs*

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Some names in this booklet have
been changed to protect identities.



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Jeanne Blake speaks nationally to parents, healthcare
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She is a consultant to communities and corporations on
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parent/child communication.

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At wordscanwork.com, you can learn about other *Words Can
Work* booklets and DVDs that help young people face chal-
lenges growing up. You can read *Issues and Answers* columns
in which young people, parents, and experts share their experi-
ence dealing with substance abuse, bullying, depression, and
more. You can also read Jeanne Blake's blog.

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Words Can Work

When Talking About Drugs



Note From the Author

In this *Words Can Work* booklet, young people and parents tell their true stories about drugs and addiction.

The experiences of these families show how drugs can harm users and the people they love.

When you discuss these stories at home or in the classroom, you can consider the very real risks associated with drug use. You'll also see the possibilities for recovery, and how making smart choices can save lives.

I'm grateful to the families who tell their stories and to Timothy Benson, M.D., and Brian Johnson, M.D., who generously share their expertise.

Drugs and Your Brain

If you take drugs that influence how you feel, your brain might adapt to changes caused by them. For example, a response to the first use of a drug might be a powerful "high." But if you continue to use this drug and the brain adapts, it tends to need more of the drug to produce the same high. This is called tolerance. Your brain might also give strong signals that it wants more of the drug – no matter what the consequences. This is called craving.

Tolerance and craving build up gradually. When you're developing addiction, you don't realize it's happening until tolerance or craving has taken hold. Once this occurs, you have to abstain from drugs, or you can harm your health and your relationships.

Choose wisely!

Parents Take Action

Parents often want to be friend and parent at the same time. If you're trying to be your kid's "friend," you overlook the warning signs of drug use. If you're a parent, you do something about it. What you do can mean the difference between life and death.

Marta and her former husband Mack suspected that their son Joe was smoking cigarettes. So Marta asked Joe's doctor to test him for tobacco at his next annual physical. The doctor asked if she wanted Joe tested for other drugs, too. Marta did.

She wasn't surprised when the test showed Joe was smoking cigarettes. But she was stunned to learn that he was smoking marijuana.

Joe admitted to smoking cigarettes, but he denied using marijuana.

Marta wouldn't let Joe leave the house until he told the truth. "When someone gets a positive drug test," she told him, "it means there are issues, and we're going to deal with that."

She and Mack took Joe to see a counselor. "We also took his car away and grounded him, until he tested clean," Marta says.

After a month, Joe passed the drug test and got back the use of his car.

But there was more trouble that summer. Joe was skipping classes that were required to make up for his failing grades. He was also fighting with his dad.

"I couldn't tell if he was being a typical 17-year-old," Marta says, "or if something was really wrong."

Marta decided to have Joe tested for drugs again, and he agreed.

FACT:

Thirteen percent of high school seniors say they've driven under the influence of marijuana.¹

Additional Resources

Recommended Resource

Drugs: True Stories (30-minute DVD)

Joel's alcohol and marijuana abuse led him to prescription pills. He describes his spiraling addiction and recovery. His parents and sister discuss their denial. Trevor tells how he avoids drug use with the support of mentors. H. Westley Clark, M.D., C.A.S., Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, SAMHSA, and Howard J. Shaffer, Ph.D., C.A.S., Division on Addictions, Harvard Medical School answer FAQ. Includes discussion guide. For grades 5 through college, parents, and other caregivers.

“Drugs: True Stories helps young people and parents understand the dangers associated with the misuse of drugs. The true stories illuminate issues that are essential for everyone to understand: there are real risks and hazards associated with using drugs; these drugs can adversely affect the brain; and, that it is possible to prevent drug misuse. The program demonstrates the powerful denial that can surround drug abuse – on the part of the users and those around them. It’s a resource that can help families and communities prevent drug misuse and reduce the harms that often associate with even casual use.”

Howard J. Shaffer, Ph.D., C.A.S.
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Also available at wordscanwork.com

Words Can Work® Booklets

Words Can Work:
When Talking About Alcohol

Words Can Work:
When Talking About Bullying

Words Can Work:
When Talking About Depression

Words Can Work:
When Talking About Drugs

Words Can Work:
When Talking With Kids About Sexual Health

Words Can Work:
When Talking About Steroids

DVDs

Alcohol: True Stories Hosted by Matt Damon

Boys on Bullying

Depression: True Stories

Drugs: True Stories

In Our Own Words: Teens and AIDS

The Power of Girls: Inside and Out

Raising Healthy Kids:
Families Talk About Sexual Health

Steroids: True Stories Hosted by Curt Schilling

Quantity discounts available. Call for pricing. Telephone: 978.282.1663

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At wordscanwork.com, you can learn about other *Words Can Work* booklets and DVDs that help young people face challenges growing up. You can read *Issues and Answers* columns in which young people, parents, and experts share their experience dealing with substance abuse, bullying, depression, and more. You can also read Jeanne Blake's blog.



Endnotes

1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, Illicit Drug Use, September 2007
2. 2005 Monitoring the Future Survey
3. 2008 Monitoring the Future Survey
4. White House Office of National Drug Control Policy's National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign
5. 2008 PATS Study – Partnership for a Drug-Free America
6. Partnership for a Drug-Free America
7. Ibid
8. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking: A Guide to Action for Families. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, 2007

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