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**Monitoring Your Teens for Drug Use Without Appearing to be Spying**

By **V. Michael Santoro, M. Ed.**

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Even if your teenagers do not use drugs, you still need to keep an eye on them. It is much better to realize that things could change, and anticipate that your teen COULD become a user. Essentially, it is not wise to make assumptions about topics such as drug use. Also, having been a high school teacher afforded me the opportunity to witness peer pressure, and how even good kids could be convinced to try drugs – just to fit in. It is important that you play a proactive role in ensuring that your teenagers and the rest of your family remains drug free.

About drug use

Initially, I learned that the signs of drug use included three basic symptoms: A loss of interest in hobbies A change in friends A drop in grades

What I later discovered was that not seeing these symptoms only provides a false sense of security regarding teenagers and potential drug use. The above behaviors apply more to signs of "drug addiction," as opposed to "experimental" drug use.

Teens who experiment with drugs don't start out addicted so logically, they do not show any symptoms. They generally look healthy and nothing seems to be wrong. In fact, teens can casually use drugs for over a year before their parents would even suspect any drug or alcohol use.

Many teenagers who decide to experiment with drugs start out casually, using them with friends and then progressing towards regular use. It is important that you look for clues pertaining to casual drug use so that if your teen is prone, you can proactively deal with it.

What you can do

## Monitoring Your Teens for Drug Use Without Appearing to be Spying

You need to monitor your teen's behavior and watch for signs of drug use, without appearing to be spying. Your goal should be to prevent him or her from feeling free to experiment with drugs or alcohol. The best way to accomplish this is to keep abreast of your teen's activities and friends. You will be able to spot a problem early if you keep your eyes and ears open, and believe that YOUR teenager is capable of using drugs. Many parents get blind-sided by thinking that their teen would never try drugs. Only then will you be ready to intervene if the situation presents itself.

The following are ten ways to monitor your teenager's behavior and watch for signs of drug use, without appearing to be spying:

1. Hug your teen as soon as s/he arrives home. Check for odors of possible marijuana smoke or alcohol. Remember that cologne or chewing gum may be used to hide the odor.
2. Teenagers under the influence will usually go straight to their room when they arrive home. While making eye contact, hold a brief conversation. Check for bloodshot eyes, slurred speech and their sense of balance.
3. Keep the lights on and stay up until your teenager comes home.
4. Ask your teen for the time and watch the way s/he looks at his or her watch.
5. If your teenager unexpectedly wants to spend the night at a friend's house, and you have concerns, say no.
6. Maintain a flexible schedule. Be unpredictable so your teen cannot find it easy to plan around your activities.
7. Keep abreast of what your teen is really doing when away from home. Meet their friends and their parents and participate in mutual activities. This is a very effective form of networking.
8. Ask your neighbors to discretely keep an eye on any activities that may take place while you are not home.
9. Check to see how your teens are doing in school. Ask their teachers if there is any cause for concern or if your teen has been behaving differently.
10. After you meet your teenager's friends, always ask them to identify themselves when they call. Get to know them. Always encourage your teens to invite their friends over while you are home.

Remember, your goal should be to prevent your teenager from feeling free to experiment with drugs or alcohol. The best way to accomplish this is to keep abreast of their activities and friends using the above methods.

Lastly, but most important, talk to your teenager on a regular basis about the drug use she witnesses,

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and how she feels about it. Also, if she has been approached, have her describe how she handled the situation. Strive for honesty and ask how you can help her to remain drug free.

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V. Michael Santoro M. Ed. coauthored, "Realizing the Power of Love," How a father and teenage daughter became best friends...and how you can too, with his teenage daughter Jennifer S. Santoro. Visit their Web site at

### **Big Brother has a name: Yahoo is Spying on you**

**By dDawg**

#### **Big Brother has a name: Yahoo is Spying on you by dDawg**

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