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with
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Is your child using drugs?

Is your child using drugs? There seems to be a real surge in the number of youth under the age of 18 that are using drugs. Most parents would be shocked to learn that most of the youth I arrest for possession of marihuana admit to smoking drugs, if not daily, several times per week. I find this trend extremely troublesome since a good deal of these "children" resort to selling drugs in and around their schools so they can support their own drug habit. Now I'm not just referring to youth in their late teens, I'm also referring to children as young as 12 years old.

One of the solutions to this problem, a solution that will reduce the number of youth becoming addicted to drugs, is parents being able to recognize drug use/abuse so they can get their children help for their addictions. The following are tips to help parents identify drug use and abuse.

1. Observe your child's relationships. Have relations deteriorated? Does your child have a new group of friends? Do you know the names of your child's friends?
2. Take note of changes in your child's eating and/or sleeping habits, and look for signs of depression or withdrawal.
3. Notice if your child has suddenly lost interest in his or her favorite activities. Do you know where your children are when not at home? "I'm going out with friends", should not be an accepted response when you ask your child where they are going. Your child owes it to you to explain where they are going and with whom.
4. Be wary of irregular school attendance or a slip in your child's grades.
5. Note any increased hostility in your child's behavior.
6. Check to see if your child has become more careless about grooming.
7. Pay attention to clues around the house. Has money been disappearing? Be sure to note the presence of small medicine bottles, eyedrops or butane lighters in the house, as well as more obvious items such as homemade pipes made out of plastic pop bottles.
8. Look for small ziplock bags, commonly referred to as "dimebags"; rolling papers for cigarettes and excessive amounts of air freshener or perfumes.

I want to stress that you as a parent have the **Right** and the **Obligation** to search your child's room and belongings for drugs if you suspect your child has chosen this path. I am not suggesting parents have to turn their child over to the authorities should drugs be found (although you can), but they should be taking the steps necessary to protect their child and get them the help they need, because like it or not, marihuana is a gateway drug. Ask yourself this: If your child is experimenting with marihuana under the age of 16, will marihuana be enough later in life? I once listened to a lecture from a recovering crack addict and that person was asked if marihuana was a gateway drug. That person stated it was, but then told the group that the real gateway drug was cigarettes....Something to think about!

If you require any other information or assistance with this issue, please call me at 905.878.5511 x 2105 or you can e-mail me at rob.felske@hrps.on.ca. If you do not feel comfortable seeking help from the police, there are community agencies in Acton that will provide confidential assistance.



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