

You can help your teen with his drug problem

(This is another in a series of columns on adolescent drug abuse.)

By Ken Moffatt & Dennis Bernardi
Addiction Research Foundation

Since it began, this column has looked at various aspects of adolescent drug use. The previous article looked at some of its indicators. Perhaps it is time to talk about what steps can be taken by parents of teenagers with drug-related problems.

While these steps are no insurance of a happy ending, they provide some general guidelines which can be useful in specific situations.

(1) Don't Blow Your Cork!

The most natural thing in the world for a parent to do upon discovering that his or her child uses drugs, is to hit the roof with rage, hurt, and fear.

In this case, however, it is important to go against nature. If you must bang your head against a wall in order to calm down, don't do it in the presence of the child in question. Initially, it is important to get perspective and control with regard to your own emotions.

(2) Get Information

If you don't know anything about drugs, get some basic information to get you started. Our office can help you in that department and so can your pharmacist or family physician.

(3) Establish Communication

Try to build some communication bridges when you begin to discuss the issue with the child. You can express your concerns about some of the negative behaviours and attitudes you've noticed (e.g. moodiness, sloppiness, dropping school grades, drug-using friends, etc.) and ask for explanations. But you must also get across that you care and want to help!

The ability to listen, and enabling the teenager to have confidence that you will continue to listen (rather than blow your top), will increase the chances that understanding can be established. The goal here is to establish a two-way communication.

A word of caution: don't expect to solve the problem in one sitting! This is a long-term project. You may even want to involve a trusted family friend in early discussions, as a sort of neutral referee.

(4) Establish a Drug Policy

The bottom line is doing something about the adolescent's problems and abstaining from drugs. Merely cutting down on drug use should not be acceptable as a goal in the home. The home itself should be declared a non-drug-storage-and-using zone. Try to get the child to move away from the drug-using environment.

(5) Broaden Scope of Your Efforts

Get perspective on the child's problems and strong points by checking with teachers, other parents, and trusted friends. Speak to the parents of drug-using friend of the teenager as well.

Go to professionals in order to obtain advice (Children's Aid, Public Health Nurse, Mental Health worker, AA, Al-Anon, Alateen, Thunder Bay Options for Youth, guidance counsellors, clergy, ARF, etc.). The more perspective and knowledge you can get, the more options you will see for yourself. Get to know the available resources.

(6) Discipline

If the adolescent's use of drugs is actually out of control, it is essential that he or she get professional help. At home, controls must be applied firmly which relate to expected behaviours in the home, e.g. abstinence, school work, curfew, etc.

Applying authority firmly does not mean doing so with contempt. It means without wavering—the tough application of love. It also means being consistent while avoiding ultimatums.

The adolescent will usually express resentment at first, but eventually may show appreciation and relief at this illustration that the parents care. Some studies have shown that the highest incidence of drug use occurs among students who are not expected at home at a particular time while the lowest incidence is found among students who have a curfew.

We are talking here about firm but reasonable discipline, not oppression.

(7) Communications Skills

Don't be outraged, inconsistent, rejecting, wishy-washy, punitive, and holier-than-thou. Do be accepting, open, supportive, firm, consistent and humble. And know (or learn) how to listen!

(8) Check Yourself Out

In his *Youth and Drugs: A Primer for Parents*, Don Smyth has a series

of 12 statements for parents to consider. He asks us to determine the extent to which the statements are true:

(1) Our home life is characterized more by warmth and calm than by coldness and turmoil.

(2) My life is one in which principles and beliefs are put ahead of career, friendships, and the general expectation of others.

(3) I project a joyful and confident outlook.

(4) Laughter and humour are often heard in our home.

(5) I usually speak in even tones rather than yell when I disagree with my child or spouse.

(6) I strive to teach self-reliance to my child rather than doing everything for him.

(7) Talking with my child and hearing about things that matter to

him or her are a vital part of my day.

(8) I find more things to praise than to criticize with respect to each member of the family.

(9) I practice respect for the laws (such as tax laws and public safety).

(10) I am a moderate or non-user of alcohol.

(11) I have seldom used prescription drugs such as tranquilizers.

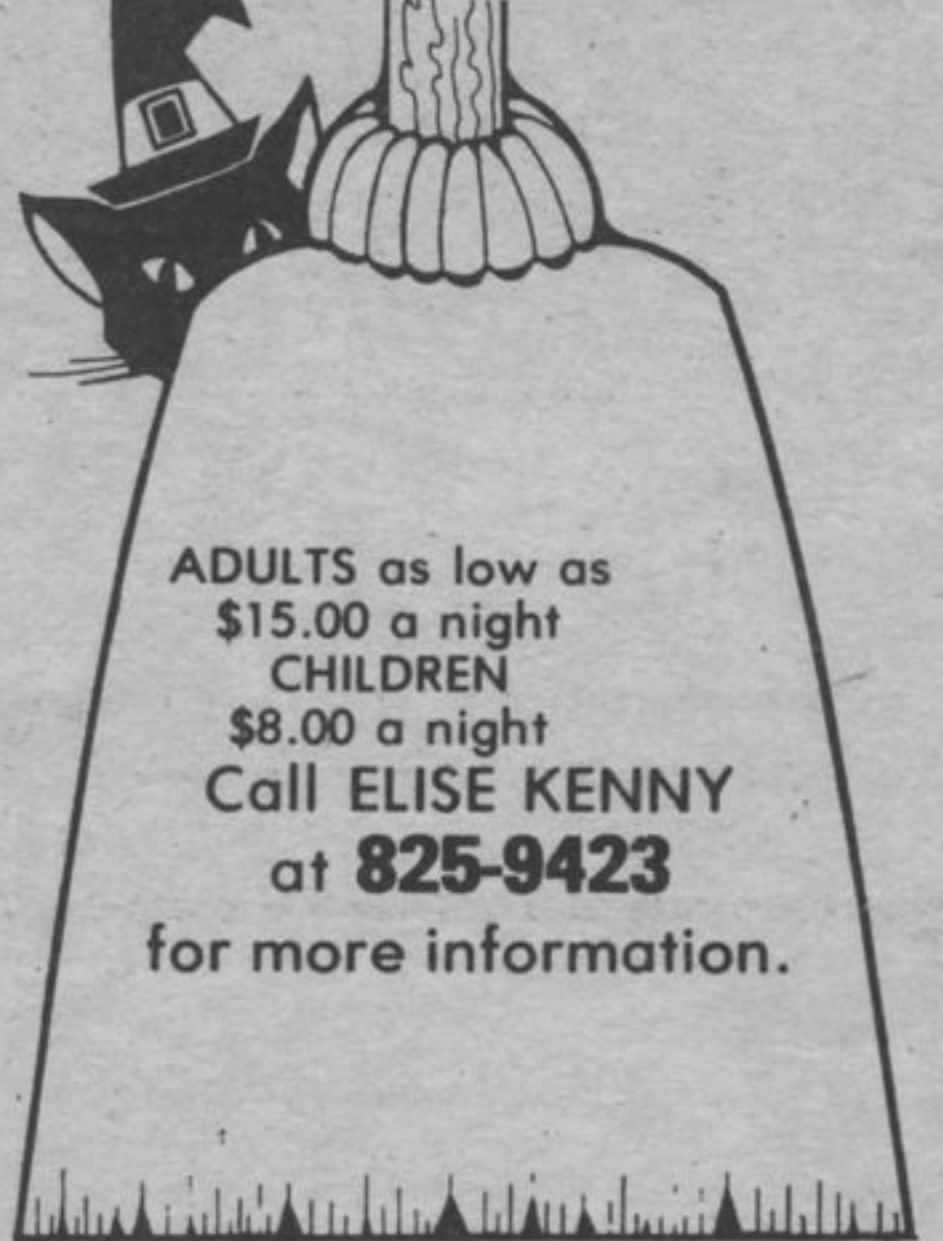
(12) I deal with anxiety in my life by positive means, such as a personal fitness or relaxation program.

(9) You Can Make A Difference

Don't let the drug mystique convince you that there's nothing you can do to help your child. Think back to your own youth and remember that adolescence is often a difficult, awkward, confusing, frustrating period at the best of times. You can make all the difference in the world!

Any questions? Write:
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Please Note: Tuesday, Oct. 20th cancelled in Schreiber
due to previous commitment

PUBLIC NOTICE OPERATING PLAN REVIEW

In accordance with Forest Management Plan No. 500800, signed between the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Great West Timber Limited, a Draft Forest Operating Plan has been submitted for the period April 1986 to March 1991, for the area outlined on the map.

The public is invited to review the five-year plan during normal office hours and express their comments or concerns verbally or in writing.

Written responses may be sent to:

District Manager
Ministry of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 280
TERRACE BAY, Ontario
P0T 2W0

Further information is available from and
verbal comments may be directed to:

Richard J. Norkooli
Acting Unit Forester
Ministry of Natural Resources
MANITOUWADGE, Ontario
P0T 2C0
Telephone: 807-828-3225

In addition, a public open house will be held October 27, from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Ministry of Natural Resources office in Manitouwadge at which time the plan text and maps will be available for reviewing.

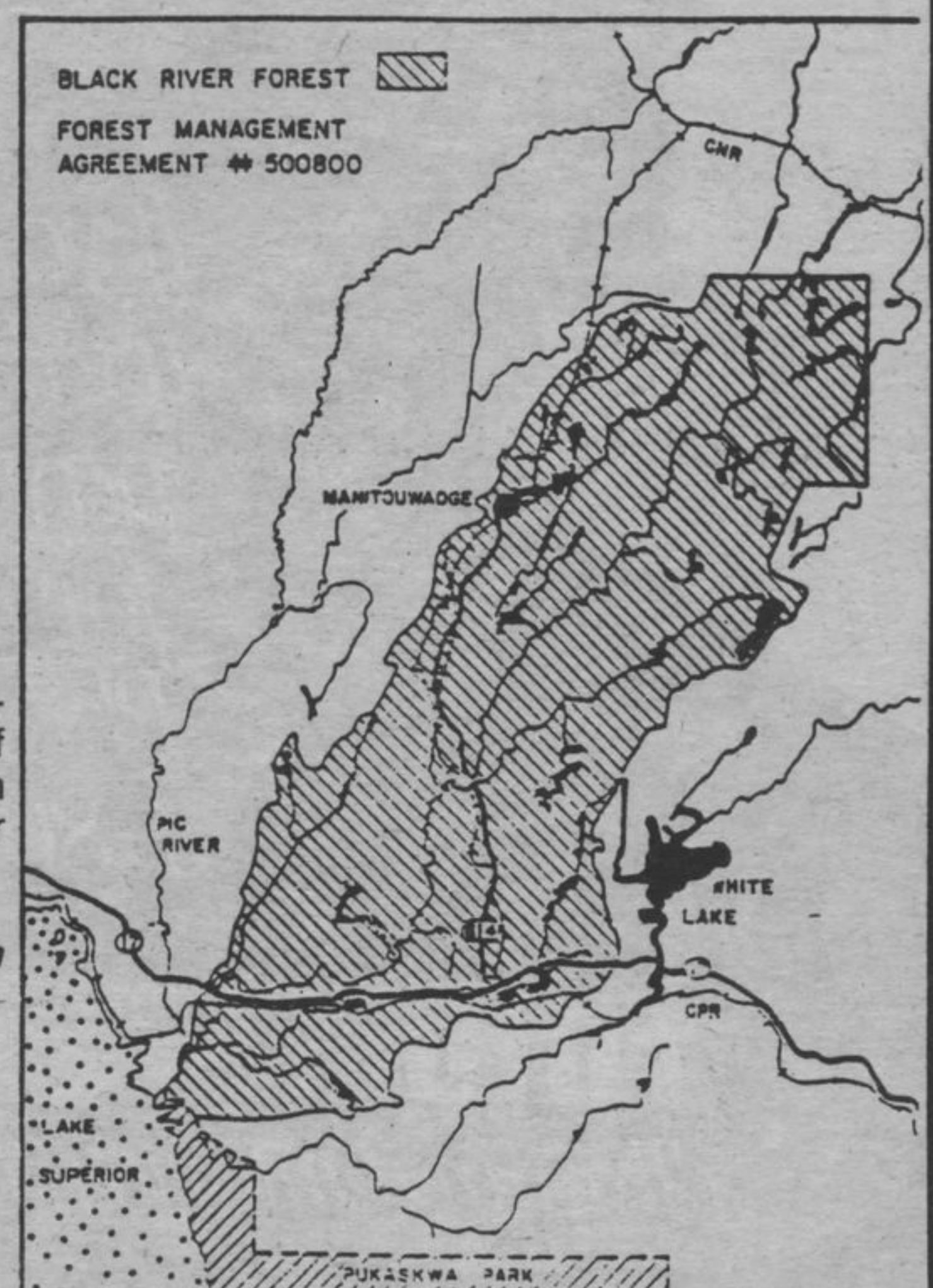
All comments are to be submitted no later than
November 14, 1986.



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