

EDITION 73 - WINTER 2019

# NEWSLETTER

BY FAMILIES, FOR FAMILIES



We've been there



## Families and Young People

Welcome to the winter edition of the Family Drug Help newsletter in which we focus on families and young people. I was interested to come across this quote:

"The world is passing through troublous times. The young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no reverence for parents or old age. They are impatient of all restraint. They talk as if they knew everything, and what passes for wisdom with us is foolishness with them."

From a sermon preached by Peter the Hermit in A.D. 1274

Throughout history families and young people have often been at odds with each other. Though the challenges and circumstances may be different, the underlying themes cycle through. Today being "impatient of all restraint" could relate to drug use, risk taking, boundary pushing, gambling, screen time or any other behaviour that can put pressure and strain on families. But it's the job description of young people to test boundaries, take risks and try on identities as they work out who they are (as if that ever stops for any of us!) in relation to themselves and their family and friends. It's a very stressful time that can be misunderstood as foolishness, arrogance, or being deliberately hurtful and destructive. Parents, though, are essential in this rite of passage, and have real influence both directly and indirectly.

Fortunately things have moved on from 1274. There is so much support and information available now, and a greater recognition of the unique needs of young people, and how as parents and families we can best support them and ourselves. As parents, get all the information you can and draw on this knowledge – you are not alone.

Family Drug Help is always here for families to provide a listening ear, provide hope and support, and explore other opportunities for support, both for the family and the young people.

For more helpful resources from our helpline, see our website.

From all of us at FDH.

Robert Campbell  
Programme Manager  
FDH

### Young People and Substance Use

- Q: What percentage of secondary school students have ever used an illicit drug?  
A: 14%
- Q: What percentage of secondary school students have used an illicit drug in the last week?  
A: 2.9%
- Q: What percentage of young people (aged 18-24) have used illicit drugs in the past 12 months?  
A: 28%
- Q: What is the average age that young people first try alcohol?  
A: 16.1 years old
- Q: On average, how many hospitalisations of 15-25 year olds happen because of alcohol?  
A: 1 in 4
- Q: How many teenagers who get drunk do something they regret?  
A: 1 in 2
- Q: What percentage of young people (12-17 years) have **never** tried cannabis?  
A: 68.7%
- Q: Is using drugs at a young age a risk factor for developing a drug or alcohol problem?  
A: Yes
- Q: What percentage of young people (12-17 years) who have **never** tried cannabis?  
A: 68.7

Source - [www.aiwh.gov.au](http://www.aiwh.gov.au)

Call our helpline for enquiries or bookings for any of the programs, including counselling, or go to [www.familydrughelp.org.au](http://www.familydrughelp.org.au) for further information.



1 300 660 068



Interpreter service available



[fdh@sharc.org.au](mailto:fdh@sharc.org.au)

One of the most difficult things about watching my teenage son discover drugs was realising just how little control I had over his choices. He no longer turned to me for advice or shared details of his days with me. In fact he did not want to spend much time with me at all - I paled in comparison to his peers. I felt totally shut out of his life, but I also knew in my heart he still needed me. I so desperately wanted to maintain a positive relationship with him, but in order to do that, I had to change my whole approach. And so I began on the counter-intuitive journey of talking to my son about drugs.

***'Don't hate the addict, hate the disease;  
don't hate the person, hate the behavior;  
if it's hard to watch it, know that it's hard to live it'***

***Anonymous***

I worked very hard to become the kind of parent he could confide in without fear of judgment or punishment, while at the same time trying to protect him from his own choices. What a tightrope to walk! I shifted from trying to control to trying to influence, from lectures to conversations, from instructions to questions and from threats to invitations. I actually had to totally let go of the 'don't do drugs' message, because it was met with an impenetrable wall of resistance in the form of eye rolls, yelling and storming out of rooms. Instead, I talked to my son about what it was he liked about drugs. This was really uncomfortable for me as he said a lot of things I didn't want to hear. But it did mean he felt more understood by me. And it meant he could also tell me what he didn't like about it. For example, that it affected his relationships with friends who didn't do drugs. These conversations were hard, but they opened the door to other positive things, such as making sure he was educated about harm minimisation, him agreeing see a drug and alcohol counsellor and us having a more harmonious relationship. Things are not perfect, but they are better for both of us.

FDH family member

## What if I think my child is using drugs?

Even if you're worried your child might be using substances, it's a bad idea to search their room for evidence. We know it's tempting, but it can break down the trust between you and your child and create feelings of suspicion and anger. It's always better to talk to them instead.

If you do think you've found a drug that your child is using, ask your child what it is. It's possible that they may be mistaken, because illegal drugs often look similar and are often confused with each other. ADF's drugs factsheets may help identify it. If you haven't talked with your child about alcohol or drugs before, now is the time—but it's important to wait until you have simmered down, and your child isn't intoxicated or tired.

When you do talk to them, consider:

- **The best approach.** It's easy to be judgemental and accusing, especially when you're worried and upset. But try to talk to them about their motivation—why they're using the substance, how it feels, and what the result is.
- Assuring them that you are **concerned about their wellbeing**, and the risk of drug use.
- Explaining that **their brain is continuing to develop** until their mid-20s, and that they are at a higher risk of harm than an adult.
- Letting them know **how you feel** about them drinking or using drugs, such as disappointment, fear, anger, frustration, exasperation.

Source - [www.adf.org.au](http://www.adf.org.au)



Photo by Michael Henry on Unsplash

### Useful links

The following websites have great information around young people and drugs:

- [www.yodaa.org.au](http://www.yodaa.org.au)
- [www.darta.net.au](http://www.darta.net.au)
- [www.adf.org.au](http://www.adf.org.au)
- [www.strongbonds.jss.org.au](http://www.strongbonds.jss.org.au)
- [www.positivechoices.org.au/](http://www.positivechoices.org.au/)

## Signs to Watch For

Whether or not drugs are involved, when a child isn't acting like themselves they could need your attention and help. Drug use, especially severe drug use, can be accompanied by the following:

- Unexplained need for money
- Disappearing money and valuables
- Problems with memory
- Trouble with the police
- Frequent absences from school/work
- Declining school/work performance
- Ignoring activities that used to be important to them
- Mood swings
- Tiredness
- Explosive outbursts
- Minimal interaction with family
- Changes in eating habits
- Sudden changes of friends
- Poor concentration
- Withdrawing socially

Source - [www.adf.org.au](http://www.adf.org.au)

## BREAKTHROUGH

Ice education for families

*'I was stuck and unable to tackle his addiction. Now I feel positive and empowered to use the framework learned in the course to navigate my way through the challenges.'*

Breakthrough attendee

BreakThrough offers workshops to families and friends who have been impacted by someone's ice use. It supports you to get the facts, develop strategies and find out where to access help and support.

## Support Groups

Our support groups are an opportunity to connect with others who are having similar experiences.

Many of our support groups have guest speakers and presenters as well as special topics. Check our website for the details (dates, times, locations) and our Facebook page for guests and topics at each group.

# InFocus

InFocus is a FREE six session education program for people affected by someone's drug or alcohol use.

Helping break the stigma, the program offers practical support, relevant information, coping strategies and the opportunity for people to connect through their shared experiences.

The program is facilitated by professionals who have also been impacted by someone's drug and alcohol use.

**You don't have to  
do this alone –  
we've been there.**

## For YOU

*I hope one day  
you give your heart  
to someone  
and they will hold it tight  
as if it's their own*

*I hope one day  
you wake up  
and have something  
or someone to live for*

*I hope one day  
you can go to bed  
smiling without a worry  
in the world*

*I hope one day  
the battle is over  
and you've won*

*I hope one day  
you meet someone  
who makes you realise  
how beautiful  
you truly are*

Anonymous



Photo by Devin Avery on Unsplash

All of us at Family Drug Help, both staff and volunteers, have lived the experience of addiction within our families. Whether it's our children, partners, parents, or siblings we know how difficult it can be. But we also know that recovery is possible, for both you and your loved ones. And we want to help you and your loved ones.

Whether it's on the helpline, in a support group or one of our structured programs, you will always be dealing with people who know what it's like because we've been there. Family Drug Help - by families, for families.

depression  
peer pressure shame  
blame anxiety  
study addiction sexuality  
trauma technology fear  
relationships

### *Gambling Family Support*



A first of its kind in Australia, InFocus Gambling is delivered through a peer support framework, facilitated by professionals who have also been impacted by gambling.

The program's purpose is to reduce gambling harm and stigma for families and friends, with the opportunity for people to connect through their shared experiences. We also run monthly support groups.

### the supper club

The Supper Club is a place you can come to gain support and talk openly about a loved one who has passed away as a result of substance use.

The group meets on the second Tuesday of each month, 5.45pm - 7.45pm, at SHARC, 140 Grange Road. A light meal is provided.

Call our helpline for enquiries or bookings for any of the programs, including counselling, or go to [www.familydrughelp.org.au](http://www.familydrughelp.org.au) for further information.

 1300 660 068



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