

## **ALEC (Aberdeenshire Life Education Centres) - Parent/ Carer Session**

### **Preventing problems with risky behaviour including alcohol and other drugs**

Research shows us that parents and carers have an important role to play in relation to their children's behaviour and also health-related decisions, including misuse of drugs in the future.

Evidence shows that there are some things that are able to protect children from misusing drugs and other behaviours that can be harmful to physical and emotional health and well-being.

These 'protective factors' may buffer exposure to risk. Some protective factors we are born with, but others can be positively influenced by parents, carers, teachers, other family members and friends.

#### **Protective Factors:**

- Bonding – feeling you belong. We are more likely to follow the rules and expectations of those we have a bond with
- Clear healthy consistent standards, including clear rules about alcohol etc
- Being able to bounce back from misfortune or adjust to change
- Raised self esteem
- Positive social skills to make healthy choices and cope with everyday life
- Involvement in alternative activities - having other things to do feeling part of something (i.e. a group)

#### **What can parents/families do?**

- Help your child feel involved in the family, school and community
- Work on communication with your child

#### **How can we do this?**

- It is a process not an event. It cannot be done overnight
- Talking and listening are so important
- Being involved and showing you care
- This process must start early. Children are impressionable about things like smoking and drinking as early as 5 years of age

#### **Use 'learning moments' – no lectures!**

Be available to talk and use any opportunity – 'learning moments' (eg TV programme, news, something happening locally etc)

#### **Set an example for your children**

Be consistent in what you say and do. If you drink, use it responsibly. Try not to use it to solve problems and don't glamorise it. Keeping large amounts of alcohol at home is inviting its use.

#### **Be factual**

Increase your knowledge of drugs so you feel more confident discussing them in a straightforward calm manner. Scare tactics and exaggerated stories have been shown not to work.

#### **State your position**

Let children know your views on alcohol and other drugs. Our children won't know what we think unless we talk openly about them.

#### **Have clear rules about alcohol and other drugs**

Children need to know where they stand and what is expected of them.

## **PROTECTIVE FACTORS START IN THE HOME.**

### **Some thing you can do...**

- Help your child develop life skills like talking about their feelings, sharing problems, decision making, coping
- Use 'I' messages (I worry that...) to express concerns
- Set clear rules/ boundaries and emphasise the consequences of breaking them. Discipline involves **teaching** not **punishment**
- Know your child's hopes and dreams. Children are less at risk if they are hopeful about the future
- Work at understanding your children. Believing that parent or carers understand them is a powerful factor for young people

### **How to show you are involved in your children's lives...**

- Express pride in them. Notice effort, not just success
- Spend time doing fun things
- Get to know their friends and their parents
- Watch TV together and discuss what you see
- Listen to their views – you don't have to agree, but listen
- Help them to get involved in a range of activities
- Be aware of where they are and what they're doing
- Establish jobs and responsibilities for everyone
- Have regular meals together, talk about what's happening in their lives at school and with friends
- Ask more 'open ended' questions other than those that require one word answers
- When appropriate, get your child's views on family decisions
- Emphasise the importance of effort in school and training
- Get involved with community groups and support school activities

### **Finally...**

- Get help if you need it

**No family is immune from difficulties.**

**Problems with alcohol/drugs affect all ages and walks of life.**

**We can only do our best to try to prevent problems arising.**

**If a problem does arise, remember help is available.**

### **Useful Websites:**

[alec.org.uk](http://alec.org.uk)

[parentzone.com](http://parentzone.com)

[coram.org.uk](http://coram.org.uk)

[knowthescore.info](http://knowthescore.info)

[dpyk.org.uk](http://dpyk.org.uk)

[net-aware.org.uk](http://net-aware.org.uk)

[talktofrank.com](http://talktofrank.com)

[drinkaware.co.uk](http://drinkaware.co.uk)

[nspcc.org.uk](http://nspcc.org.uk) (share aware)

[re-solv.org](http://re-solv.org)

[ashscotland.org.uk](http://ashscotland.org.uk)

[thinkuknow.co.uk](http://thinkuknow.co.uk)