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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

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Know! Addiction Doesn't Play Favorites

“7 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” Matthew 7:1-5

Whitney Houston’s sudden and tragic death will continue to be speculated and talked about by news media, and individuals, for weeks to come. Once the toxicology report is released, the subject is sure to reignite. More than likely, at one point or another, a conversation about Ms. Houston will emerge in your home. But parents beware; depending on how you discuss the issue of drug and alcohol addiction, you may be reinforcing attitudes and beliefs in your children, based on stereotypes, not facts.

Question: How do you think most people would describe a typical addict?

Common answers include: Emotionally Weak - Can’t Handle Stress - No Willpower - Uncaring - Immoral - Selfish.

Would you agree that most people do in fact think it is “that kind of person” who is more likely to develop an alcohol or other drug addiction? If this is true, it should simply be a matter of adjusting who they are, right? If only they become stronger, display greater willpower, start caring more about the people in their lives than their drug of choice; then they should be able to beat their addiction, right? If only it were so easy.

Perhaps Whitney Houston was under that same misconception when, in reference to her personal struggles with alcohol, marijuana, cocaine and pills, she said, “The biggest devil is me.” In that same interview she went on to say that in the past she chose to use these substances and that now she is simply choosing not to use. She claimed she was done with drugs. That was 10 years ago. We know that prescription pills and alcohol were found in her hotel room where she recently died.

In reality, for a person addicted to alcohol or other drugs, the biggest devil is the drug itself. While “choices” absolutely lay the groundwork toward the path to addiction, recovery is about much more than willpower or the love of family. It is not a matter of strength versus weakness. Substance addiction is a disease resulting from changes in brain chemistry, which is powerful and consuming. Professional help is usually required to treat the disease and make permanent lifestyle changes.



Talk early and often about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Even when it gets tough.

Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free



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Reality also reveals that addiction does not play favorites. There is no one person who can be defined as the stereotypical addict. A loving parent raising his/her children or a teenager with a seemingly bright future is at-risk, just like this Grammy award-winning celebrity.

The take-away message for parents: When the subject comes up, especially in the presence of young, impressionable children, be mindful of what you say and how you say it. Dispel the myth that addiction only happens to, "that kind of person." Youth need to know that it can happen to anyone, including them. Reinforce the importance of making good decisions and remind your child that one high-risk choice can change the course of everything. Speaking with empathy, not judgment, resonates more with young people and promotes open conversation, increasing your child's comfort level in talking with you about sensitive subjects like this and other drug-related topics.

Sources: Diane Sawyer/Whitney Houston Interview, ABC, 2002. Prime For Life, Prevention Research Institute.

Other Verses to Consider:

1 Corinthians 5:12-13
Philippians 2:4

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