



Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free

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



Click here to print a PDF of this article so you can start a conversation with your child

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

Know! encourages you to share this Parent Tip with friends and family.

Learn more at: DrugFreeActionAlliance.org

Know! is a program of:



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Know! The Impact of Childhood Trauma

Nearly half of all children in the U.S. have endured one or more traumatic experiences which threaten the life or wholeness of the child or someone really important to him/her. Common childhood traumas include: abuse (physical, sexual or verbal); neglect (physical or emotional); having a parent who is addicted to alcohol or other drugs or has a mental illness; a child who witnesses domestic violence or loses a parent to abandonment, divorce or death.

While every child reacts differently to trauma, the common thread is that they are more likely to view the world and the people in it as unpredictable, untrustworthy and unsafe. Many times, these children have difficulties in their relationships and coping with their emotions. They are likely to experience sleep problems, churning stomachs, increased heart rates and be on constant high alert for potential danger. Adolescents who've suffered traumatic events are also more likely to make poor choices, underachieve and/or fail in school, act aggressively towards others, be promiscuous and engage in delinquent activity.

Substance abuse is also common among youth who've experienced trauma. They turn to alcohol or other drugs in an attempt to avoid those overwhelming negative feelings. But in doing so, they create a cycle of re-victimization.

For these teens, reminders of past trauma elicit cravings for alcohol and other drugs. These substances however, further impair their ability to cope with distressing and traumatic events, increasing their likelihood of engaging in further risky behaviors that could lead to additional trauma. So in the end, instead of drowning-out their pain, they have only increased it.

The consequences of childhood trauma do not necessarily end with childhood either. A CDC study revealed a direct link between childhood trauma and the adult onset of chronic disease, mental illness and violence. And, as the number of traumatic childhood experiences increased, so too did a child's risk for lifelong negative consequences.

Without help and support from caring adults, children who have experienced trauma are likely to suffer physically and mentally and deal with those feelings in unhealthy ways. If you are a parent, grandparent, caregiver or teacher of a child who has gone through or is going through some type of trauma, you can make a difference and potentially change the course of their future.



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In our next tip, [Know! The Importance of Trauma-Informed Parenting](#), you will learn a parenting strategy to provide help and hope for a hurting child.

Sources: [ACES too high: Nearly 35 million U.S. children have experienced one or more types of childhood trauma](#). [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Adverse Childhood Experiences Study \(ACES\)](#). [National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(NCTSN\): Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma: A workshop for resource parents \(2010\)](#).

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