THE EIGHT MOST CRITICAL YEARS

Virtually all non-medical drug use begins between the ages of 12 and 20. If a young person can survive these critical eight years without using alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, or inhalants, not only do we drastically reduce the likelihood that he will use other drugs, but we will also reduce the possibility that he will ever have a problem with alcohol.

DRUG USE RARELY BEGINS IN ADULTHOOD; IT BEGINS DURING THE CHILDHOOD YEARS.

Most teens usually do not seek out alcohol or other drugs initially; they simply respond by taking them in order to "fit in" among peers.

Many youth who eventually try drugs turn them down the first several times they are offered to them. Stopping first-time drug use is essential to stopping all drug use.

ADULT ATTITUDES AT HOME AND SCHOOL

Parents, teachers, law-enforcement officials, and youth peer groups need to get tough on all underage drug use. Such use is harmful, illegal, and unhealthy.

We need an all-out, family-based effort to stop teenage drug use. The most important means to achieving this goal is the ***re-education*** of parents and teachers who, along with our adolescents, have come to accept teenage drug use as both inevitable and normal.

Adults must stop being taken in by the cop-out that *"Everybody does it"* or that *"Drug use is okay but drug abuse is the problem"* or that we need to reduce the "harm" caused by the illegal use of alcohol or other drugs. ***Any and all*** alcohol and other drug use by teenagers is harmful, illegal, and dangerous.

Adults—especially parents—have in the past few decades too often abandoned our teenagers, especially when it comes to alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana. They seem to accept the notion that *"Everyone has to try it for themselves"* and that this is *"a stage kids go through."* Many adults don't know what to say, so they say nothing.

These trends MUST be reversed. Adults must make clear statements that intoxicating drugs are poisons and pollutants to the brain and the entire body. Alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs must be rejected—not played with.

ALL DRUG PREVENTION EFFORTS AIMED AT CHILDREN ARE NOT SO MUCH ANTI-DRUG AS THEY ARE PRO-CHILDREN.

~ Getting Tough on Gateway Drugs, by Robert L. DuPont, Jr., M.D., American Psychiatric Press, Inc., 1984

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