

For parents



Living with a drug user



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- Be ready to explain your views – e.g. do you see the use of cigarettes or alcohol in the same way as you see the use of other drugs? What about the use of drugs such as cannabis, ecstasy and heroin? What are these differences based on?
- Think about your own behaviour and examples you set for your children. Despite being aware of the potential dangers of alcohol it doesn't stop most of us having a drink, and sometimes overdoing it. Many young people learn from example, so you need to be prepared to talk about your own behaviour and discuss what you do to make sure it doesn't get out of hand.
- If you have taken illegal drugs, you could tell your children about your experiences, how you avoided dangers and if it led to problems, why and how you stopped. You could also talk about the risks you took and how you feel about this now; was it worth it? This could help to encourage a more open and in-depth discussion between you.
- If you or adult friends of yours currently use illegal drugs, it's extremely important to think about how you will handle this with your children. Even if you are discreet about your use, there are potential negative consequences involved in breaking the law and unexpected health problems that it is important for you to discuss with your children.
- If you are worried that your own drug use is affecting your ability to look after your children, don't avoid getting help, because asking for help rather than waiting until things get out of control will be seen as positive, not negative, action by those you ask for help. Drug treatment facilities are available in all areas of the country (see www.talktofrank.com for a directory of treatment services).

A family support worker says of Louise, a concerned parent:

“She'd tried to talk to her daughter about her cannabis smoking and she'd responded by saying 'Well you smoke and that's dangerous, so why shouldn't I smoke cannabis?'

Louise felt at a loss and didn't know how to respond. At a support group, Louise was able to talk through her feelings about the differences in her behaviour and her daughter's and to think about how she could approach the issue with her daughter. ”