



Happy new year to all! Now that we're past the holidays, much planning is occurring for events both in the near future and further off in the year. In January, for instance, we're going to be holding focus groups of both Lakeland and Yorktown school district parents. If you're interested in attending, please let Cathy know.

This month we're debuting two new columns – "What's on My Nightstand", reviews of books on topics of concern to the Alliance. Check out the first Nightstand, on page 4. For the second, "What Do I Do If ...?", a different question will be posed each month – this month's has to do with discovering a teen smoking marijuana.

As ever, if there's something you would like to contribute for the newsletter, just contact Cindy at Justask_ask@yahoo.com, or Cathy at ASK4Kids@gmail.com.

Tricy Cushner, President Cathryn Martin, Director Cynthia Cervini, Editor

Calendar

Tues, Jan 26th
4-5 PM
*Coalition mtg, ,
 Sparkle Lake
 Community
 Bldg*

Tues, Jan 26th
7-8:30 PM
*Lakeland parent
 focus group*

Sat., Feb. 27th
8-10 PM
*Middle School
 Night at Solaris*

What Do I Do If?

**Ask the Experts: The Right Punishment
 From Parents, The Anti-Drug**

I have caught my 16 year-old son and a couple of his friends smoking pot in our house. I acknowledged that I knew what they were doing, but because I was so mad, I said I would deal with it later. Just how do I deal with this? What kind of punishment should he receive?

One caveat about punishment, it is most effective when a positive affective bond exists between the parent and child. Thus, it is important as a parent to balance being hard and soft. That is, parents must consistently enforce all rules and consequences but also build in opportunities to promote positive interactions with your child (e.g., praise).

If a positive affective bond exists between you and your child, you might find several strategies helpful:

- First, as suggested in "The Anti-Drug" ad campaign, be very specific and clear with your son that you do not want him to use drugs or associate with peers who use drugs.
- Second, punish your son's association with these drug-using peers by taking away his privileges contingently (examples can be found below) and positively reward association with prosocial peers (i.e., access to privileges).
- Third, contact the parents of his friends and let them know that you found your son and his friends (their son) smoking pot in your house and as punishment you are limiting your son's contact with their son (a minimum of one week, however, if you catch them again you may have to mandate no contact at all). Association with drug using peers is the number one predictor of adolescent drug use.

Contacting the parents of your son's friends can be helpful in several ways: (1) it sends a clear message to your son's friends and their parents that you are serious about your son not using drugs, (2) it often leads to parents punishing their children, (3) it provides a useful model for other parents on what "to do" if they were in a similar bind, (4) it elicits help from others in keeping an eye on your son (it does "Take a Village to Raise a Child"), and (5) it may serve to embarrass your son, which is a powerful motivator for most adolescents.

A third strategy is to take away privileges such as the use of the telephone, T.V., or video games for some period of time (several days to a week). Other privileges that you can take include: listening to the stereo, dating or going to

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Middle School Night at Solaris Rescheduled

The Middle School Night at Solaris Sports Club, originally planned for December 26th, has been rescheduled for Saturday, February 27th. The event will run from 8-10 PM. All middle school students are invited to a social at Solaris Sports Club. Please see next month's newsletter for more information.

Your Child: Grades 10-12

From Partnership for a Drug-Free America

When it comes to drugs, teens are a savvy bunch. Drugs and messages about living drug-free have been part of their lives for years. They can make distinctions not only among different drugs and their effects, but also among trial, occasional use and addiction. They've witnessed many of their peers using drugs — some without obvious or immediate consequences, others whose drug use gets out of control. By the teen years, kids have also had to make plenty of choices of their own about drug use: whether they should give in to peer pressure and experiment with drugs, or go against some of their peers and stay clean.

Here are 6 tips to help you help your teen continue to live a healthy, drug-free life:

1. **Don't speak generally about drug- and alcohol-use— your older teen needs to hear detailed and reality-driven messages.** Topics worth talking about with your teen: using a drug just once can have serious permanent consequences; can put you in risky and dangerous situations; anybody can become a chronic user or addict; combining drugs can have deadly consequences.
2. **Emphasize what drug use can do to your teen's future.** Discuss how drug use can ruin your teen's chance of getting into the college she's been dreaming about or landing the perfect job.
3. **Challenge your child to be a peer leader among his friends and to take personal responsibility for his actions and show others how to do the same**
4. **Encourage your teen to volunteer somewhere that he can see the impact of drugs on your community.** Teenagers tend to be idealistic and enjoy hearing about ways they can help make the world a better place. Help your teen research volunteer opportunities at local homeless shelters, hospitals or victim services centers.
5. **Use news reports as discussion openers.** If you see a news story about an alcohol-related car accident, talk to your teen about all the victims that an accident leaves in its wake. If the story is about drugs in your community, talk about the ways your community has changed as drug use has grown.
6. **Compliment your teen for the all the things he does well and for the positive choices he makes.** Let him know that he is seen and appreciated. And let him know how you appreciate what a good role model he is for his younger siblings and other kids in the community. Teens still care what their parents think. Let him know how deeply disappointed you would be if he started using drugs.

Drugs in your teen's world can include:

Tobacco, Alcohol, prescription drugs such as Ritalin, Oxycontin, Vicodin, Valium and Xanax, Inhalants, Marijuana, Ecstasy, Herbal Ecstasy, Cocaine/Crack, GHB, Heroin, Rohypnol, Ketamine, LSD, Mushrooms

Get a Life

By Cynthia Cervini

The Shot came out of rehab two weeks ago. Report card rehab that is. He'd been in rehab since his June report card, which had grades never before seen in the Cervini household. And the comments... well, let's just say they weren't worthy of posting on the refrigerator.

The basic premise of report card rehab was to grab his attention by taking away something of interest to him. This was easy enough - the child would marry his Xbox video game system if it were legal to do so. An added bonus: he could use all the time formerly used for gaming to do something productive, like ... maybe homework.

But there was a flaw in the plan. It's all about the math. Here's a word problem: If there are six hours between school ending and bed time, give or take a half hour for eating (the Cervinis are discouragingly fast eaters), how much time would that leave for homework? Five hours is the technically correct answer, but you'd be assuming you can get a seventh grader to devote more than two or three hours to academics. I quickly learned that teachers can't assign enough work to fill the time now open in his new Xboxless life. Clearly a second intervention was in order.

It's a common complaint for kids in places like Yorktown and Cornwall, where I live, that there is 'nothing to do'. (I often wonder if kids in places like London, Paris and Rome tell their parents there is nothing to do – "*Je déteste Paris parce-que il y a rien à faire ici!*") As parents, isn't that one of our responsibilities – not to entertain our children, per se, but to provide our children with outlets besides 'hanging out'?

Then my boss Jim (not to be confused with Jim From Karate) presented my son with vintage slot cars – *lots* of vintage cars. I'd mentioned that my son enjoys building model cars, and my boss made an early Christmas present of cars given to him by his friend's widow ten years ago. Now The Shot has intact cars, cars under construction, car engines, copper piping to make the engines run, etc, etc. That's not even the best part! Turns out, fifteen minutes from our house is a slot car racing track where kids and adults race the evenings away. I had unwittingly stepped into a gold mine of good old fashioned family values, clean-fun-for-all-ages heaven. It isn't open until after dinner, leaving him plenty of time to do his homework and ... alright, I'm gushing; you get the picture.

Listen, I recognize that not every twelve year old gets a charge out of racing cars, but there are other outlets as well for this pent-up middle school energy. For instance, if you put a board under my son's feet he's a happy man.

[Snowboarding](#) in winter, [skimboarding](#) in summer. He and his friend Ricky (aka 'Rick Dog') skimboard down the hills of the local golf course after a heavy rain. I mentioned last month his love affair with Grand Prix New York in Mount Kisco where he [races go-carts](#) (I never claimed rehab came cheap). They even have an espresso/coffee bar for parents. For Yorktown kids, a couple of months ago the Alliance for Safe Kids and Club Fit co-sponsored a middle school night that drew 185 middle schoolers for a night of music and activities in a supervised setting. A similar event is scheduled for February 27th at Solaris Sports Club.

Our counselors often receive requests from parents of high school freshman imploring us to "make" their child get involved in sports or clubs now that they are in high school - "It looks good for college". But while I'm more than willing to have the conversation, it's extremely difficult to cajole a reluctant high schooler to join a club or participate in sports because "it looks good". It's far better to develop their interests earlier, involve them in activities while they are still in elementary and middle school. By high school it's almost too late, but even at that point there are opportunities available - it just may be that one has to think outside the box to find something that's meaningful to your child.

I just wrote a college recommendation for a senior, a dancer who teaches youngsters for free at her house, then in a recital showcases her students. Her last recital netted \$16,000, donated to the University of Michigan for cancer research. One of my colleagues wrote a recommendation letter for a boy who started his own successful computer business as a freshman. It goes without saying that nothing pretty will come from too much unstructured time with kids left to their own devices. So next time one of your children tells you to get a life, you might just challenge them to do the same.

What's on My Nightstand

By Cynthia Cervini

As anyone who knows me will attest, I have a bad habit of interrupting any conversation or discussion with the often unrelated query "What are you reading right now?" I'm nosy as to what my friends, colleagues and neighbors are reading at any particular time, and am quick to regale them as to my book of the moment. So I will start the ball rolling this month but promise that each newsletter will feature a new book recommendation from a different ASK member. Here goes:

What it Takes to Pull Me Through – Dave Marcus

The book follows the progress of a group of students who attend Academy of Swift Hills, a private, therapeutic boarding school in western Massachusetts. The students are demographically and economically diverse and the problems that brought them there run the gamut from drug use, violence, and theft, to depression and promiscuity. For 14 months the author had unlimited access to the teenagers, their parents and staff from this program, which combines academics, a wilderness program and intense group therapy. It's disturbing to find out what went on in these kids' lives prior to their placement and fascinating to watch as they progress through the program. The book offers an insider's view of the culture of teens and the issues they face.

Oath of Peace Through Sports: the Harlem Wizards come to Solaris

Students aged 7-15 are invited to Solaris Sports Club to participate in an Oath of Peace Through Sports program with the Harlem Wizards. There will be a basketball workshop, and attendees will sign a basketball to be delivered to the United Nations. Pizza will be served, and t-shirts given to participants. Other prizes will be offered as well.

The cost is \$70 per participant and will be held on January 18th from 9 AM – 3 PM. Contact Jeannie at Solaris at (914) 962-4094 for more information.

Teen Drug, Alcohol Use and Gambling: Ellen Morehouse Presentation at LHS

On Wednesday, January 13th, Executive Director of Student Assistance Services Ellen Morehouse addressed a group of parents at Lakeland High School. The topic of discussion was a survey conducted with 10th and 12th graders in Lakeland High School in 2009 which survey focused on alcohol and other drug use, as well as gambling, gang involvement and other destructive behavior. Many thanks to Lakeland High School Principal Cheryl Champ and Parents for Lakeland President Mary Farrell Murphy for co-sponsoring this event.

What Do I Do If ...?*Cont'd from pg 1*

the movies, having friends over, etc. One privilege that most parents do not use that can be a powerful reinforcer is access to brand name clothing. One consequence that we have used is to take a youth's "Brand name" clothing (e.g., Nike, Tommy Hilfiger, FUBU, etc.) and replace them with bland "no name" clothing contingent upon repeatedly passing urine tests.

Fourth, if the affective bond is there, having your son earn your trust can be a very powerful tool to use. Earning your trust can include mandatory supervision by not allowing your son to be home alone without adult supervision (which may inconvenience him) and requiring an early curfew. However, as your son increases compliance with tasks (home, school) at least 75% of the time you can begin extending curfew and increasing the amount of time he is without "close" adult supervision (but you must continue to check on his whereabouts and peer associations).

Finally, make sure to pay attention to your son's efforts at good behavior and the things he does right. Because exclusive use of punishment has the untoward effect of undermining the affective bond (not to mention increased anger, resentment, and "sneakiness") you must set up opportunities to "catch your son being good."

Dr. Phillippe Cunningham has a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. He currently serves as an assistant professor at the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Medical University of South Carolina.