

PLAYING OUR ROLES TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM THE HARM OF DRUG ABUSE ¹

1. THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Supportive mothers and fathers can teach children values and life skills that will guide them in making the right choices in life.

- Parents can start by building a good parent-child relationship. Parents should show their children that they care and that they are interested in what their children do.
- Parents should talk with their children, not at them, and keep the lines of communication open. They should pay attention to what their children are saying.
- Parents should be alert and pay attention to their children's body language. A relaxed child smiles, and will not show obvious signs of nervousness. These signs may include shaking or tapping of feet, drumming fingers and hanging the head when speaking.
- Parents should help make their children feel responsible. Children can be given tasks at home to learn responsibility.
- Parents should help children say no to drugs. One way is to encourage them to take up sports or hobbies and teach them to make creative use of their leisure time.
- Parents should learn about the dangers of drugs and what they do to people so they can help their children make informed choices.
- Parents should learn to look out for signs of drug abuse. Some of these include :
 - ➔ moodiness, excitement, anger, hostility, depression
 - ➔ constant lying and stealing
 - ➔ refusing to admit to the harmful effects
 - ➔ being secretive about phone calls
 - ➔ having friends they do not want you to meet or talk about
 - ➔ being evasive about their whereabouts
 - ➔ loss of motivation
 - ➔ no interest in everyday life
 - ➔ paying truant from school
 - ➔ lack of interest in personal hygiene and appearance

¹ United Nations Office for Drugs & Crime (UNODC)

PLAYING OUR ROLES TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM THE HARM OF DRUG ABUSE ¹

2. THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS

Schools should be a safe environment where children can develop inter-personal skills and a sense of responsibility. Teachers should seek to build children's confidence and self-esteem.

- Teachers can be role models for students and dissuade them from abusing drugs. This is all the more important if young people do not have supportive families to guide them.
- Teachers can help students realise that they are not alone in facing the challenges of growing up. Teach students life-skills so they can resist peer pressure.
- Teachers can help build a student's self-esteem and strengthen their inter-personal skills. Teachers can help instill confidence in their students by encouraging them to accept themselves.
- Teachers should show tolerance so that students are prepared to communicate their thoughts.
- Teachers can help students learn about drugs and HIV/AIDS through creative expressions – class debates, art competitions, drama and role plays
- Teachers can encourage students to participate in extra-curricular sports activities as this will foster a healthy lifestyle.
- Teachers should learn to look out for warning signs which include:
 - ➔ anger for no reason
 - ➔ loss of interest in school or extra-curricular activities
 - ➔ difficulty getting along with others
 - ➔ playing truant
 - ➔ falling grades and poor academic performance
 - ➔ short attention span