



addaction



RESILIENCE PROGRAMME
PARENTS' INFORMATION BOOKLET



ABOUT THE RESILIENCE PROGRAMME

The Amy Winehouse Foundation Resilience Programme was first launched in 2013 and then expanded in 2014 thanks to funding from the BIG Lottery Fund. Delivered in over 200 schools across England, the Resilience Programme works with parents, teachers and pupils to better manage their emotional wellbeing to enable students to make healthy decisions about the use of drugs and alcohol, and about how to best handle peer pressure, their self esteem and risky situations. Parents play a key role in this process and whether or not your school is receiving the Resilience Programme, we believe it is vital that every parent has access to the information held within this book.

The programme is delivered in partnership between the Amy Winehouse Foundation and Addaction, one of the UK's largest specialist drug and alcohol charities. To find out more about the programme, our organisations and the work we do please visit www.amywinehousefoundation.org and www.addaction.org.uk

PROMOTING RESILIENCE

Each year we speak to thousands of children and young people in classrooms up and down the country about the issues that might be affecting them both inside and outside of school. We encounter many who feel under a great deal of pressure, whether it be to succeed in exams, maintain relationships or to look or act in certain ways. These stresses can have a significant impact on both physical and emotional health.

For example:



Almost 1 in 4 children and young people show some evidence of mental ill health (including anxiety and depression).

(ONS, 2016)

Many young people who feel stressed will seek positive ways to cope with whatever life throws at them, perhaps taking part in sports and leisure activities, meeting with friends or confiding to someone in whom they trust. Parents can play a vital role in supporting them with this. Unfortunately there will be those that suffer in silence and who find other means to cope with their problems, which could increase the risk of engaging in drug or alcohol misuse.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

Many parents tell us that they are extremely concerned about these issues, but feel unsure about how to talk about them with their children, often citing a lack of knowledge or confidence. We are regularly asked questions such as ‘when is the right time to talk to my children about drugs?’ or ‘what if they tell me something I don’t like or ask a question I can’t answer?’

Parents can play a huge role in educating young people about the dangers and risks associated with drug or alcohol misuse and whilst there is no exact science, in this booklet we offer some helpful advice that can support you in having effective conversations with your child.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE

It's important to remember that not all young people will experiment with or misuse drugs or alcohol at some stage. Many do not. For those that do, not all will come to any direct harm as a result. There will, however, be those that do, because drug and alcohol misuse can present a number of risks that can impact significantly on an individual's health and wellbeing. The full extent of these risks will be determined by the type of substance being used, and the quantity, frequency and environment in which it is taken.

For your reference, current research suggests that the most commonly used substances amongst young people are alcohol and cannabis. In recent years we have also seen a rise in the use of NPS (which you may have heard referred to in the media as 'legal highs'). For example:



23% of children aged 15 years report having been drunk in the last four weeks. Of pupils who obtained alcohol in the last four weeks, the most common sources were to be given it by parents or guardians (70%), given it by friends (54%), or to take it from home with permission (41%)

(NHS, Smoking, Drinking and Drugs Survey, 2017)

24% of children aged 11-15 years report having taken drugs at some stage, with 18% having done so in the last year. The likelihood increases according to age with 37% of children aged 15 years reporting having taken drugs at some stage

(NHS, Smoking, Drinking and Drugs Survey, 2017)

In order to begin having effective conversations with your child it is important for you to know where you can go to access up-to-date and credible information on the various substances that are out there. You do not have to become an expert, but this will help build your confidence to begin a conversation and put you in a better position to answer any difficult questions you may receive. We suggest the following websites to get you started:

Young Addaction	www.addaction.org.uk
Talk to Frank	www.talktofrank.com
Drinkaware	www.drinkaware.co.uk
Alcohol Concern	www.alcoholconcern.org.uk
Mentor UK	www.mentoruk.org.uk
Young Minds	www.youngminds.org.uk

WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE USE SUBSTANCES?

There are a variety of reasons why young people might experiment with or misuse drugs or alcohol. It could be out of simple curiosity, something that perhaps seems cool or fun. It might be a way to fit in with friends or a particular peer group, or perhaps a means to escape from whatever issues they have going on.

It is important that young people have access to information and advice that can help them to make more positive and informed choices. Parents can play a crucial role in tackling this by helping to put in place protective factors that help build resilience. Some examples for children can include:

- Having positive relationships and open communication with parents
- Being made to feel like they belong somewhere
- Having positive experiences and achievements
- Maintaining positive relationships with friends/peers
- Feeling respected and cared for



MAKING CONVERSATION



Three-quarters of parents with 11-16-year-olds thought they had had a conversation about drugs with their child. Less than half as many (36%) 11-17-year-olds said they remembered such a conversation taking place. (Mentor UK)

80% of parents said they would deal with the issue of alcohol with their child once it happens. (Drinkaware)

It is common for many parents to feel they might be the last person their child would want to speak to about drugs or alcohol. There are a variety of reasons why parents admit to avoiding these difficult conversations; e.g. not having enough knowledge, being frightened of their child's reaction or saying the wrong thing. It may be a case of not knowing the right time to bring it up.

Here are some top tips we would suggest:

1. Getting prepared

Firstly explore what your own thoughts/feelings are on drug and alcohol use. This will help you to consider any potential barriers or anxieties you may have and ways in which they can be addressed.

2. Getting clued up

This will help you to answer any questions that your child may have and ensure they are getting up-to-date and accurate information. It might be a useful conversation starter to review some information on drugs and alcohol together with your child and ask them for their thoughts and reflections.

3. Don't make it a big scary thing

Avoid having the 'big talk' by starting the discussion early and talking regularly. This will help avoid you or your child feeling awkward or uncomfortable.

4. Don't presume the issue won't affect you or your children

We know from our experience that people from all types of backgrounds and walks of life misuse drugs or alcohol.

5. Plan ahead for the conversation

Identify a suitable and convenient time to talk with your child. Perhaps you could use a relevant film or TV storyline to break the ice and begin a discussion. Alternatively, you could ask your child to talk to you about what they've learned by taking part in the Resilience Programme.

6. Think about location/environment

You should consider when and where might be a good place to begin to have the conversation. Ideally you want to be somewhere your child feels safe and comfortable. This will encourage them to open up to you.

7. Don't give up

If the conversation doesn't go the way you expected, remember an initial conversation can help to sow a seed and children do benefit more from a continual conversation rather than a 'big talk'. If your child feels reassured that you are available and will support them if they get into any problems, rather than punishing or sanctioning them, they are much more likely to ask for help early on before any problems get out of hand.

8. Talk to other parents

It may be useful to talk with other parents in a similar position to find out what worked or didn't work for them. This will also help ensure you feel supported.

HOW WILL MY CHILD REACT?



Nearly three quarters of children aged 9-17 say they would turn to their parents first for information and advice on drinking alcohol. (*Drinkaware*)

In our school-based sessions, we recently interviewed a number of the children to discuss their thoughts and feelings about talking to their parents about drugs and alcohol. The majority suggested they would be more than happy to do so, but acknowledged some concerns. In particular, they were worried that:

- Parents might react negatively or angrily
- Parents might think less of them
- They would get into trouble
- Parents might end up overreacting
- The experience would be awkward and uncomfortable

Such fears can sometimes encourage secrecy and avoidance, so it's important that you take these into consideration when planning your conversation. To encourage an honest and open dialogue with your child we would suggest the following steps:

1. Listen

Ask for their opinions, rather than simply lecturing them with the facts.

2. Stay calm

Try to be clear in setting out your values/expectations, and try to avoid shouting or making ultimatums, as these may encourage a negative reaction and secrecy.

3. Avoid scare tactics or being overly confrontational

It's important that young people don't feel accused or judged. Listen to

their views and offer your own in an honest and respectful manner. This should help them to feel comfortable in coming to you in the future.

4. Be non-judgmental about their thoughts/choices

This can feel difficult sometimes, but being dismissive or judgmental of someone's opinions or choices can often be counter productive.

5. Show empathy/understanding

Make sure your child knows that you understand that they might be facing a range of pressures and that they can talk to you honestly if ever they feel there is a problem.



SPOTTING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

It is common for parents to contact Addaction services with concerns about their child and ask what signs and symptoms they should be looking out for. The following are just a few examples that might be a sign of drug or alcohol misuse:

- **Finding paraphernalia around the home, i.e. bongs, smoking equipment, empty packets or bottles**
- **Frequent absences from school or a decline in their performance**
- **Displaying mood swings, tiredness or having angry outbursts**
- **Becoming anxious or withdrawn**
- **Changes in their eating, sleeping or social habits**

If you recognise any of the above signs and symptoms it is important that you do not jump to conclusions and overreact. There may well be a perfectly rational explanation that does not involve any drug or alcohol misuse. For example, if your child is presenting as tired or irritable there could be a number of causes. Maybe they haven't been sleeping well or are perhaps stressed about something that is going on at school.

The easiest way to get to the bottom of it is to encourage an honest and open conversation with your child so they feel comfortable and reassured enough to tell you what is going on for them.

ACCESSING FURTHER SUPPORT

In the event that your child requires help for a drug or alcohol problem, you should contact your local young person's substance misuse service for advice and support. There is one commissioned in each local area around the country, so you should be able to find their contact details with a simple web-based search.

They will be able to talk you and your child through the options and support available. If you require any assistance please contact Addaction on **020 7251 5860**. We will be able to help you find the support you need.

You can also visit the Information for Parents section of the Young Addaction website at www.youngaddaction.org.uk for further information.





addaction

RESILIENCE PROGRAMME

The drug and alcohol awareness programme for schools.

Amy Winehouse Foundation, charity registered in England and Wales no. 1143740.
A company limited by guarantee. Registered no. 07737209. Registered office: 5 Harley Place London W1G 8QD
Correspondence to Amy Winehouse Foundation, PO Box 70116, London N12 2DW

Addaction - Registered office 67-69 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6PU Tel: 020 7251 5860 Fax: 020 7251 5890
E: info@addaction.org.uk www.addaction.org.uk Registered charity no. 1001957 Scottish charity no. SC040009
VAT no. 735842515 Company registration no. 2580377