

Tips for the Addiction Stage

When we find out our child is using drugs and having problems **CONCERN** can be the first thing we experience – **CONCERN** for them and **CONCERN** for ourselves and our family. Here are some more useful pointers to help us deal with this situation

Communication

Keep talking and listening to them. This includes talking about our fear about the harmful effects that may be caused by drug use.

Ownership

Who owns this problem and who is being affected by it? Remind the young person that they are responsible for their own behaviour and any related consequences and that we cannot and will not assume responsibility for keeping them out of trouble and free from drugs.

Need

We need to think about what needs are being met for the young person through their drug use. Is it a coping mechanism? Is it about the need to rebel? Or is it something else? We also need to remember our own needs and the needs of other family members, e.g. the need for a stable family life, the need to consider everyone's safety and well-being.

Coping skills

Everyone needs coping skills in this situation. As parents, we need coping skills to deal with this situation, to deal with our son or daughter and to deal with the effect this may be having on the rest of the family. The young person is also going to need coping skills in order to make changes.

Effects

This includes the effects of the drug taking on the young person themselves (e.g. on their health and safety) and the effects of their drug taking on others around them, (e.g. family, friends etc). We need to keep an eye on all of this.

Respect

Respect might seem like an old fashioned idea but it is central to moving forward. Everyone needs to have respect for themselves in this situation – both parents and children. We may need to remind the child that they are showing a lack of respect both for themselves and for others affected by their drug taking. Part of having respect for ourselves as parents is setting limits and clearly stating what we are prepared and not prepared to do.

Networking

'No man or indeed woman is an island'. It is likely that we are going to need help to deal with all of this. We may need to talk to other family members, friends, other parents or other professionals. A little timely advice can save a lot of trouble in the long run. Who is best placed to help us and who do we trust?