

# IS MY CHILD USING DRUGS? WHAT DO I DO?

## First, How Can I Tell?

If your child has been using marijuana or other drugs, there will be physical, behavioral and psychological signs.

### Physical Signs:

- Red, bloodshot eyes
- Change in eating or sleeping patterns
- Lack of coordination
- Change in or not caring about physical appearance
- Shakes or tremors, particularly in the morning
- Injuries or bruises

### Behavioral Signs:

- Change in behavior at school – missing school, skipping class, slipping grades
- Change in interactions with family -- can range from unusually giggly to more withdrawn
- Using incense or other deodorizers to cover up smells
- Sudden change in peers or where they hang out and what they do
- Money or valuables missing
- Hiding from you, locking doors, or being secretive

### Psychological Signs:

- Moody, irritable, or easily angered
- Change in personality
- Change in level of motivation – seems spacey, unmotivated, or lethargic
- Prone to paranoia
- Appears withdrawn or depressed

## What Do I Do First?

Start by having a conversation with your child/teen.

- Prepare for this conversation so that you are not rushed, angry, or anxious
- Remember the goal is to listen to your child and gather information
- *“I have noticed that you have been quiet lately, and your grades are slipping a bit. I worry when you don’t seem your usual self. What’s been going on? How have things been going?”*
- Or start with a direct approach regarding marijuana or other drugs. Perhaps, *“Tell me what you think about marijuana”* or *“What are some of the stories you hear from your friends about using marijuana?”*
- Let them know you support them no matter what help they may need

## What Next?

Now, likely two outcomes have resulted from your conversation:

### **I Have Talked With My Child/Teen, and I Am Reassured That My Child/Teen Is Not Using Drugs.**

- *"I'm so glad we can have these conversations, and I appreciate you being truthful with me. I am also glad that you have made the choice not to use marijuana or other drugs."*
- *"You should be proud of the choices you've made. It can be hard when your friends are using marijuana or other drugs and you decide you're not going to."*

### **I Have Talked With My Child/Teen, and I Am Still Concerned That My Child/Teen Is Using Drugs...**

#### **...And My Child/Teen Is Concerned as Well.**

- Try to withhold judgement and anger about your child's/teen's choices, keep your questions open ended, and be comfortable with silence as you and your child/teen process this conversation.
- *"I am concerned about your marijuana use, and it sounds like you might be concerned as well. How can we work together to make some changes around this behavior?"*

#### **OR ...My Child/Teen Is Not Concerned.**

- The earlier you intervene, the easier it will be for your child/teen to get back on track. Sometimes intervening is as simple as telling your child/teen that you are concerned and having an intentional conversation about what you are noticing. Other times intervening might involve getting professional help.
- *"I am really concerned about your marijuana use. Remember, I was your age once, and I know what it's like to deal with pressure from friends and the stress of school and sports. I am here to support you."*

Listen to your child/teen without judgment and communicate that this is not a legal choice for them. Keep in mind that while the choice to use drugs may have been a result of peer pressure or the desire to "look cool," drug use may also be a way for your child to manage deeper issues like depression, anxiety, or stress. Work with your child/teen to uncover the core issues and identify appropriate treatment to handle these issues in a healthy and appropriate manner.

