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PrEvention News

ET'S TALK

Parents...The #1 Prevention Tool

Information Courtesy of

The Council of Southeastern Pennsylvania

Parents Have the Power! Parents – did you know that you are the most powerful prevention tool in your child's life? Contrary to popular belief, your influence is greater than that of peers, the Internet and social media! This fact is backed by over 35 years of scientific research. Engaging in on-going dialogue with your child about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD) is one of the best strategies you can employ to improve your child's outlook for a healthy, drug-free future.

When to have the talk. Using ATOD is a decision that youth are being forced to make at increasingly earlier ages. The average child takes his or her first drink at age 12. The earlier parents begin dialogue with their children about drug and alcohol prevention, the less likely they are to turn to these substances when they reach adolescence. The conversation and language will sound different depending on the child's age. Information should be age appropriate. For instance, early elementary children should understand the difference between food and poison, medicine and illegal drugs, but older children should understand the risks and short- and long-term consequences of ATOD, including addiction. Continue the dialogue, even throughout the college years.

What should you say? The former "just say no" approach of the Nancy Reagan era is not effective. It is important to teach your child how to say "no" to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD) and specifically what to say or do in certain situations. Practice different scenarios to allow your child to think about how he or she would respond when presented with various situations. You can even make it fun! Encourage your child to use you as an excuse (My mom would kill me if she found out I was drinking beer!).

The brain continues to develop until age 25, and so a child's biological ability to make good decisions on their own is not mature. Parents should set specific boundaries and rules around the acceptance of drug and alcohol use. Children will not assume that you disapprove of their use of alcohol and other drugs; it must be explicitly stated, as well as consequences of breaking the rules. If you are unclear about your position, children may be confused and tempted to experiment. Research shows that children who chose to avoid ATOD did so because they did not want to disappoint their parents. When parents establish clear, consistent "no use" rules, their children are more likely to lead alcohol- and drug-free lives.

Parents are sometimes hesitant to engage in ATOD conversation for fear of being questioned about their own use as a teen. Whether you are in recovery or had experimented with drugs as a teen, you can use your own experience to convey a prevention message. Honesty is fine but do avoid glamorizing any past use or providing too much detail. Instead, emphasize the negative consequences that resulted from your use. In addition, let your child know that much has changed since you were a teen. This includes the purity of drugs like heroin, the strength of THC in marijuana and nicotine in tobacco products and the proliferation of prescription and over-the-counter drug misuse. In addition, new brain research reveals that early ATOD use can cause permanent brain cell damage and vulnerability to addiction.

How should you have the talk? Find teachable moments. In the age of technology and instant access to news and other information, the subject of ATOD is unavoidable. Celebrities or professional athletes in the news due to drug use, and the negative consequences, could spark a meaningful dialogue. Ask about your child's opinion on a book or character, movie or TV show, local and national news. If a friend or family member is struggling with addiction, help your child process this by having a conversation about it. Family dinners and driving in



Talk They Hear You Discussion Starter



<u>Dr. Nadine</u> <u>Burke Harris</u> <u>On The Power</u> Of Parents

the car offer ideal opportunities to start a conversation about ATOD. The dialogue should go two-ways. Ask open-ended questions to encourage a more in-depth conversation with your child. Ask what he or she knows or has heard about ATOD.

What else can you do to utilize your power as a parent? Have daily positive interactions with your child. Children are less likely to engage in ATOD use when their parents are involved in their lives and when they share a close bond. Educate yourselves about ATOD and current drugs trends. Much of the information available online is pro-drug, so if your child or his or her peers obtain their information via the Internet, most likely it will be one-sided. It is important that your child knows he or she can come to you for accurate information, and that you are equipped to dispel any myths he or she may have read online or heard from a friend. Children are 50% less likely to use ATOD if they learn the risks of drugs from their parents.

One in four children is exposed to a substance use disorder in the family. Inform your child that addiction has a strong familial component. If you or an immediate family member is in recovery or has struggled with addiction, it is important that your child understands that this increases his or her overall risk of developing an addiction. The risk is both genetic and environmental; research shows that children of parents with substance use disorders are more than five times more likely to develop an ATOD-related problem than children in families without them. This familial component paired with the high level of risk-taking inspired by the teen brain increases a young person's risk of becoming addicted even more.

Teen prescription drug misuse has increased in recent years. This is attributed to a lowered perception of harm in misusing medications because they are legal and prescribed by a doctor. Some prescription drugs, particularly the opioid-based narcotics, are equally as harmful as street drugs such as heroin when misused. Parents can help educate their children about the risks involved. In addition to the health risks, it is illegal to give or sell prescription drugs to someone for whom the prescription was not intended, yet 70% of people who misuse prescription pain relievers say that they obtain them from family or friends.

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Practice Parenting Skills

Information Courtesy of Center for Disease Control



Westmoreland Drug & Alcohol Commission, Inc. www.wedacinc.org

> **Available Online Resources**

Pennsylvania's comprehensive mental health resources https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Men tal-Health-In-PA/Pages/default.aspx

Mental Health America https://mhanational.org/covid19

Helpful phone numbers:



National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

> The Crisis Text Line: Text "PA" to 741-741



Parenting is hard work! But it can also be fun and rewarding. There are many things you





Substance Use Prevention

Veteran Crisis Line: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990

Get Help Now for substance use disorder and alcohol treatment: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Westmoreland Drug and Alcohol Case Management Unit Access Treatment Resources and Services 24/7 365 days a year 1-800-220-1810

Those struggling with addiction are among those caught in the pandemic's wake: Article Courtesy of The Mercury Post

Jackie Robinson admits she was the crazy mom, the one screaming her head off at her son's wrestling matches while he was growing up in Berks County. And her son, Kody Frank, or "Pumpkin" as Robinson affectionately called him, was the boy who was never embarrassed to hug his mom in front of his friends. But as much as the two loved each other, they often battled, and always over the same problem: Kody's drug addiction.

Robinson, formerly of Flying Hills and now living in the Schuylkill County town of Mechanicsville near Pottsville, often didn't know what Kody was using, but she knew how much the drugs were hurting him, and she felt powerless to stop it. Then late last year, at 28, Kody got clean. He entered and graduated from a 28-day in-patient recovery program, and on Dec. 26 he moved into Life's Journey in Levittown, a sober-living house in Bucks County where he received support and was tested often for narcotics. Substance abuse had been his downfall for half his life, but Kody had finally turned it around. "Then this damn coronavirus came along," Robinson said.

When the pandemic hit, forcing restaurants statewide to close in mid-March, Kody lost his job as a server and bartender at a Red Lobster in Langhorne, Bucks County. Without those paychecks and tips, he couldn't afford the \$800 a month it cost to live in the sober house, and neither could Robinson, so he had to move back with his mom. "I really struggled with bringing him home," Robinson said. "But what else could I do?"

Initially she could tell how good recovery had been for Kody. He was clear-eyed, had stopped smoking and using chewing tobacco, and was searching for local Narcotics Anonymous meetings to attend, as he did almost daily while living at Life's Journey. But those meetings were no longer being held in person due to the pandemic, and soon Robinson noticed Kody slipping back to his old habits. He started using tobacco again, which she knew was a bad sign, and soon his behavior indicated he was using drugs, too. "His eyes were sunken in," she said. But Robinson was working long days as a nursing home administrator and couldn't watch him around the clock. By mid-April the two were in heated arguments daily, with Robinson begging him to stop and Kody denying he was in trouble. The night of April 23 seemed better, though. They had a nice dinner together at home, and afterward Kody sat with his mom and their dogs in her bed, having a nice talk. He said goodnight and headed downstairs to his room, but after 15 minutes Robinson had a bad feeling and went to check on him. When she got to his room, he was already dead of an overdose.

Seeking a ruling

Robinson thinks her son was as much a victim of the pandemic as those who contracted the virus. She said Kody was excelling in the program, but his job loss disrupted all that and put him on a fatal course. So Robinson is hoping Dr. David Moylan, the Schuylkill County coroner, will list COVID-19 as a secondary cause of Kody's death. The death certificate had not been released as of Friday, and Moylan was unavailable for comment. "What happened is sickening," Robinson said of how Kody's recovery was disrupted. "When he came home the pull (of the drugs) was just too much. I couldn't pull him away."

Pandemic impact

As Gov. Tom Wolf and other state and federal leaders nationwide have put strict restrictions in place and temporarily closed many businesses to mitigate the spread of coronavirus, there has been increasing concern about those suffering from the shutdown. That includes the theory that many with addiction issues will relapse or increase their substance abuse due in part to the stress, unemployment and isolation related to the pandemic. Though there are expectations that overdose deaths will rise during the lockdown, the early evidence in Berks is that it has not happened. From January through May of 2019 there were 47 confirmed overdose deaths in Berks. As of Wednesday, there had been 48 confirmed or open cases so far this year, a similar time frame, according to the county coroner's office. There also hasn't been a clear month-to-month trend this year in Berks as the pandemic rules were expanded. There were 10 overdose deaths in January 12 in February, eight in March, seven in April and 11 in May.

The Pennsylvania State Coroner's Association does not have a count of how many have died of overdoses statewide during the pandemic but eventually will, said Charles Keissling, Lycoming County coroner and association president. It's been difficult enough just to keep up with tallying coronavirus deaths, he said. "Everything else has taken a back seat," he said. But Keissling said he's heard accounts from some coroners across the state that overdose deaths are up in their counties. He said that's true in Lycoming County as well. Last year Lycoming had a record 39 drug deaths but is somewhat ahead of that pace this year with 20. He suspects when the final count is eventually done that drug deaths during the pandemic also will be up statewide. "For some people, having too much free time is a bad thing," he said.

For those needing emergency counseling, detox or in-patient rehabilitation in Berks, help is available, as are beds in those facilities, said Stanley J. Papademetriou, executive director of the Berks County Council on Chemical Abuse. "We're not having problems getting people into care," he said. But the pandemic has been tough on many who are further along in the process, as recovery and support services have been affected for many trying to get their lives back in order, he said. That includes Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings. In most Pennsylvania communities those organizations cannot hold group meetings now, so members are participating online, if at all. "They count on that peer support, on being able to talk and share stories," Papademetriou said. "Having virtual meetings isn't the same experience. It's better than nothing, but it's totally different." When the isolation of social distancing is added to their worries about whether they're going to get sick or even die of the virus, it can increase their risk of relapse, he said. "It's one more layer of a fragile recovery breaking down," he said. Papademetriou said his office has anecdotal evidence that there have been more nonfatal overdoses in the county during the pandemic, but those reports have been word-of-mouth. He hopes that by June or July the support side of treatment will resume and those in recovery can again attend meetings in person. But it's too early to know how likely that is, he said. "The focus is on the virus, but there have also been other casualties along the way," he said. "It's a shame." **'Still here to help'**

Pennsylvania had for years been in an opioid epidemic, and the current COVID-19 crisis has made things even more dangerous for many with addiction issues, said Rachel Kostelac, spokeswoman for the state Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs. "The disease (addiction) doesn't go away," she said. Three keys to successful recovery are housing, unemployment and transportation, and during the pandemic many have had at least one of those pillars knocked down, she said. DDAP does not keep track of whether there is more demand for addiction treatment in the state since the pandemic started, as it contracts with counties, not the providers themselves, she said.

In Schuylkill County, all five outpatient providers are holding telehealth sessions by Zoom or other web programs, said Melissa Kaylan, Schuylkill County Drug and Alcohol Program Administrator. And when needed, those providers are still giving patients face-to-face sessions, she said. But Kaylan agreed that the inability for many to attend AA, NA or any other support meetings has affected recovery for some. "That support system is so important," she said. "Having people that the individual can reach out to when they're feeling stressed especially during this time is really critical." The in-patient treatment providers the county contracts with are still accepting referrals and have structured their facilities to be able to quarantine new admissions and any COVID-positive individuals for a period of 14 days, she said. They are still running their programs, though, for groups and individuals with counselors and other staff still practicing social distancing. "Our providers have done a great job of adjusting their programs to operate during this time," she said.

Alicia Fleischut, executive director at Clinical Outcomes Group Inc. in Pottsville, said their doctors are seeing patients through telehealth as well as face to face, depending on their needs. Case managers and certified recovery specialists are doing in-person outreach and offering clients assistance with picking up food or medication or whatever they need. One day a week, they mandate a drive-thru drug testing in their parking lot so the individuals are tested, and the SCA partners with them to provide Narcan to be handed out for any high-risk individuals. The facility reports few relapses in the past few weeks, but also has seen a decrease in the number of assessments being completed and in turn a decrease in in-patient referrals, she said. Kaylan urged those who are struggling to seek the services available just as they would if the pandemic weren't happening. "We're still here to help," For Robinson, it's hard not to dwell on how things could have gone differently for Kody. When he was nearing graduation from Gov. Mifflin High School in 2010 he wanted to join the military, but he'd already pleaded guilty to DUI and receiving stolen property. A recruiter told him no branch of the service would take him because of his criminal record. "I feel that

and senior years, when he wrestled at around 125 pounds. What Voit remembers most is how Kody would notice when other teammates were struggling and reach out to them. Voit suspects that was because Kody had already faced his own troubles and sympathized with others who were in a tough spot. "You could tell he had a lot of heart, a lot of empathy," Voit said. "He was always trying to help." It seemed Kody was looking for something that would keep him busy and on track, and wrestling did that for him to an extent, Voit said. But even there Kody had his ups and downs, which Voit suspects were due to his drug use. "He was a good person," Voit said. "You always hope a kid like that will find their footing. It's sad for him, and for the people around him."

could've helped him," Robinson said of the military. "What better place to straighten these kids out?" Mifflin High School wrestling coach Ralph Voit coached Kody during his junior

Joe Gudinas, owner of Xtreme Fitness in St. Clair, Schuylkill County, coached Kody in mixed martial arts, kickboxing, wrestling and other disciplines. "Kody was a great kid," he said. "He was the guy who could make everybody in the room laugh." There was often tension on fight nights as Gudinas' students waited their turn, but even in that serious setting Kody would crack a joke and lighten the mood. "He'd bring a smile to everyone's face," Gudinas said. "A lot of people enjoyed his company." He was a good amateur fighter, too, working hard to improve and using his wrestling skills to win all four of his mixed martial arts bouts.

In his first MMA fight, Kody went against an experienced fighter who outweighed him by 20 pounds, putting him at a serious disadvantage. But Kody got him into choke hold in the second round and forced him to submit. "The sky was the limit for him," Gudinas said. But that was before Kody's addiction changed things, and he got less serious about the sport, Gudinas said. "He started slacking off," he said. "He was missing practices. And he didn't look all there. Then we couldn't let him come here anymore. A lot of people here tried to help him. And I never gave up on him. But you've gotta be clean to come here. "Gudinas, who also lost an uncle to an overdose, said Kody's death was heartbreaking to him. "He had 100 good qualities," Gudinas said. "It just sucks." Robinson's mind often replays the horrible image of how she found Kody the night he died. But she counters that by listening to messages from Kody on her phone, in which he wishes her a happy Mother's Day or tells her he loves her. Her son had such a good heart. "He'd give you whatever he could," she said. The mother saw that kindness when Kody worked with nursing home patients, and how he'd kneel next to those in wheelchairs instead of towering over them when they spoke, a simple act that showed his inherent humanity, she said. She also saw that goodness in the way he loved dogs and brought several rescues home over the years. Robinson thought maybe someday he'd have a career in health care or counseling, but now she laments that untapped potential to help others.

In the recovery house where Kody had been living, he had shared a room with another man who also had been staying clean, knowing if he didn't, he'd be evicted that day, Robinson said. But he also lost his job during the shutdown, then lost his room and soon after his life to an overdose, she's learned. She sees him as another victim of the pandemic. She feels anger and resentment about the unfairness of it all and hopes her story will help others who have lost family members to addiction or the virus and are dealing with the same emotions. "The parents are left to suffer," she said. "I lost my only child. And my mother lost her grandson." Robinson also wonders if there was something more, she could have done to help her son. "No one should have to go through this," she said. "It's an awful thing." Access Full Article Here



Information Courtesy of Guardian Recovery Network

Effect Children?



Contact Sage's Army at 724-863-5433. We will find a way to get Narcan distributed to those who need it. Whether it be your home or a mutual location, we will ensure that we get the Narcan to you.

As children, we look to our parents and caregivers for unconditional support from the time we are infants through adulthood. But some parents can't provide that support because they're dealing with a drug or alcohol addiction. In fact, it's estimated that 25% of children under 18 are exposed to alcohol abuse or dependence within the family confines. The exact number of children exposed to parental substance abuse is unknown, but an estimated 8.3 million children under 18 were living with at least one substance-dependent of substance-using parents between 2002 and 2007.

The effects of parental substance abuse are two-fold: children are exposed to drugs and alcohol, and their parents are unequipped to provide the basic physical, psychological and emotional care they need. Genetic and environmental reasons can make children who grow up in this kind of environment more likely to: Develop anxiety or depression in adolescence, use alcohol or drugs earlier, become a part of the foster care system, get into trouble with the juvenile justice system. Parental substance abuse can lead to lifelong problems if a child doesn't receive the support they need early on. Once children reach adulthood, they are more likely to: Seek mental health treatment for anxiety or depression, Struggle with parenting their own children, Have marital problems.

The Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences. Parental alcohol or drug abuse is considered an adverse childhood experience, or ACE. Psychologists coined the term in one of the most comprehensive studies of the effects of childhood neglect and abuse on health and well-being later in life.

Growing up in an environment filled with chronic emotional stress as a result of parental addiction negatively impacts children's brain development from infancy. Mental illness, physical and emotional violence, and having a parent in prison are also ACEs.

How Clinicians Can Help Families? Findings from that initial ACE study enabled health care professionals to establish guidelines for testing, interventions and referrals to treatment. However, these processes are focused on helping the person abusing drugs or alcohol—not the person who is dealing with the physical and mental side effects of living with that person. Because children are at such a high risk of physical and emotional harm, clinicians need to know how to identify a child's risk and connect families with the help they need.

Prior research suggests that when clinicians approach parents who screen positive for substance use about seeking treatment, most are cooperative in pursuing follow-up recommendations, such as counseling or treatment programs. Interestingly, even if parents aren't open to treatment or total abstinence, the knowledge that their substance use has a direct impact on their children typically results in reduced substance use, which is benefits parent and child, and could help break the often multi-generational cycle of addiction. By Detox & Recovery Experts

Access Guardian Recovery Network Here

Pregnancy & Postpartum Support

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Those with weakened immune systems

Pregnant women

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Westmoreland Drug & Alcohol Case Mgt 203 South Maple Avenue Greensburg, PA 1-800-220-1810

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Greensburg PA 15601 225 Margaret Avenue, Ste 2994 River Road 724-834-0420 3Jeannette PA 15644 Vandergrift PA 724-522-5456 724-696-9600 724-696-9600	
	tecovery Center 2 Loop, Ste 2200 on PA 15642
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Westmoreland

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OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES

• <u>RecoveryLink</u>: Daily recovery meetings, physical activities, meditations, and more via your smartphone or computer.

 <u>Connections Mobile App</u>: Addiction Policy Forum's app will help connect you with trained counselors and peers, access e-

therapy, & more. • WEconnect app: Helps with scheduling routines to stay active in recovery.

• This <u>Shatterproof blog</u> provides helpful suggestions to keep your recovery a priority during social distancing

Get Help Now



Recovery is hard but not MONI recovering is



DO YOU NEED HELP WITH A SUBSTANCE ABUSE OR **DEPENDENCY PROBLEM?**

For Treatment access



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Grief without the Stigma Join Zoom Meeting: https://zoom.us/j/193687515 Meeting ID: 193-687-515 Call in number: +646-558-8656 Meeting ID: 193687515# US When: Every other Wednesday Starting 4/8/2020 6:30-8PM Family GroupJoin Zoom Meeting: https://zoom.us/j/8969097174 Meeting ID: 896 909 7174 Call in number: +16465588656 Meeting ID: 8969097174# US When: Every Thursday of the month 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM Coffee Break Join Zoom Meeting: https://zoom.us/j/946202392 Meeting ID: 946 202 392 When: The 1st Friday of every month from 4:00-6:00 PM Waking up with Willingness Zoom Meeting ID: 896-909-7174 When: Every Monday-Friday at 8AM With Adam Daykon from Sage's Army

