

Persistence, a united front can help parents address drug issues with their children

So, you're putting your child's clothes away after doing the wash and come across a baggie of pills in their drawer. Your first reaction probably is shock, anger or fear, or a jumble of emotions.

How do you best address the situation? Here are few tips:

- Take a few minutes to gather your emotions. Your anger and other feelings are entirely justified. Giving yourself some time to calm down and collect your thoughts will help you deal with the situation more effectively. However, don't discount the effectiveness of healthy anger in disciplining your child.
- Huddle up with your spouse or partner, agree in advance on how you'll address the issue and together talk with your son or daughter. A united front will help you not only come up with the most effective response, but also make the discipline more potent.
- Realize that your child's first reaction could be denial that the pills are theirs and that your tendency might be to breathe a sigh of relief and think everything is OK.
- Be persistent and ask open-ended questions. Ultimately, if you determine your child is not taking drugs, the situation still presents a lot of questions: What are the pills and where did they get them? Which of your child's friends might be doing drugs, and why is your child hanging out with them? And it's a prime opportunity to let your child know – or to reinforce - where you stand and to establish clear rules and consequences for their behavior.
- Arm yourself with information about the dangers of substance use – prescription drug abuse among youth as well as adults is a growing concern – and share these facts with your child so that they understand the negative effects.
- Stand your ground when it comes to discipline. Your influence, and the firm rules and consequences you establish, are the most effective barriers to your child using pills, alcohol or other drugs.
- If you establish that your child is using drugs, find out as much as you can about the extent of it. Tap into your community's resources. Consult a school counselor, contact an organization that specializes in prevention or, if appropriate, explore treatment options. Remember, you're not alone when it comes to helping your child navigate the sometimes tumultuous waters of growing up.

To find out more about keeping your kids free of alcohol and other drugs, contact the nonprofit Oregon Partnership, a statewide organization that provides substance abuse prevention education and treatment referral, at 503-244-5211, or www.orpartnership.org.