

MANITOBA ADDICTIONS AWARENESS WEEK

Topic: Encouragement as a prevention strategy

Audience: Parents

Outcome: Many suggestions are made, and they are clearly easier said than done. But the effort must be made, for there is no other way that we know of to build healthy people. Many of these things you may already be doing, and others may require only a small change in your behaviour or the running of the family. Others will require great thought and effort because their accomplishment will mean new ways of communicating with your children and dealing with problems.

Method:

The need to “belong”

- Parents, by both their actions and their words, can show their children that they appreciate and respect them.
- Family rituals, even small ones, can help satisfy the need to “belong” – the way you celebrate a birthday, regular family outings, discussion at the dinner table.
- Have fun together. Do things together which is fun for both the parent and young person.
- Peer groups are a must for young people. It helps them develop a “we” feeling apart from the family. By seeing peer groups as healthy, positive relationships rather than as possible “bad” influences, parents can be encouraging their children.
- Encourage your children to have adult friends; include young people at adult functions.



The need to “be somebody”

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- Give the young person meaningful responsibilities such as doing the family's grocery shopping, being responsible for the maintenance of the car, preparing the income tax forms, making their own doctor's appointment.
- Invite them to be adults before they demand it. For example, respect the privacy of their room, drop the bedtime rule, change the curfew.
- Seek their opinions on problems that you face in your life, or on social or political topics.
- Encourage them to take part in stimulating experiences. Teenagers want to experience "risks" such as trying something new.

The need to "be oneself"

- Encourage them to make decisions. For example, increase a teenager's allowance so that they are responsible for buying their own clothes with it. Let them select their courses at school after having discussed with them the important issues and concerns. Allow them to solve their problems. Exploring alternatives is one way to encourage decision making.
- Let them experience the consequences of their decisions whenever possible. It helps them to develop internal controls.
- Support their setting their goals and trying to achieve them such as trying out for a part in a play, getting a part-time job, or saving money for a special event or purchase.

The need to "experience the beyond"

- Encourage participation in "creative" acts such as music, dance, art, writing, or creating things.
- Encourage participation in activities that allow them to experience their own inner strength like a hundred-kilometer bike trip, camping out with friends, or organizing a community or school event.
- Clarify your lifestyle approaches and religious values and show that you are serious about them by living with them.

Additional Resources:

- Videos/DVDs (available from the AFM library – 944-6279)

