

Parents Can't Be Wishy - washy - Discipline Key to 'Drug Prevention Kit'

Omaha World-Herald (NE) - March 30, 1984

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- Edition: Metro
- Section: News

Miller Newton offered Omahans Thursday his "do - it - yourself kit" to prevent young people from getting deeply involved with drugs and alcohol.

The kit by the treatment center director contains lots of rules, discipline, family talk, sharing of chores, listening and soul - searching.

It has no room for permissive, wishywashy behavior by parents.

"I wish I saw more 'parent panic' instead of waiting until the horse is out of the barn," Newton said in a talk at the Midwest Drug Conference at the Red Lion Inn, 1616 Dodge St. About 1,000 people registered for the two - day conference, which ended Friday.

Too many parents fail to take steps to prevent their child from experimenting with chemicals, then they don't react soon enough if the child gets involved, said Newton, who is president and clinical director of KIDS of Bergen County Inc., a New Jersey treatment center for troubled adolescents and their families.

Abused Drugs

Newton and his wife have a son who abused drugs, he said.

Keeping young people away from drugs and alcohol is difficult today because television commercials, songs, movies and peer pressure lead young people to believe that all sorts of pills and other substances legal and illegal bring them pleasure and quick relief from overindulgence and pain, he said.

Newton, author of the book "Gone Way Down: Teen - age Drug Use Is a Disease," said young teen - agers respond to "concrete thinking" and don't grasp abstract messages about the implications of their actions.

On drug and alcohol use, young teens should be told, "Don't do it," or, "Do it and you are in trouble," he said.

School officials, he added, should adopt a policy of no drug and alcohol possession, sale or purchase in their building. Violators should be kicked out, he said; that would deter others.

Warn Other Parents

Newton suggested parents set up a network to help ensure that their teenager is properly chaperoned at parties. If a parent finds another youth's parents allowing teens to use alcohol in their home, he should warn them that "if anything happens, I'll go after (sue for) everything you have," Newton said.

If those parents allow drinking to continue, police should be called, he said.

He said police should take youthful drinkers to the station and require parents to come down and pick them up.

Newton also was asked what he would do if he took young children to a skating rink and saw other children smoking. He said he would tell the rink operator to stop the smokers or he would call police.

- *Index terms: Drug Abuse*
- *Record: 185378*
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