

Drug Abuse and Hands-On Parents

Parents of teenagers and preteens! Do you ever wonder if teaching your teen Bible principles and family rules is actually effective? Do teens really care what their parents think? Several years ago I read an article in **USA Today** about the correlation between parenting styles and the increased or decreased likelihood of teenage drug abuse. What caught my attention was how the article and professionals reported the success rate of fathers and mothers who practice “hands-on” parenting style.

Here are the “12 indicators” teenagers use to differentiate between “hands-on” and “hands-off” parenting styles, as determined by a survey of teen risks for abusing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal narcotics:

- Parents expect to be told where teen is going in the evening or on weekends and is told the truth by the teen.
- Parents have made clear they would be “extremely upset” to find teen using marijuana.
- There are not periods of time after school or on weekends when parents do not know where teen is.
- Parents monitor what teen is watching on television.
- Parents impose restrictions on the kind of music CDs teen is allowed to buy.
- Parents are very aware of how teen is doing in school.
- Parents monitor teen's Internet usage.
- Family typically has dinner together seven nights a week.
- Teen has a weekend curfew.
- An adult is always at home when teen returns from school.
- Teen is responsible for completing regular chores.
- The television is not on during dinner.

Did you notice what should be obvious to parents who are Christians? These are common sense parenting practices for every father and mother who is prayerfully working to ***“Bring up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it”*** (Proverbs 22.6).

The sixth annual teen survey by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University further reported how “hands-off” parents double the risk that their teens will smoke, drink alcohol, or use illegal drugs. *“As much as they may complain*

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about the rules their parents set, teens see that and feel that and sense that as caring and love" (CASA president Joseph Califano).

Here is the lesson for concerned parents: Teens who think their parents would “not be too upset” if they smoked marijuana are more than three times at risk than those who think their parents would be “extremely upset.” In the survey, a “hands-on” household was defined as one in which parents took 10 or more of 12 actions, listed above, ranging from monitoring what their teens watched on TV to knowing where their teens are after school and on weekends.

The survey found that teens with “hands-on” parents were more likely to report an excellent relationship with their parents. “Hands-off” parents consistently fail to set rules and monitor their teen's behavior. Moms and dads should be “parents” to their children, not “pals.”

Parents, you can put your faith in what God teaches us in the Scriptures. ***“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”*** (Ephesians 6.4). Parents, if you are will teach your teenager with genuine “hands-on” love and care, the chances are that they will actually listen to you!

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