



Last year, a group of parents at a PTSO meeting and myself held a sincere conversation about how our school staff should communicate any worries that we at become aware of. We desperately want to raise awareness about any dangers that our students face, but we also agreed that some issues are so significant and/or sensitive that they are best handled at home. Therefore, the idea of "Pete's Tough Topics" was born.

It is our hope that you will read this message and hold a sincere conversation with your student. We have researched the best advice that we can find for you below. If you have specific questions, please consider Harborside a caring partner as you work to raise your students. Our staff is here to help as we are all in this together! Call us if you want to talk. – Mr. Haithcock

As you may know, today marks the beginning of Red Ribbon Week in Kenosha. Mr. Buschmann, our staff and our SADD students will be implementing a few innovative ideas this week to raise awareness relating to the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse.

Today's "tough topic" relates specifically to prescription drug abuse. Do you know that overdose related deaths due to prescription drugs are up 13% in Kenosha County!!?? Do you know that drug dealers are selling prescription meds on street corners just like marijuana? The police and other community leaders are teaching us that this is maybe the fastest growing danger that our local teens face. Arrests and school related incidents relating to prescription drug abuse are on the rise. The police explain that many kids think it is "safe or no big deal" because a doctor prescribes these drugs. However, do our students know that doctors also do several background checks on their patients before prescribing anything? Do our students know that some kids die the first time that they ingest an amphetamine? Do they know how addictive many prescription drugs are?!

Some advice:

- Talk to your kids about this. It makes sense to assume that someone somewhere sometime is going to offer your student drugs or alcohol. Many students later tell adults that they took a drink or a drug for fear of being viewed as a "looser" or "dork". Many also state they took the drug simply because they didn't know what else to say. We highly recommend that you talk about it now and decide what they can say so they have a plan if something is offered to them. This way, they can respond to a tough situation in a carefully planned way. The last thing we want is for a student to make a really important decision in a moment of panic while they are scared and can't think straight.
 - o Possible things to say:
 - "I can't, my Mom watches me to close."
 - "No thanks, I have stomach problems."
 - Our personal favorite: "No thanks, it's not for me!"
 - Etc.....Say whatever you want, just have a statement ready.
- Help kids to understand that drugs are not a glamorous world at all. Other students will not tell them the ugly side. Understand that students who partake in drugs will want more people to do the same so that they feel a little better about doing it themselves.
 - a. Watch the TV show "Intervention", those people started out with small doses "just for fun". Do you want to be that person? Nobody sets out to be an addict.

- b. Just find a few pictures of anyone with “meth mouth”. Wow. – Most of these addicts started with lower level drugs but soon had to “up the dose or drug” to feel high.
 - c. Overdose deaths are WAY up! Friends that give away a drug to a kid who dies are being charged with manslaughter all over the country. One of our staff members knows of a kid currently facing 20 years for sharing a drug with his best friend.... who is now dead. (It was the first time he tried the drug.) – Drugs ruin lives!
- Establish a rule that your child should check in with you if they return at night after you have gone to bed. If they know they will need to talk with you and sit next to you for a couple minutes to talk about their night, they might be less tempted to make a poor decision. *(Keep an honest kid honest!)*
 - Walk your son/daughter to the door when they are spending the night at a friend’s house. Are you sure there is a parent home, or did you talk to a deep voiced college kid on the phone???
 - a. Does the other parent agree that the group is staying with them for the night, or are they letting them leave or driving them somewhere else? Do you know where? Do you approve?
 - Keep an eye on Facebook. I am SHOCKED at the things kids talk about in this “unsupervised world”. Pay attention to what is happening and communicate with your fellow parents and school staff.
 - Keep your prescription medicine put away where your kids cannot get at it. --Discard leftover pills!
 - Please do not assume that “this cannot be my kid”. The police are telling us how popular and dangerous this is becoming, even for kids who normally are not in trouble. We have great kids at Harborside, but peer pressure can be REALLY tough. Talking to them and keeping an “open eye” is a small price to pay.

Thank you for paying close attention to this difficult topic. It is not fun to talk about, but it is too important to avoid.

Have a great week.... Pirate Pete

Note: FYI - We keep an archive of the past articles on our website so that anyone can go back to them for information if they wish.