

From Ecstasy to Agony

After an Affair

Dr. Linda on Dr. Laura

Video Violence

Exposure to violent video games can increase aggressive behavior.

Avoiding Substance Abuse

The best protection against addiction is filling yourself full of the Word of God.

The current statistics for substance abuse in our country are

staggering. An estimated 13.6 million Americans are users of illicit drugs. Of that number, 9.9 percent are teens ages 12-17. Twelve million Americans are heavy drinkers. Illegal consumption of alcohol by minors affects 10.5 million teens.

Substance abuse is based, in part, on a need to feel powerful in interpersonal relationships. People are deceived into thinking substances will solve their interpersonal discomfort and medicate pain. Opening the door to substance use begins the addictive process and allows demonic forces to build strongholds.

What can you do to prevent members of your family from becoming a statistic?

Know your family history. If addiction is rampant in your family line, you are at risk. This doesn't mean you are doomed to become an abuser, but it does mean you are a possible candidate.

Build a strong self-concept based on who you are in Christ. Your worth is not dependent on what others say or on what you have accomplished. Your worth is based on God's love for you. Build yourself up by learning what His Word says about you.

Doing this will help you develop social and coping skills. People who can deal effectively with interpersonal relationships are less likely to need other sources of power. Those who learn how to manage stress and how to relax won't need to turn to drugs to help them.

Don't use escape and avoidance as solutions to conflict. Instead, model healthy ways to deal with conflict and stress. Solve problems when they arise. Learn confrontation, problem solving and negotiation skills.

Be vigilant with your children. Give your children lots of adult supervision. Know where, when and with whom they spend their time.

Talk with them about emotions and experiences. Help your children identify and manage feelings without being ruled by them. We all have negative feelings; it's what we do with them that matters.

Show them unconditional love. Be open and generous with your praise. Demonstrate and verbalize your love often.

Talk with them about values and the need for balance and moderation in all aspects of life. Individual accountability should be high on your list.

When you have to discipline, focus on behavior. The idea is to teach children how to behave, not to demoralize them with criticism and shame. You want to bring out the best in your child.

Try to help your children identify their needs, and then respond. Be physically, emotionally and spiritually available to your kids. Don't force them to go outside the family to have their needs met.

Establish clear and consistent rules and boundaries for them. The absence of boundaries leaves children feeling confused and frightened. Structure and limits help build self-control.

Develop a unified parenting coalition. You and your spouse must agree on parenting issues. Work out your differences, and present a strong front.

But keep your home a place of joy and relaxation. Learn how to have fun as a family and enjoy one another.

If you work on having a strong family, you greatly lessen the chances of a family member turning to drugs or alcohol. Of course you also must attend to the spiritual condition of each member. Without a personal relationship with Christ there will be a longing for something bigger and more powerful than self. This search propels some people toward substance abuse.

Family members must be taught how to resist the devil. If a family is not grounded in the truth—the Word of God—members can be easily seduced. The best protection against addiction is filling yourself so full of the Word of God that you can tell the enemy to take a hike when he comes to deceive you. The Bible says, “Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7, NKJV).

A strong family system grounded in the Word of God is a great defense against the temptations of the enemy. This along with prayer, trusting God and living in the authority you have in Christ will go a long way toward keeping you and your loved ones free from the grip of substance abuse.

Power Over Drug Abuse

Substance abuse occurs because people want to feel powerful in relationships.

What to Do If Your Child Says He's Gay

What do you do if your child comes home one day and announces he or she is gay? This act of self-disclosure presents an incredible challenge for Christian parents, especially in light of the deep chasm between secular thought on homosexuality and the biblical approach.

More than Thirty years ago secular psychiatry and psychology declared that homosexuality is not a disorder or some form of psychopathology. Twelve years ago, the American Psychological Association took the stance that Christian reparative therapy (therapy aimed at loving gays out of their lifestyle and into a right relationship with God) was not only scientifically ineffective but also unnecessary and possibly harmful.

Naturally, as a Christian parent, you will choose to adhere to biblical morality and not the current cultural opinion. However, it is important that you not cut off the parent-child relationship. Too many Christian parents are overcome with fear—fear they'll be ostracized by their peers, fear of their own failure and fear of lovingly facing their own children.

It might help to ask yourself the following questions:

1. Did I love my child prior to knowing their sexual identity?

Of course! They are a part of you, and nothing will change that, not even their self-proclaimed sexuality. The parent-child relationship should be based on unconditional love.

This doesn't mean you find their sexuality morally acceptable. It means you love them in spite of what they say they are. That's the way God loves us. We disappoint Him, sin, have moral failures and rebel, but He still loves us because we are His children.

2. Does their sexuality define our relationship?

Hopefully not, even though it may be a tremendous disappointment to you. Deal with it but don't get stuck in it. Talk to them. Stay connected and committed to wanting the best for them. If you need more support, get involved with an organization that provides counsel. You may be surprised at the well-organized efforts of many Christians who reach out to gays.

If you feel disgusted (as many parents do), try not to focus on the behavior. Focus on what may have led to the behavior.

Many gays struggle with self-abasement. You don't want to add to feelings of inadequacy by rejecting a child who is desperate for your love. Their seeking same-sex partners may be driven by the need to be accepted.

Begin to discuss with your child when their sexual feelings became apparent, how they developed, when they were first acted upon and how they came to the conclusion they did about their sexual identity. I know this is a difficult step for parents to take, but it's a necessary one. Working with a Christian therapist who has experience dealing with homosexuals might help.

3. What would Jesus do in this situation?

Jesus loves the gay person but never approves of the lifestyle. His Word declares homosexual behavior is a sin.

However, when He was on earth, Jesus socialized with sinners. If He were here now, He would be hanging out with gays, loving them and frequenting AIDS hospices. Jesus healed the brokenhearted. He told us to do the same.

Many Christian counseling groups and "ex-gays" are committed to helping gays come out of the lifestyle and live a holy life before God. They will be the first to tell you, it's not an easy task. Even those who want to leave the lifestyle experience a strong pull to stay in it. Some do find total freedom. Others struggle with their impulses and regularly fight homosexual tendencies. The important thing is not the struggle but the daily overcoming.

Realize that your child is in a difficult place and is searching for authentic love. Don't get preachy. Don't look at them as less of a human being.

Ask God to give you wisdom to deal with your child in love. Be willing to look at your part of the problem and start making changes. Your demonstrated acceptance may be the key to change. Rather than alienating them, choose to be part of their healing.

Linda S. Mintle, PH.D., is a licensed clinical social worker based in Chicago. She welcomes your questions about relationships, emotional problems and the tough issues of life.