

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.