

Teen drug use spurs how-to-help panel

BY LINDY WALSH
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Parents struggling to deal with teenagers' drug and alcohol use can learn about tactics to help their children at a panel this month in London.

"Scare tactics do not work," says David Wolfe, academic director of the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children at the University of Western Ontario.

Attitudes have changed over the years in terms of knowledge and approaches to teen drug use, Wolfe said.

"They are going to experiment and it is our job (as parents) to keep them safe," says Wolfe.

Wolfe, an author and psychologist, will speak on the subject as part of the panel Feb. 18 at the Pamela Fralick Community Information Forum on Addiction.

The forum runs 7-9 p.m. at the Best Western Lamplighter Inn.

The forum will "offer parents a way to better understand what their children are going through and how to talk with them," Wolfe said.

Scare tactics only isolate and alienate teens.

Instead of ultimatums, Wolfe

suggests parents speak openly with their children and express how they would like them to deal with situations.

A 2003 survey of Ontario students' drug use by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health found although use of illicit drugs, such as cocaine and ecstasy, had dropped, binge drinking continued to rise.

It's important parents approach topics such as binge drinking in a way that lets their teens feel safe about speaking openly, Wolfe said.

There are three key things parents should remember when talking with their children about substance use, he said.

First, parents need to be as non-judgmental as possible and focus on their child's safety.

Second, parents need to understand teens are under a lot of pressure and if they "don't offer an opportunity for kids to talk and give them a balanced perspective, then teens will listen to their friends instead."

Last, parents should discuss how they would like their children to deal with situations involving drugs or alcohol.

For more information on the forum, call 433-3171 ext. 8106.