

# Media Release

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**30 September 2009**

## **Drugs and drinking a community problem**

Anyone trying to help a friend or relative with a drug or drinking problem is not alone and can seek help and support.

It's Mental Health Awareness week and a good time to remind people that the Community Alcohol and Drug Service (CADS) at Tauranga Hospital can help family and friends, as well as people with drinking or drug problems.

"We often receive phone calls from people concerned about a relative or friend's drinking or drug taking and wanting advice on how they can help them," says clinical coordinator Hester Hattingh.

"If there is one thing that is true about alcohol and other drug abusers it is that they are all different in their needs and responses, reasons for drinking or taking drugs, their reactions to drugs and their readiness for treatment."

Close family and friends are in a good position to help people with drug or drinking problems, because they know their unique qualities and their way of life.

"Armed with some understanding of the signs and effects of problem drinking or other drug abuse, they can really help someone trying to deal with these issues," says Hester.

## **What not to do:**

- Don't attempt to punish, threaten, bribe, or preach.

- Don't try to be a martyr. Avoid emotional appeals that may only increase feelings of guilt and the compulsion to drink or use other drugs.
- Don't allow yourself to cover up or make excuses for the alcoholic or drug addict or shield them from the realistic consequences of their behavior.
- Don't take over their responsibilities, leaving them with no sense of importance or dignity.
- Don't hide or dump bottles, throw out drugs, or shelter them from situations where alcohol is present.
- Don't argue with the person when they are impaired or high.
- Don't try to drink along with the problem drinker or take drugs with the drug abuser.
- Above all, don't feel guilty or responsible for another's behavior.

#### **What To Do:**

- Try to remain calm, unemotional, and factually honest in speaking about their behavior and its day-to-day consequences.
- Let the person with the problem know that you are reading and learning about alcohol and other drug abuse, attending Al-Anon, Tough Love and other support groups.
- Discuss the situation with someone you trust -- someone from the clergy, a social worker, a counselor, a friend, or some individual who has experienced alcohol or other drug abuse personally or as a family member.
- Establish and maintain a healthy atmosphere in the home, and try to include the alcohol/drug abuser in family life.
- Explain the nature of alcoholism and other drug addiction as an illness to the children in the family.
- Encourage new interests and participate in leisure time activities that the person enjoys. Encourage them to see old friends.

- Be patient and live one day at a time. Alcohol and other drug addiction generally take a long time to develop, and recovery does not occur overnight. Try to accept setbacks and relapses with calmness and understanding.
- Refuse to ride with anyone who's been drinking heavily or using other drugs.

CADS offers individualised appointments to provide practical help and information to anyone who has concerns about a relative or friend and needs assistance in dealing and managing this.

CADS opening hours are 8:30am –5:00pm, Monday to Friday

(Closed public holidays) Our contact number is 579 -8391.

**Mental Health Awareness Week is 5-12 October. Please check the table in the email for activities and events.**

Ends

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