

Valley Stream Central High School District

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At Risk Behaviors – Problems, Warning Signs and Some Suggestions

Below are the talking points I used for discussing at-risk behaviors for adolescents that was presented at the South PTSA meeting on 10/18/11.

- **Technology revolution** where the child is in more control than we are compound the other problems with adolescence:
 - Drug and/or alcohol use/abuse
 - eating disorders
 - obesity
 - self esteem issues
 - peer pressure
 - self pressure
 - physical, emotional and cognitive changes
 - worries about the world and the economy
- **Technology problems**
 - Social Network Issues
 - Cyber bullying
 - Sexting
 - Sex-tortion
 - Distractions by the computer
 - Changing communications
- **What can we do?**
 - **Communicate** even if they don't participate
 - Listen
 - Create Opportunities to talk
 - Talk over differences
 - Avoid over-reacting
 - Talk about things that are important to your teen
 - Don't avoid talking about sensitive subjects and emotions
 - Use respect and kindness
 - **Set Limits**
 - Be clear
 - Give reasonable choices
 - Grant independence in stages
 - Health and safety come first
 - Guide but don't control

- Let kids make mistakes
 - Make actions have consequences
 - **Help them to become more confident**
 - Provide opportunities for your child's success
 - Don't force them to participate
 - Monitor violent TV and games
 - Praise and encourage
 - Have Patience
 - **Peer Pressure**
 - Get to know your child's friends
 - Get to know the parents of your child's friends
 - Talk with your child about friends and choices
 - Teach your child how to get out of a bad situation
 - **Media**
 - Set limits
 - Monitor
 - Consider buying a bully V-chip
 - Discuss risks with computer, social network
 - Provide alternatives to media entertainment
- **Warning signs for:**
 - **Alcohol and Drug Use**
 - Withdrawn
 - Hostility
 - New Friends
 - Grades slip
 - Lost interest in hobbies
 - Eating or sleeping patterns have changed
 - Relationship with family members has worsened
 - Has trouble concentrating and seems forgetful
 - eyes are red rimmed and nose is runny
 - household money keeps disappearing
 - **Eating Disorders**
 - Loses a large amount of weight
 - reduces the amount of food eaten
 - exercises excessively
 - possesses an intense fear of gaining weight
 - stops menstruating
 - binges
 - tries to control weight by vomiting
 - **Depression and Suicide**
 - Change in sleeping patterns

- Change in behavior
- Change in personality
- A major loss or life change
- Decreased interest in friends, school or activities
- Low self esteem
- No hope for the future
- Preoccupation with music art and personal writing about death
- giving away prized possessions
- direct suicide threats