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## When Silence Isn't Golden

BY SUSAN E. MURRAY

**M**any things created for good also can be used to destroy people's lives. Ellen White speaks of Satan gathering the fallen angels together "to devise some way of doing the most possible evil to the human family. One proposition after another was made, till, finally, Satan himself thought of a plan. He would take the fruit of the vine, also wheat and other things given by God as food, and would convert them into poisons, which would ruin man's physical, mental and moral powers" (see *Temperance*, p. 12).

The recent death of an iconic entertainer opened the doors for important discussions about the dangers of alcohol, and combining alcohol with prescription drugs.

Alcohol abuse among teens has increased during the past 20 years despite continued research and resources. The misconception that only "troubled" teenagers get into drugs is not true. Even young children are vulnerable to drug dangers.

Some worry less about prescription drug abuse than alcohol and other drugs. Research shows that kids think prescription drugs are safer than street drugs because they are prescribed by doctors and they see people using them. Today, teens are more likely to abuse prescription drugs than use ecstasy, crack/cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine combined. There are as many new abusers (ages 12–17) of prescription drugs as there are of marijuana.

What are parents to do?

**Learn about medications, their uses and the dangers of combining medications.** For example, learn how OxyContin, Vicodin, Demerol, Valium, Xanax, Ritalin and Adderall work in the body's system. Know the risks of over-the-counter medicines as well.

**Give straightforward, factual information.**

Don't use scare tactics. Share your values about drugs on an ongoing basis. When parents talk about the dangers of prescription drugs, teens are 50 percent less likely to use them.

**Keep your eyes and ears attuned.** Know your child's friends, their parents, and how their friends are supervised. Did you know that trail mix, french fries, big boys, cotton, chill pills and "pharming" (pronounced farming)\* also have drug-related meanings?

**Remember that kids are creative and risktakers.** They are affected by what they see in the society that surrounds them. We live in a quick-fix society. Consider how you treat common stressors and ailments in your home: headaches, indigestion, general aches and pains, down-in-the-dumps feelings.

**If there are prescriptions in the house, count the pills regularly to be sure none are missing.** Kids, knowing how Ritalin calms down a sibling, have been known to take it to calm themselves. Grandparents can be easy sources, too. Keep prescriptions in safe-keeping, and appropriately discard any unused medications.

**Care enough to confront.** It's been said, "Silence isn't always golden. It's permission." Let kids know you are serious about protecting them. Don't be afraid you will offend them. Be honest, open, caring and diligent — you may save a life!

Susan Murray is a professor emerita of behavioral science at Andrews University, and she is a certified family life educator and licensed marriage and family therapist.

\*For more information about pharming (pronounced "farming") see: <http://parentingtoday/skids.com/article-teens-go-pharming-clearly-we-arent-talking-about-crops>.

