

Purim begins on Monday, March 9, 2020. The Vaad Harabonim of Cleveland is taking this opportunity to address a very serious issue.

Every segment of our community, regardless of Hashkafa or level of observance, has members who are affected by substance use and addiction. The consequences of this behavior can be devastating; affecting one's personal health, financial security, family life and spiritual well being.

There are many substances with the potential for abuse, some that are legal (e.g. inhalants, alcohol and tobacco), some that are illegal (e.g. marijuana, cocaine and heroin) and some that require a doctor's prescription (e.g. oxycodone, valium and xanax). It is important to note that no amount of these substances is completely safe, and all have the potential to cause addiction. Medications that are not prescribed by a doctor or that are not used exactly as instructed are particularly dangerous.

When it comes to illegal drugs or medications taken without a prescription the terms "casual" or "recreational" are misleading and unhelpful. Individuals who use illegal drugs or medications without prescriptions, even occasionally, are at significant risk of impairment, injury and death.

The causes of substance and abuse are complex. However, it is indisputable that children who form habits do not do so in a vacuum. What children witness from their parents is particularly important in forming their own patterns of behavior, for good and for bad. Unsafe or unhealthy behaviors on the part of parents, including abuse of legal substances like alcohol, have implications for children that can last many years into adulthood.

As a Jews we bear responsibility for each other. Accordingly, it is incumbent upon all members of our community to be vigilant for problem signs of addiction that may include:

Physical - Change in sleep or eating habits; unusual smells on breath, body or clothes; hyperactivity or talkativeness; slowed or staggering walk; poor physical coordination; unexplained injuries or marks; nausea, vomiting or excessive sweating; tremors or shakes of hands, feet or head; or deterioration of hygiene, dress or physical health.

Behavioral - Change in overall attitude or personality; drop in grades at school or performance at work; missed family activities; lying or dishonesty; hypersensitivity or rapid changes in mood; difficulty in paying attention or forgetfulness; general lack of motivation, energy, self-esteem or "I don't care" attitude; change in habits at home; loss of interest in usual activities; unexplained need for money; unusual emotional states such as paranoia, giddiness or hyperactivity; secretive behavior; or excessive need for privacy.

If you suspect that a friend, family member, neighbor or colleague may have a substance abuse problem, it is imperative to seek help from a qualified professional. This may include a physician, mental health professional or social worker. Teachers and Rabbonim are important sources of guidance for those affected and their families but they are not a substitute for professional medical treatment. This is not merely an act of helpfulness or Chesed -- it is an act upon which someone's life may well depend. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of prompt intervention in preventing tragedy.

We further encourage all of our community's schools, Shuls and social service organizations to educate their students, members and supporters about this important message that affects all of us.

If someone is in immediate danger - including suspected overdose, runaway children or suicide threats -- you should call 911 immediately. Nothing, not time of day, fear of embarrassment or Shabbos/Yom Tov, should deter you from performing this life saving action. See, Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 328: 1-2; Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 329: 1; Mishna Berura 328:6 and Rambam, Hilchot Shabbat 2:3.

As a community service, we also want to share with you important contact information:

Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services, Board of Cuyahoga County

Phone: 216-623-6888

Website: <http://www.adamhsc.org>

Amudim Community Resources

Phone: 646-517-0222

Website: <https://amudim.org>

Website: http://www.jewishcleveland.org/access_jewish_cleveland_help_hotline

Website: <https://www.ifsa-cleveland.org>

Website: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/departments/neurological/depts/behavioral-health/alcohol-drug-recovery-center>

Website: <https://naalehcleveland.org>

Shmuel Spitz

Phasenbau

Hendrik

12/11/20

Del