

frivolity, for which we were not commanded . Simchah is when we serve the Creator of all... and worship must be with joyousness, while it is impossible if done with frivolity and drunkenness.

*In the last 10 months  
JACS Toronto has taken more than  
1200 drug related crisis calls and  
hosted over 500 recovery meetings  
helping thousands of individuals and  
families on their road to recovery*

**Shulhan Arukh, Yoreh Deiah 116:5**

One should take care never to put money in one's mouth, lest it be covered with the dried spittle of a diseased person...one should not leave a knife inserted into an etrog or a vegetable, lest a man unknowingly fall on its points and be killed.

**Rema, Yoreh Deiah 116:5**

One should avoid all things that might lead to danger, because a danger to life is more serious than a prohibition, and one should be more concerned about a possible danger to life than a possible prohibition. Therefore the sages prohibited one to walk in a place of danger, such as near a leaning wall or alone at night. . . All these things are intended to avoid danger, and one who is concerned with his health will avoid them. And it is prohibited to rely on some saving miracle or to endanger oneself in any similar situation.

**ADDITIONAL SOURCES FOR  
OLDER CHILDREN AND ADULTS**

**Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, Igrot Moshe,  
Yoreh Deiah 3:35** *written in 1973*

Regarding the matter that a number of boys from the yeshiva have begun smoking marijuana, it is clear that this is a forbidden act based upon a number of essential laws of the Torah. First, as this act harms and causes deterioration of the body, and even if there are some healthy individuals who are not excessively harmed by it, it still harms the mind and they are not fully able to comprehend an idea [when they are under its influence], which is even more serious. For they are then preventing themselves from studying Torah properly as well as preventing themselves from prayer and the fulfillment of mitzvot. For performance of these acts without mental faculties is as if they have not been performed at all.

Moreover [smoking marijuana] causes a great craving, even greater than that for food and such, which are [at least] necessary for man's sustenance. And there are those who cannot control and sublimate their craving [addiction], and this is the great prohibition which is stated in relation to the "rebellious son" who has an enormous desire for food, though it is for kosher food, and even more so it is forbidden to bring oneself to a [situation] of a greater craving, especially for a substance which is totally unnecessary for man's sustenance. And though in relation to the punishment of lashes let us say that we would not impose it simply based upon the logic of this "kal vachomer" argument, however regarding the prohibition, he certainly violates it.

In addition, the reason given for [punishing] the rebellious son — that he will eventually come to rob and steal from others [to sustain his habit] (Sanhedrin 68b) – - applies here as well. Moreover, the parents of such children [who use drugs] are very distressed and upset about the situation and thus [these children] are violating the commandment of honoring one's parents. In addition, there exists the prohibition devolving from the positive commandment of "You shall be holy" as interpreted by Ramban in his commentary to the Torah [Vayikra 19]. Moreover, they cause the violation of many other prohibitions, besides the ones [enumerated above].

In conclusion, it is crystal clear that the use of drugs is one of the most serious prohibitions. One must try with all one's ability to remove this impurity from the midst of the Jewish people and especially from among those who study in Yeshivot.

**How Do I Convince My Kids:  
"I was Once a Teenager!"**

**Sunday Nov. 23, 2003**  
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Chief Executive Officer of OHEL  
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**Darren Sederoff**  
Criminal Lawyer  
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TORAH ETHICS PROJECT OF THE ORTHODOX CAUCUS**  
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The S. Daniel Abraham and Ira L. Rennert Torah Ethics Project seeks to sensitize all Jews to the cardinal importance of achieving a harmonious balance of both ritual and ethical excellence. Framed by its Statement of Conscience, the Project is implemented via local and regional Task Forces that bring together synagogues, schools, homes, and other local Jewish institutions. A key component is community-wide education via the electronic and mass media. Each community focuses on a halachic and ethical theme for several weeks at a time. All the study, discussion, and curriculum materials for the Project, including this brochure, are produced by the **Lili & William Goldberg Resource Library for Ethical Education.**

**ABOUT THE ORTHODOX CAUCUS**

The Orthodox Caucus, a leadership group founded in 1992, brings together many prominent rabbis, rashei yeshiva, educators and lay leaders, in common cause. These men and women share in The Caucus' vision to address a variety of pressing issues and challenges facing Orthodoxy and the Jewish community, in the most practical and effective manner possible.



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416-633-5770  
16 Dorchester Drive, Toronto, Ontario M3H 3J1 Canada  
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Three words you never  
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Ve'Nishmartem Me'od  
ונשמרתם מאד  
Substance Abuse

**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

# ונשמרתם מאד Substance Abuse

## DISCUSSION SCENARIOS

### 1. For Elementary School

You are playing with your 5th grade friend in the playground when you find a box of matches. Your friend thinks that making a fire is cool, so he (or she) tells you to keep the matches a secret, so the two of you can play with them the next day. But you know fires are dangerous and you can really get hurt, and you would like to give the matches to the teacher on duty. But then you think “if I do that, my friend will think I’m not cool, and will probably tell the other kids that I’m a ‘baby.’”

- Would you give the matches to the teacher even if it meant that the kids in the class would make fun of you?
- Why do some kids feel it is important to impress their friends by doing things that are either dangerous or not approved by their parents or teachers?
- When one of your close friends does something, or encourages you to do something, that you feel might be wrong or harmful to yourself or someone else, is it right to “tell on them” to your teacher or your parent? What about telling on them to another friend? Is that lashon hara?
- When you’re with your friends and the group wants to do something crazy which you feel is not right, and someone says “everyone is doing it, so it’s OK,” what should you think or say?

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*Those working with our youth in Toronto report that drug use begins in junior high school and is known to exist in virtually every high school.*

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### 2. For Middle School, and High School

It is a Saturday night and you are with some friends in one of their homes watching a movie. One of the neighbours happens to come by, and brings along a few joints of marijuana. He offers them around, and some of the kids accept them and light up. You’re uncomfortable about this, as you’ve heard that getting high on drugs is

illegal, unhealthy, and really wrong. But you don’t want to look like a “loser,” so at one point you take a few puffs just to be “one of the guys.” You find it quite a pleasant, relaxing experience. But the next day you feel very guilty, and decide never to do it again. A week later, at another friend’s house, someone brings along some more marijuana. This time you decide to challenge the group.

- What are the strongest arguments you can think of against using such drugs? How would you score the importance of the following arguments: drugs are (a) illegal (b) unhealthy (c) against Jewish law (d) a cop-out (e) addictive (f) anti-social.
- One of the kids says that an occasional joint, or even snorting cocaine, poses no health hazard and is not addictive, so what’s so wrong if it helps you to relax and cope with life’s hassles? You answer that drugs are just an escape from dealing with your problems, and could in fact lead to long term health problems. He then says “what about people who occasionally drink alcohol for the same reason – how come that’s legal, and permitted by Jewish law and tradition.” How would answer him?
- How is a person supposed to decide in a case like this what is morally acceptable or unacceptable behavior? What role does halakhah have in this situation? Is this something that you can decide for yourself, or are there certain moral or behaviour issues for which you should turn to certain authority figures, such as a guidance counsellor, school principal, rebbe, or community rabbi?

### 3. For High School and College

There is a kid in one of your classes with whom you have been close since 3rd grade. You find her smoking “pot” one day, after school. You feel that she could really be ruining her life. You try to talk to her about it and she says “Stay out of my business.”

- Is her drug problem any of your business if she refuses to discuss or share it with you? What if instead of marijuana, it is cocaine or another “hard” drug?
- Would it be right for you to raise the matter with (a) the school guidance counsellor; (b) her parents; (c) your own parents for their advice; (d) the school principal; (e) the synagogue rabbi? Is it ok to “rat” on someone under these circumstances?
- What might be a helpful answer to give someone who uses drugs to “forget their problems?” Is there anything wrong, halachically, or hashkafically (in serving God) about escaping from a harsh reality once in a while?

### 4. For College and Adults

Every Shabbat in your shul you notice that a group of men leave before Mussaf. You ask about this, and are told about a “kiddush club” where quite a bit of liquor is

consumed. Apparently, whenever there is a kiddush, shalom zachor, or other catered event in the community these and other people are known to take the opportunity to engage in some heavy drinking. Purim and Simchat Torah are especially known as opportunities for “shikkering” (getting tipsy.) You discuss the issue with a friend who tells you to leave it alone, saying “it’s their business, they are not causing anyone harm, so what’s wrong with it.” You have several options:

- What problems might the existence of “kiddush clubs” create in a synagogue or community environment? What effect might such clubs have on youngsters in shul, or on the quality of tefilah, or even the perceptions of members by non-Jewish workers in the synagogue?
- Assuming that Shabbat or Yomtov morning “kiddush clubs” are not appropriate, should you call the shul president/rabbi/gabai and ask for a private meeting to discuss the problem and set a new synagogue policy regarding public consumption of alcohol?
- Should you quietly lobby to have the “offending parties” socially ostracized until they get the message that the community does not approve of their behavior? Would that be ethically wrong?
- If at a synagogue kiddush parents are seen to be encouraging their own teenagers to drink alcohol, should that be the concern of other congregants, or the synagogue leadership?

## SOURCES FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

### **Breishit 9:20**

And Noah planted a vineyard... and he drank wine, became drunk and was uncovered.

### **Devarim 4:15**

You shall carefully guard your own lives.

### **Tanchuma, Yalkut Shimoni, Noach 61**

Satan came and stood before Noach, saying “what are you planting?” Said Noach “a vineyard, whose sweet fruits produce wine that cause the heart to rejoice.” Said Satan “let us be partners in this vineyard” “Yes,” said Noach. Satan then brought a lamb and slaughtered it under the vine. Then he did the same, one after another, with a lion, a pig, and a monkey, sprinkling their blood throughout the vineyard, thus causing Noach to drink their blood in his wine. In so doing Satan hinted to man that when a person begins drinking alcohol he is timid and innocent like a lamb, then when he drinks just enough he is strong like a lion, thinking that none are as strong as he, But when a person drinks too much, first he acts like a pig polluting himself in his urine, then like a monkey who dances around uttering vile words, completely out of control. All of this happened to Noach.

### **Bara Kama 15b**

Rav Nathan said: “Whence do we know that a man should not maintain a vicious dog in his home, or keep an insecure ladder in his home? Because it is said, “Thou shall not bring blood- guilt upon your house.”

### **Pesachim 113a**

Rav said to his son Hiyya: “ Do not take drugs.”

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*Youth workers report that drugs are not only used but are readily available in all Jewish neighbourhoods.*

*These drugs are bought and sold by our youth. This includes hard drugs.*

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### **Rashbam to Pesachim 113a**

Do not take drugs: this is because they demand periodic doses. And your heart will crave them. You will waste much money thereby. Even for medical cure do not take them, and if possible find another mode of healing.

### **Rambam, Hilchot Rotzeiach 11:4-5**

Whether it is the roof or any other element that is dangerous so that a person might potentially stumble and lose his life such as if he had a spring or ditch in his courtyard, whether it contained or did not contain water, he is obligated to make a protective bank ten cubits high or to make a cover for it so that no one will fall in and lose his life. Similarly, regarding any obstacle that is life-threatening there is a positive commandment to remove and protect against it and to be exceedingly careful about it as it states: ‘But take utmost care and guard yourselves scrupulously’. And if he does not remove the (danger), and allows the dangerous obstacles to remain in place, he has nullified fulfilling a positive commandment, and has violated (the negative commandment) of ‘You shall not bring blood-guilt on your house’. There are many things that the Sages prohibited because they involve danger to life, and anyone who violates these things and says ‘I take upon myself the responsibility to put myself in danger and why is it other people’s business regarding my welfare?’ or who says ‘I am not concerned about the risk,’ receives “Makat Mardut” (rabbinically sanctioned whipping.)

### **Rambam Hil. Yom Tov 6:20**

When a person eats, drinks, and rejoices on Yomtov, he should not be seduced by alcohol to engage in levity and frivolity, saying that whoever does more of this fulfills the mitzvah of simchah all the more. For drunkenness, laughter and frivolity are not simchah but folly and