

MESSAGE FOR DRUG AWARENESS MONTH 2017

January is traditionally the time when people make promises to change some aspect of their lives or renew previously made commitments. There is no better time to pay attention to improving health and helping others to improve their quality of life. This should include committing to a life without substance abuse.

Substance abuse and addiction impact us all - directly or indirectly. They are problems that are not only close to home but also close to the workplace. Within the work environment, substance abuse and addiction can lead to absenteeism and a loss of productivity. When productivity is reduced, the potential of our local businesses may also be compromised, thus impacting the economic landscape of this country.

In addition to the potentially large negative impact which substance abuse and addiction can have on the business and economic sector, one must also consider the costs associated with rehabilitation. Research has shown that the cost of rehabilitating one person in residential care per day is six to eight times greater than the average cost of providing drug prevention education for that same person.

That said, can we as a small nation afford the financial costs associated with drug abuse? Perhaps if we each translated those costs into the costs of our individual families in terms of taxes paid, we may be more convinced to get on board in helping reshape our individual communities into drug-free spaces.

Substance abuse prevention is a responsibility which each of us must assume. Ever important in our efforts, is showing teens and even younger children how to stand up to peer pressure so that they do not succumb to a moment of temptation that may ruin their lives.

As the lead agency for drug abuse prevention, The National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA) has embarked on several initiatives which will bring the key players in the drug fight together. In this vein, the NCSA, along with its partners in the criminal justice and health sectors, worked assiduously to bring about the introduction of the Barbados Drug Treatment Court. This serves as yet another intervention in response to the scourge of drug abuse and provides an alternative to incarceration for drug dependent offenders. Drug treatment courts aim to direct eligible offenders with substance abuse problems into appropriate treatment and supervision programs tailored to their specific needs. The ultimate goal is to break the cycle of substance abuse and criminal behaviour - a better solution for the offender and the community. The Barbados Drug Treatment Court was successfully piloted and is now working with the second cohort of eligible offenders.

In addition, the Barbados National Anti-Drug Plan (BNADP) was recently approved by Cabinet. This national policy addresses several areas of concern in the illicit drug trade and provides a comprehensive response to the areas specified in the Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs. The specific targets for accomplishment outlined in the BNADP focus the efforts of the NCSA and its partners, not only on intermediate achievements such as the number of treatments given or educational programs conducted, but also on long term accomplishments, including the reduction of the human and social costs associated with drug abuse.

In closing, we are reminded of the potential physical and psychological dangers that drugs pose to the abuser. Physically, drugs can deteriorate the body and lead to death. Psychologically, they can cause us to lose all sense of control. Take control of your life by making the right choices. Don't let drugs take over your life or make you lose control.

Use these guidelines in your life to help you avoid any temptation to use drugs:

1. **I can do all this through him who gives me strength. *Philippians 4:13 New International Version (NIV)***

Think positive, life is not dull. You can enjoy life and feel good about it by placing God or your higher being at the centre of your life. A negative attitude can destroy you, but tell yourself you can do whatever you set your mind to, including being drug free. If you are not sure of yourself, you are in trouble.

2. **Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God. *Psalms 43:5 (NIV)***

Fill your life with joy - don't go around with your chin dragging on the ground. Hold your head up with enthusiasm. Don't let life drag you down.

3. **Not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. *Philippians 2:4 (NIV)***

Get involved - you get out of anything exactly what you put into it. If you are not willing to sacrifice, don't expect life to be a rose garden.

4. **Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. 1 Corinthians 6:19 (NIV)**

Discipline yourself - bring your body in subjection. Control your own life. Don't allow a chemical to rule you.

5. **Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)**

Be a Living Sacrifice

6. **My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. James 1:19 (NIV)**

Be your own person not a reactor to others

7. **Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV)**

Handle everything with prayer

This Drug Awareness Month and throughout the year, the National Council on Substance Abuse encourages you in your commitment to a drug-free life. Feel free to contact us at telephone number 429-6272 or via email info@ncsa.org.bb Please also visit our website at www.ncsa.org.bb or like us on Facebook.