

WORDS CAN WORK®

When
Talking
About

Steroids

A GUIDE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, PARENTS, AND CAREGIVERS

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Craig

Craig wanted to be bigger. The biggest. A guy in his gym suggested he use anabolic steroids—injections and pills.

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At first Craig was afraid. He didn't like needles. But he was frustrated that his already large muscles weren't getting bigger. He decided to start using the drugs. Craig hid the syringes so his parents wouldn't find out. From morning to night, he was obsessed with his body and his routine—injecting the drugs, working out, and eating foods high in protein.

Craig's muscles grew quickly. Everyone started to notice. Even teachers who coached him in high school commented, "Gee, too bad you're not playing football now."

The coaches talked to Jake too. "All my friends are football coaches," Jake says. "They were telling me that Craig was getting really big really fast. They never came right out and said, 'I think your son's on steroids.'"

Joyce didn't like how Craig looked, but it was his attitude that disturbed her the most. "Every time Craig passed the mirror in the dining room," she says, "he checked himself out. He was constantly asking anyone in the room, 'How do I look? Am I big enough?'"

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Dr. Olivardia

of taking steroids is injecting them with hypodermic needles. When people share needles, there’s a risk of passing hepatitis or HIV from one person to another. I’ve come across people who have contracted HIV by sharing needles.

Dr. Rauch: One of the reasons Kristen is able to keep making good choices is that she talks with adults she trusts. Sometimes it can’t be a parent. Kristen’s teacher listened without being judgmental. This gave her a sense of being valued for who she is, not what she looked like or how many homeruns she could hit.

Dr. Olivardia: Teachers, coaches, and parents need to be aware of the rise in the number of girls using steroids, and watch for signs of it. Parents can also help protect their children from a range of risky behaviors by building their confidence so they are less likely to turn to a quick fix, like steroids, to try to make themselves feel better emotionally.

Dr. Rauch: Working hard as part of a team toward a common goal builds self-esteem and helps offset Kristen’s difficult home environment. There’s a lesson in this for parents and coaches. Had her coach not given the team the message that he expected them to work together and avoid steroids, Kristen may have been at risk for using performance enhancers.

Fair Play in Sports



Josh

“I would rather lose, knowing I tried my best, than win by taking steroids.”

Josh

FACT: Taking anabolic steroids, or any performance-enhancing drug, is a decision to cheat. It ruins the experience of all other athletes against whom the user competes, because it undermines the basic principle of sport—the fair contest to determine the most skilled competitor.⁶

Josh has always been active in sports, from Little League Baseball to college football. He says being involved in sports has taught him to handle life’s ups and downs. His dad was his Little League Baseball coach whose message was constant: “Things can be difficult. Life can get frustrating. But you’ve got to learn how to handle it.”

The words stuck. “Now, playing college ball,” Josh says, “I have the skills to handle frustration and disappointment. When you can handle the tough times, you’re less likely to look for the easy way out.”

Josh doesn’t take anabolic steroids. “I would rather lose, knowing I tried my best, than win by taking steroids,” he says. “Using steroids is like a 25-year-old playing basketball against a 10-year-old. It wouldn’t bring any sense of

the pay off can feel great. That builds confidence.

Dr. Olivardia: One of the most important ways a parent can support their child is to acknowledge his or her strengths. That also builds self-esteem. A parent can say, "I'm proud of you. I love you. I think you're a funny person. You have a great personality." Or, "You're a great math student." Even if their son or daughter rolls their eyes and says, "Oh, you're just saying that. Whatever, Mom." Pointing out your children's talents is important.

"Communities need to be pro-active on the issue of anabolic steroids."

Dr. Olivardia

Josh's words to parents

"I'm glad that my dad let me know that sometimes I'd stumble. That sometimes I'd get frustrated and fail, but to do my best, to give it my all, was more important than anything. I'd say to parents: let your kids stumble. Ease up on the pressure. Winning is great, but it's not all that matters."

Remember

Playing fair can be applied to any activity in life. As Josh says, "Will you know that you achieved your goals honestly? Will you be happy with yourself?"