

Helping parents manage their child's substance use: Evidence-based strategies

Lori Siegel, PhD

Psychiatry and Behavioral Health Institute

Allegheny General Hospital

Allegheny Health Network

CRAFT:

Community Reinforcement and Family Training

What is CRAFT?

- Strategies that parents can use to help their child decrease alcohol and drug use
- Research shows that these strategies are effective.
- Developed as an alternative to the traditional intervention
- Parents are not helpless; they just need the right tools.
- Based on the idea that the consequences of behavior affect how likely it is for the behavior to happen again

Goals of CRAFT

- To encourage the child to attend treatment
- To reduce the child's substance use regardless of whether he/she is in treatment
- To increase positive behavior in the child
- To improve the parent's self-care
- To improve the relationship between the parent and the child

How is CRAFT different?

CRAFT

- Parent self-care
- Stay connected to child

Al-Anon

- Parent self-care
- Detach from child

CRAFT

- Effective communication and rewards for positive behavior

Intervention

- Confrontation and coercion

Comparison of Three Approaches

- All three improve family members' functioning and relationship satisfaction
- CRAFT more effective than others in getting person using substances to attend treatment
 - CRAFT: 64%
 - Intervention: 30%
 - Al-Anon: 20%

Miller, Meyers, and Tonigan, 1999

Why does my child use drugs/drink?

- To feel relaxed
- To lower anxiety/stress
- To feel part of a group
- To have more fun
- To lower depression
- To lower anger

How knowing this helps

- I can understand that my child's behavior isn't "crazy" or simply self-destructive.
- My child's behavior "makes sense" because it has benefits.
- I can feel less confused and less angry.
- I can help to figure out other ways for my child to get these same benefits without the costs of substance use

Skill: Effective Communication

- How to talk to get your message across
- 7 elements of effective communication
 - Be brief
 - Be specific
 - Use positive wording
 - Use “I feel” statements
 - Offer an understanding statement
 - Take partial responsibility
 - Offer to help
- Effective communication is foundation for many other skills

Skill: Positive Reinforcement

- Positive reinforcement: giving a reward for positive, non-using behavior
- Giving a reward makes the behavior more likely to happen again.
- Isn't that just enabling? What's the difference?
 - Positive reinforcement is giving a reward that makes the behavior more likely to happen again.
 - Enabling is preventing the child from experiencing negative consequences of using substances which makes it more likely to continue

Skill: Allowing Negative Consequences

- Parents tend to protect their kids from negative consequences of substance use (enabling). This is understandable! But...
- Negative consequences can make kids see the downsides to using and increase their desire to change.
- Allowing natural negative consequences to occur
- Giving your own negative consequences

Skill: Self-Care

- Parents of children who use substances are more likely to become depressed, anxious, and isolated.
- They often assume their needs are secondary.
- Parents can improve their own well-being by focusing on social support, relaxation, and increasing enjoyable activities.
- Increased self-care can improve resilience and ability to deal with stress of child's substance.

Skill: Inviting Child to Enter Treatment

- Ongoing rewards for positive behavior shows your child benefits of reducing drug and/or alcohol use.
- Negative consequences of substance use show the costs of it.
- Use effective communication skills to discuss treatment
- Allow the child to be involved in decision-making about treatment, if reasonable.

Further Resources

- Center for Motivation and Change (2014). The Parent's 20 Minute Guide: A Guide for Parents about How to Help Their Children Change Their Substance Abuse., New York, CMC.
- The20minuteguide.com
- Partnership for Drug-Free Kids Parent Support Network
- www.drugfree.org
- Allies in Recovery: alliesinrecovery.net
- Robertjmeyersphd.com
- Meyers, R.J., (Author), & Yu, J. (Director) (2007): "Getting an Addict into Treatment: The CRAFT Approach" [television series episode]. In J. Hoffman & S. Froemke (Producers), The HBO Addiction Series; Why Can't They Stop? HBO New York, New York.
- Foote, J., Wilkens, C., Kosanke, N., & Higgs, S. (2014). Beyond Addiction: How Science and Kindness Help People Change. New York, Scribner.