

TALK TIPS

Parent Guidelines in Talking to Children about Drugs and Alcohol

The following guidelines help parents to navigate the often-difficult terrain of talking about drugs and alcohol with their children. While difficult, it is crucial to address potential concerns and create an open relationship to honestly discuss the risks and dangers associated with drug and alcohol use.

1. Start having age appropriate discussions with your children at a young age. It is never too early to educate your children about the importance of substance abuse and the dangers of teen drugs and alcohol use.
2. Be clear about your expectations for your child's behavior and decision-making concerning teen drinking and drug use.
3. Establish specific consequences for not following your rules and expectations. Refer to our behavior contract on alcohol and drug use which can be used as a formal agreement with consequences for your child.
4. Discuss the following reasons why you want your child to avoid alcohol or drugs:
 - a. It is illegal to drink underage and use drugs. Reinforce the legal age limit of 21 to drink and that breaking the law can hold strict legal ramifications as well as personal and academic consequences.
 - b. Preserve self respect and esteem by honoring themselves at all times. Teens can easily lose respect for self or from others if they get involved in embarrassing or compromising situations involving substances.
 - c. Drinking and using drugs can be dangerous. Inform your children that drunk driving is one of the leading causes of death for teens. Using drugs or alcohol impairs judgment and leads to hazardous activities such as unprotected sex, sexual and physical assault and even death.
 - d. Educate them about alcoholism if it runs in your family. Let them know it is a progressive disease and if they have a genetic propensity for alcoholism, they are more vulnerable to developing a serious problem.
 - e. Inform them that you will keep tabs on their activities if you have any suspicion they are using. Let them know you love them and will do whatever it takes to keep them safe, healthy and alive.



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5. Teach refusal skills to your children. You can be sure that at some point your teen will be offered alcohol or drugs.

To help them resist, ensure your child has the ability to say NO when confronted with peer pressure.

a. Brainstorm with your child ways to say NO. Talk about strategies on how to say no in difficult social situations. It is helpful to think of various comebacks when they feel pressured to drink or use drugs.

b. Comeback examples:

- 1) "No thank you"
- 2) "Drinking and drugging is not my thing."
- 3) "My parent's will kill me!"
- 4) "It's past my curfew, I have to go home."
- 5) "It's not worth getting grounded and stuck with my parents."
- 6) "Why are you always pressuring me? Please stop."
- 7) "Back off"

