



Talking Tips & Open Communication

Start early and talk often to let your child know you care about their health and safety, and that you are speaking from a place of concern, love, and support. **Of all Americans struggling with addiction, 90% of them started using substances in their teen years**, so it's important to take early action to keep your child drug-free.



Developing open and trusting communication between you and your child can help them avoid substance use and addiction, and help guide them in a healthy lifestyle for years to come. It's never too early, or too late, to talk to your child about your no-use stance against underage drinking, marijuana use, vaping, or prescription drug misuse.

Make it clear to your child that you don't approve of them using alcohol or other drugs, but be curious and open-minded about their experiences. Ask them questions about what they think about these substances. Ask them what they know or what they've heard about them. It's more important – and effective – to listen and discuss rather than to lecture. Resist interrogating or threatening your child. You are building a foundation for a relationship with your child that is honest, trusting, and open, which is an important protective factor to safeguard your child.



Talking Tips to Guide the Conversation

- Encourage conversation with questions like:
 - "What was the best thing that happened to you today?"
 - "What are other kids at school saying about alcohol/vaping/marijuana/prescription pills?"
 - "What do you think about teens who drink/vape/use drugs?"
- Use teachable moments when you see alcohol or drug use by teens on TV or in movies. Sometimes these teachable moments occur within your own family or friend group.
- Listen without interruption. Your active listening paves the way for conversations about topics that concern you.
- Ask open ended questions (instead of questions with yes/no only answers).
- Be clear that you disapprove of any drinking, vaping, marijuana, or other drug use and expect your child to stay alcohol-free until at least age 21. Be sure to include talks about misusing prescription medications when you talk about alcohol and other drugs.
- Establish a no-use policy when it comes to alcohol and other drugs, and communicate it clearly with your child. Create consequences ahead of time and follow through if rules are broken.

Research shows that kids who learn about the harms of alcohol and other drugs from their parents are HALF as likely to use than those whose parents don't.



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