

A Parent's Guide to Talking with Your Child About Substance Abuse



1 Start the conversation.

In your conversations about your student's day, feel free to ask questions like:

"Have you ever heard of vaping?"

"Do you know what THC or marijuana is?"

"Do you have friends who vape or use substances?"

"What would you do if someone asks you if you want _____?"

2 Listen to their response without interrupting and without judgment.

Let's be honest—that is hard to do. We want the best for our children and want them to know our thoughts and feelings about a topic, but they will respond best if they feel heard. Let them explain as much as possible, and then have a conversation. If you are open and listen, your child will feel comfortable coming to you with difficult topics for your opinion and advice. This will open the door for good conversations on many topics and can help keep you and your child close through the difficult teenage and early adult years.

3 Correct any misconceptions or wrong information.

Sometimes children think they know the effects substances will have on them—good or bad—but actually have wrong information. Helping your child know the truth about substances will help them make better decisions for their growing brains and bodies, and for their futures. *See the resource links to the right for more information about current substance use trends and how to help your child.*

4 Clearly explain your thoughts on substance use.

Survey results tell us that many students don't know what their parents think about substance use. Parents are the most influential persons in a child's life—even when they are teenagers—and they will listen. Tell them your thoughts clearly. Children are more concerned with disappointing their parents than making them mad or upset.

5 Help them figure out how to refuse substances.

Some of the most important skills children can learn are refusal skills. The best way to help your child is to ask them what they would do if someone offered them a substance. Help them find ways out of the situation, and share how you can help them. Remind them that other trusted adults in their lives (school personnel, coaches, members of their house of worship, etc.) can also help. Remind children that they can always come to you to talk about these issues.

Research tells us that relationships with trusted adults help children stay away from harmful substances.

These are called "protective factors." You are your child's biggest protective factor!

CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[Prevention Tips for Every Age - Partnership to End Addiction](#)

[DEA Publications | Get Smart About Drugs](#)



For more information,
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