

Parents and Prevention

TALK WITH YOUR ADOLESCENT ABOUT THE HARM OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

Learn about alcohol and other drugs so you can answer questions and explain how these drugs can harm people, especially young people. Talk together frequently and clarify any mistaken ideas, such as “everybody drinks” or “marijuana is harmless.”

MAKE FAMILY RULES THAT HELP YOUR ADOLESCENT SAY “NO” TO DRUGS

Make your expectations of no use of alcohol and other drugs clear. “The rule in our family is no use of illegal drugs by anyone and no use of alcohol or tobacco by anyone under the legal age.” Back it up with accurate and convincing information about the harm of drugs, and then explain the consequences for breaking the rule. Be prepared to follow through, if necessary.

LISTEN CAREFULLY TO YOUR ADOLESCENT

Build a close relationship by talking and listening carefully to your adolescent so you can better understand his or her feelings and concerns. Encourage questions about drugs, and make sure your child knows you are available for help no matter what.

HELP YOUR ADOLESCENT DEVELOP SELF-CONFIDENCE

Look for the positives in your child—and then point them out. When correcting, criticize the action, not the person. Praise effort, not just achievements, and acknowledge when he or she shows good judgment. Whenever possible, talk together about hopes and goals for the future.

HELP YOUR ADOLESCENT DEVELOP STRONG VALUES

Communicate and model your family’s values. Teach your child to make decisions based on these standards of right and wrong. Explain that these are the standards for your family, despite what others may decide.

BE A GOOD EXAMPLE

Examine your own attitudes and behaviors about alcohol and other drugs. Your actions speak louder than words.

HELP YOUR ADOLESCENT DEAL WITH PEER PRESSURE

Discuss the importance of individuality and the meaning of true friendship. Talk about situations in which drugs might be available, along with different ways to handle negative pressure. By deciding in advance what to say and do, your adolescent will be ready to deal with those promoting drug use.

ENCOURAGE HEALTHY AND POSITIVE ACTIVITIES

Look for ways to get your adolescent involved in satisfying hobbies, school clubs, and other activities that reduce boredom and too much free time. Promote friendships with young people who do not use drugs, and be careful about giving your child excessive spending money.

TEAM UP WITH OTHER PARENTS

Get to know your child's friends and their parents. Keep in touch, particularly when parties are being planned, so you can support each other in establishing common rules and expectations. The best way to keep adolescents free from drugs is to help their friends be drug-free, too.

KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A PROBLEM

Realize that no child is immune to the lure of drugs. Learn the signs of use and take seriously any concerns you hear from friends, teachers, or other young people about your adolescent's possible use.

Be aware of community resources and places to go for questions and problems.

Adapted from the brochure "Ten Steps to Help Your Pre-Teen Say No," prepared by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.