

TIPS FOR PARENTS

Adolescence is a complex and teenagers are just beginning to establish their identities. This means testing the boundaries of parental controls. When it comes to drugs and alcohol, pushing these limitations can sometimes lead to serious and dangerous situations. Below are some suggestions on how to get the conversations started with your teen:

Plan to have a relaxed conversation. Don't lecture. It is important to engage.

Don't make your teenager feel defensive or ambushed. Give them the heads-up before you have the conversation so that everyone is prepared. *"Tomorrow night let's have a talk about drinking, drugs and driving. No one is in trouble. We just want to talk about where we stand, our concerns and discuss any questions you have. Most of all, we love and support you."*

Put yourself in your teen's shoes.

Consider the manner in that you would prefer to be addressed when speaking about a difficult subject. It might be helpful to think about how you felt when you were a teenager.

The 'I learned it from Dad and Mom' dilemma.

Parents sometimes feel hypocritical about hiding their own experiences. If your children ask if you've ever tried drugs, you can choose to keep your experiences private (not everything in your history needs to be available) or to share them, but don't reminisce your experiences. You can also explain that as a parent, it's your job to help them avoid things they will regret, and substance use increases the chances of doing something you will regret.

Be honest about your own use of substances.

Your child might see you drinking alcohol or consuming cannabis and get the impression it's a good way to cope with stress or anxiety. Think about how they may be modeling your reactions to stress, and talk with them about alternative coping mechanisms that are better suited for the developing brain.

Most important, remember these key things when speaking with your children:

- Tell your child that you **love** them, No matter what the situation.
- You **understand** that drug use may seem like the thing to do, but doing drugs can have profound consequences on their mental and physical health.
- You are there to **listen** to them and **support** them.

- **And above all, CALL YOU if they are in a risky situation and out late at night**

PARENT RESOURCES

Conversation Starters

Ask your child about **THEIR** concerns regarding drugs and alcohol. Discuss and address those issues. Let your child know that they can be open and honest with you and let them know that **their safety is your priority**.

“My #1 concern is your safety. Call me at any time. Talk to me about anything. **I will not be mad. I only want you safe.**”

Approach every conversation with curiosity and not with accusations.

Be mindful of family history of substance use disorders

Think before you search your child's phone, room or bags. The potential gains far outweigh the trust you may lose with your child.

Make your position clear when it comes to substances like alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Don't assume that your child knows where you stand.

Be **honest** about what you know and don't know.

Have **courage** about having the discussion in the first place.

Your child will make mistakes, but with a **loving** and **supportive** family, it will turn out all right.

Website Resources

<https://www.greenwichtogether.org>

Vaping

<https://www.stamfordyouthservices.org/vaping>

<https://www.parentsagainstvaping.org/>

Marijuana

<https://www.stamfordyouthservices.org/marijuana>

Partnership to End Addiction

<https://drugfree.org/>

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