

TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT DRUGS

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Virtually all parents in America (98%) say they have talked with their children about drugs. However, only 27% of teens say they are learning a lot at home about the risks of drugs, according to a new national study by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America. It is challenging for parents to find opportunities to talk to their children about drugs, yet the more effective your communication, the more at ease your child will feel about discussing drugs and other sensitive issues with you. Here are some tips from www.theantidrug.com to help parents address the issue of talking to young people about drugs.

- **Be absolutely clear with your kids that you don't want them using drugs.** Ever. Anywhere. Don't leave room for interpretation or assumptions. Talk often about the dangers and effects of alcohol and other drug use.
- **Be a better listener.** Ask questions and encourage questions from your child. Show your willingness to listen.
- **Give honest answers.** Don't make up what you don't know; offer to find out. If asked if you ever used drugs, let them know what's important: that you don't ever want them using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs.
- **Use TV reports, commercials, or school discussions to talk about drugs.** You can use the "teachable moments" as a natural, unforced way to talk about your values and expectations.
- **Don't react in a way that will cut off further discussion.** If your child makes statements that challenge or shock you, turn them into a calm discussion.
- **Role play with your child and practice ways to refuse drugs in different situations.** Acknowledge how tough these moments can be.

Remember these key talking points in your conversations with your child.

1. We are here to make it clear that we will not tolerate any use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs by you.
2. We have rules in the family. The rules do not permit teen drug use.
3. Even though you think everyone is using alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs, it is illegal and we do not allow it.
4. You can endanger your life and the lives of others. We don't want anything bad to happen to you. I don't know what I'd do if I lost you.
5. We count on you as a family member. Your brothers and sisters look up to you and care about you. What would they do if something bad happened to you?
6. The use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs can ruin your future and chances to graduate, go to college, get a job, and keep your driver's license.
7. We are here to support you. What can I do to help you be drug free?
8. Sometimes kids use drugs because there are other issues going on such as stress, unhappiness, or social issues. Have you thought about this? Are there other problems you want to talk about?
9. Are your friends using drugs? How are you handling that? Is it hard not to use drugs in the environment?
10. We won't EVER give up on you, because we love you. We will stay on your case about drugs because alcohol, tobacco and other drugs are a life and death issue with young people.