



Navigate the tough questions...

Asking and answering tough questions about alcohol and other drugs will open the lines of communication between you and your kids.

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Asking and answering questions about alcohol and other drugs is not as difficult as one may think. Here are some helpful hints that can keep the lines of communication open between you and your kids.

- Be absolutely clear with your kids. Tell your kids you do not want them to ever use drugs. Be certain to talk often about the harmful effects and dangers of drug and alcohol use and abuse. Talking about alcohol and other drugs should be an ongoing dialogue, not a five-minute “talk”. As your kids grow they will need more information. Be certain to start the conversation early and build on it as your kids mature.
- Role-play with your kids. Practice with them ways to refuse drugs in different situations. Mention refusal skills like: being assertive, offering an alternative, giving an excuse or talking to an adult.
- Be a better listener. Kids have valuable things to say. When parents listen, it helps build their kids confidence and self-esteem. Ask questions and paraphrase what your kid says to you. Ask for their input about family decisions. Showing that you are willing to listen will make them feel more comfortable about opening up to you.
- Give honest answers. Don't make up what you don't know; offer to find out. If asked whether you have ever taken drugs, let them know what's important: That you don't want them to use drugs. The issue is not about your past. It is about your kid's future. What is important now is that your kids understand you do not want them to use drugs.
- Don't react in a way that will discourage further discussion. If your kids make statements that challenge or shock you, turn it into a calm discussion of why your kid thinks people use drugs, or whether the effect is worth the risk.

Kids need to hear about the dangers of drug use from their parents. There are many opportunities to start the conversation about drugs and its harmful effects; for example, after dinner, before bedtime, or on the drive to or from school. Also be sure to make use of teachable moments, such as use newspaper headlines, TV news stories and shows, or point out alcohol and other drug related situations that are going on in your own neighborhood.

Source: Partnership for a Drug Free America and www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com.

For more information about how to talk to your kids about drugs go to: www.timetotalk.org or, www.drugfree.org

This information is part of a community campaign designed to encourage parents to talk to their kids about alcohol and other drugs.