

A Parent's Role in Preventing Substance Use **PART 2**

COMMUNICATION *WHAT DO I TALK ABOUT?*

Conversation Starters

It's never too early to start the conversation. Discussions about alcohol and other drugs are ongoing conversations that begin early on and continue throughout the teenage years and young adulthood. As youth grow, your conversations may change, but they always will be centered on keeping them happy, healthy and safe.

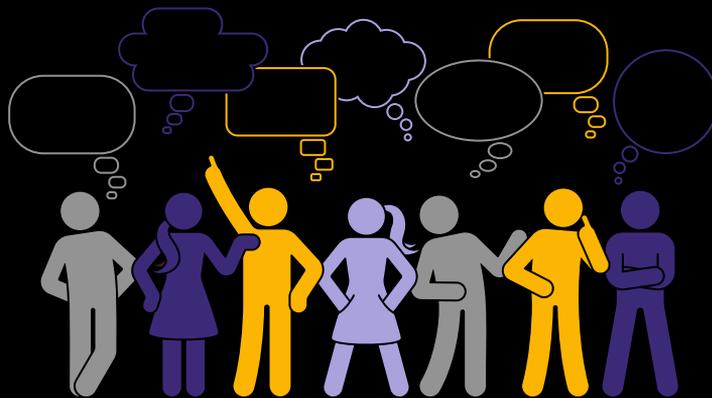
The following discussion topics may help youth open up and talk about their knowledge and exposure to drugs. As a parent, you try to protect your children, but research shows most kids are exposed to substances at an early age through social media, the Internet, TV or friends.

PERCEPTIONS AND UNDERSTANDING

- Do you know what vaping/binge drinking/overdosing is? What do you know about it?
- What do you know about why someone your age is more likely to get addicted to drugs?
- When you hear or see messages about drugs, how do you decide which are myths and which are facts?

FRIENDS AND PEERS

- What would you do if you saw friends taking prescription pills that aren't theirs? What if you saw them drunk or high?
- If you were with kids who were vaping, drinking or using drugs, how would you feel? How would you handle it?
- Besides family members, who do you feel most comfortable talking to about substances? Why?



Visit **Raising Placer** for more communication tips.

There's an app for that! Use the **"Talk. They Hear You"** app by SAMHSA as an online role-play tool to practice and build skills.



TRY ACTIVE LISTENING



Ask open-ended questions. Ask questions to elicit more than just a "yes" or "no" response.
Tell me more about ...



Be positive. Find positives in a situation, no matter how difficult it may seem.
Thank you for your honesty. I really appreciate it.



Let youth know you hear them. Reflect back what you are hearing verbatim or just the sentiment.
I'm hearing you feel overwhelmed and believe drinking alcohol relaxes you. Is that right?



Sum up and ask questions. Show you're listening the entire time and ask for their input.
Did I get everything? Do you have anything more to add?



Ask permission. Ask if it is OK for you to speak with them about their concerns and to offer some feedback.
Are you OK with me asking you this? Do you mind if I give you some advice?



Offer empathy and compassion. Demonstrate understanding.
I hear that you feel smoking pot helps your anxiety. I'm sorry you're feeling anxious; I know that's a really difficult feeling. Can we think of some other activities that can help you relax?

WHAT TO SAY HOW DO I RESPOND?

There is no script available for talking about substances. However, these samples can guide you with ways to integrate prevention messages and positive parenting.

WORDS TO AVOID WHEN TALKING ABOUT SUBSTANCES (OR ANY ISSUE)

AVOID	INSTEAD, USE
BUT You did well on your report card, but I know you can work even harder.	AND You did well on your report card, and I know you can work even harder.
SHOULD You should stop drinking alcohol.	WANT I want you to stop drinking alcohol, and I'm here to help you.
BAD Smoking pot is bad for you.	HARMFUL Smoking pot is harmful for your health and brain.
STUPID Vaping is a stupid choice.	UNHEALTHY Vaping is unhealthy for you, and that's why I'm concerned.
DISAPPROVE I disapprove of you hanging out with that group of friends.	CONCERNED I am concerned about your group of friends and worry they may not be the best influence.
DISAPPOINTED I am disappointed in you for breaking curfew.	WORRIED I am worried about your decision to come home past curfew.
CAN'T You can't come home at 11 p.m. on weeknights.	DON'T WANT I don't want you to come home this late at night anymore.

YOUR CHILD SAYS:

"I know, I know.
You've talked with me about this before."

YOU CAN SAY

"I know we've had conversations about drugs before, and I'm sorry you feel like I'm being a nag."

"I want us to be able to discuss topics because I love you and want to help during these years when you're faced with a lot of difficult choices. Talking about them is important. Would that be OK?"

HERE'S WHY

Taking responsibility and acknowledging youth's feelings are effective ways to reduce resistance.

This statement shows compassion for what they are going through. Asking permission helps youth feel empowered in the dialogue. Be prepared for a possible response of "No, I don't want to talk." If this happens, ask why. Then have them suggest a time when they would be willing to talk.

YOUR CHILD SAYS:

"I don't know what to say when other kids ask me to use."

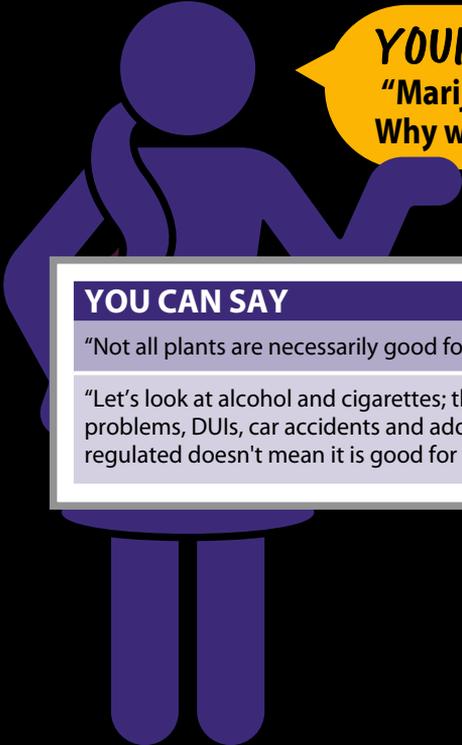
YOU CAN SAY

"Let's think of some ways you can turn down the offer that you are comfortable saying."

HERE'S WHY

Instead of telling them what to say or do in an uncomfortable situation, ask them. Help youth brainstorm ways to turn down offers for their own reasons, such as, "I'm not into that," "I can't," "I don't feel like it" or "I have a big game tomorrow and don't want to be groggy."

WHAT TO SAY HOW DO I RESPOND? Continued



YOUR CHILD SAYS:

"Marijuana is a plant. It's natural and even legal in some states. Why would they make something legal if it could hurt me?"

YOU CAN SAY

"Not all plants are necessarily good for you. Think about poison ivy."

"Let's look at alcohol and cigarettes; they are legal but cause damage such as health problems, DUIs, car accidents and addiction. Just because something is legal and regulated doesn't mean it is good for you."

HERE'S WHY

This helps youth rethink their point.

This includes examples to redirect youth back to your goal of helping them understand harmful side effects of substance use.

YOUR CHILD SAYS:

"All the kids in my class are vaping and they're fine. It's a lot safer than alcohol."

YOU CAN SAY

"Honestly, I don't want you to be doing anything that can harm you. I'm wondering how you know all of your classmates are vaping and why you believe it is safer than alcohol."

HERE'S WHY

You can express genuine curiosity about their thought processes. If youth assume everyone else is taking drugs, they are more likely to engage in drug use. Challenging inaccurate beliefs of peer behaviors and providing accurate information helps debunk falsely held norms about peer drug use.

SCENARIO:

Your teen comes home smelling of alcohol/cigarette smoke/marijuana for the first time and reluctantly explains that other kids were experimenting on the ride home.

YOU CAN SAY

"I'm upset because you were not honest with me. I need you to know you always can call me for a ride or use me as an excuse to remove yourself from a risky situation. I get you're worried about being in trouble, but remember I love and care about you. Your health and well-being are very important to me. Let's talk more about what happened tonight."

HERE'S WHY

The response should be measured, quiet and serious; you shouldn't yell or be overly emotional. Your child should realize this isn't just a small, frustrating moment, such as when the youth doesn't do a chore; it's very serious due to the dangerous consequences of riding with individuals under the influence.

TALKING TO YOUTH ABOUT SUBSTANCES AT EVERY AGE

Ages	Keys to Prevention	Tips for Conversation and Communication
6-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach facts so they see you as a credible source. Help them develop decision-making skills. Explain that just because someone tells them to do something doesn't mean it is always "right." Discuss how to avoid and escape dangerous situations that make them feel uncomfortable. Keep your child active in the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk about drug-related messages they see and hear through TV, news, movies, social media and at school. Discuss short-term consequences. Children are interested in how their bodies work, so focus on maintaining good health and avoiding things that might harm the body. Note the differences between medical/illegal use of substances.
10-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empower them to make good decisions and resist pressures to try drugs. Get to know your child's friends and caregivers. Check in by phone or visit once in a while to make sure they are on the same page about prohibiting drug use. Teach your child how to vet credible online resources - go to www.commonssensemedia.org. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate their curiosity. Preteens love to learn facts, especially strange ones, and want to know how things work. Note the difference between fantasy and reality while watching TV and movies. Let them know they can always use you as an excuse during peer pressure: "No, my mom [or dad, grandma, etc.] would ground me forever if I vaped."
13-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind your teen you disapprove of all drug use. Emphasize family values, expectations and consequences. Provide praise for making positive decisions and avoiding substances. Help build their self-esteem and self-image. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk about their choices of friends; substance use in teens starts as a social behavior. Assist them in creating a list of assertive tactics and prepared responses that are helpful in saying "no" to peer pressure. Discuss the immediate and unpleasant effects of drugs. Note the negative effects drugs can have on physical appearance because teens are typically concerned with how they look.
16-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage participation in healthy activities with peers. Monitor and supervise their activities. Encourage volunteering where they can see the impact of drugs on your community (homeless shelters, hospitals or victim services centers). Teens enjoy hearing ways they can contribute and make a difference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk to them about how to stand up for their beliefs so they will be empowered to take a stand when someone is pressuring them to make high-risk choices. If they resist, be willing to back off and try another time. This shows you respect their privacy. Emphasize consequences of misusing drugs, such as decreasing the chances of getting into college or getting a job.
19-on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out periodically and keep the lines of communication open as your child leaves home. Stay alert to mental health issues related to drug use and campus/community resources available. Review the legal, academic and employee penalties for underage drinking, using a fake ID, public intoxication, DUI and drug use. Be an at-home resource. Respect their privacy and independence while expressing the desire to help. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be specific about the behavior you expect ("I expect you to wait until you are 21 years old to drink."). Talk about over-the-counter and prescription medicine abuse; nonmedical, unsupervised use can be very harmful. Discuss risks associated with binge drinking. Encourage them to intervene when roommates or friends are in trouble with substance misuse (passed out, unconscious) by calling 911.
All Ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have meaningful, ongoing conversations about substance use. Repetition is key! Model appropriate behaviors to promote healthy living. View the Parent Drug Guide to learn and stay up to date on drug trends. Be aware of your family history of substance misuse and discuss any potentially elevated risks. Get to know your child's friends. It is never too late to start talking about drugs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offset feelings of insecurity and doubt with positive comments about their character (not just when they get an "A" or do well in sports). Convey you care about and love your child, even when you're having tough conversations. Use "I" statements to express yourself without youth feeling judged, blamed or attacked. Describe their behavior, how you feel about it and how it affects you, then spell out what you need.

I **FEEL** worried **WHEN** you come home past curfew and go straight to your room. **BECAUSE** I love you and want to keep you safe, I **NEED** you to follow our rules about communication and not doing drugs.

"I" STATEMENT



I FEEL

WHEN

BECAUSE

WHAT I NEED IS

(Good Therapy, 2018)

SUBSTANCE USE FAST FACTS

- ✘ Youth are less likely to use substances if their parents have established a pattern of setting clear rules and consequences for breaking those rules. Those who are not monitored by their parents regularly are four times more likely to use drugs. (Partnership for Drug-Free Kids, 2018)
- ✘ 46 percent of children live in a household where someone age 18 or older is smoking, drinking excessively, misusing prescriptions or using illegal drugs. (Center on Addiction, 2018)
- ✘ 75 percent of all high school students have used addictive substances; two in five reported past-year use of vaping. (Center on Addiction, 2018; NIDA, 2018)
- ✘ One in five 12th graders vaped nicotine in the past month. (NIDA, 2018)
- ✘ Fentanyl-related deaths in the U.S. amongst 13- to 24-year-olds have INCREASED BY 491% in the last 5 years. Fentanyl is the #1 CAUSE OF DEATH amongst 18- to 45-year-olds in the U.S. (1pillcankillplacer.com, 2022)

EVERY PARENT HAS THE POWER TO PREVENT ADDICTION

Research shows that teens are less likely to drink, smoke, or use drugs when they feel their parents are actively involved in their lives. (NIDA, 2019)

BOTTOM LINE: Adults Play a Key Role

You are the most important and powerful influence in your child's life. A majority of substance-free adolescents credit their parents for their decision not to use illegal substances. Even if you're not a parent, you still can play a significant role in a youth's life. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings, mentors, volunteers, teachers and coaches all can help guide youth toward healthy choices at every stage of life. Caring adults can take action by having frequent conversations with the youth in their lives about the dangers of substance use. Let youth know YOU are a resource.



SUSPECT SUBSTANCE USE?



You never can be too safe or intervene too early. Talk to youth as soon as your instinct tells you something is wrong or you spot signs of drug use.



Express your concern and willingness to help, make observations, ask questions and listen to their answers.



Get professional help. A family doctor or addiction specialist can screen for signs of drug abuse and other related health conditions.



Call SAMHSA's National Helpline (1-800-662-4357) for referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups and community-based organizations.



Be sure youth know that loved ones will stand by them and offer support.



MEDICAL EMERGENCIES CALL 911

California is a Good Samaritan state and you won't be prosecuted for ingestion or possession if you seek help.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



211 Placer <https://211connectingpoint.org/placer-county>

Raising Placer <https://www.raisingplacer.org/>

1PillCanKillPlacer.com <https://1pillcankillplacer.com/>

A Parent's Guide to Drug Prevention www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2018-06/growing-up-drug-free-2017.pdf

Parent Resources www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking/parent-resources

Family Checkup: Positive Parenting www.drugabuse.gov/family-checkup

Set Limits and Monitor (create a contract) <https://drugfree.org/article/set-limits-monitor>

Helpful Links for Parents <https://teens.drugabuse.gov/parents/drugs-and-your-kids>

Talking to Youth and Young Adults to Prevent E-cigarette Use <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/features/back-to-school>

Let's Talk: Parent's Guide to Start a Conversation https://healthcollaborative.org/performing-above-the-high/wp-content/uploads/sites/17/2020/07/cahc_parlier_letstalkflyer.pdf

Marijuana Talk Kit: What you need to know to talk to your teen about marijuana https://drugfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Marijuana_Talk_Kit.pdf

Preventing Drug Use: Connecting/talking with Your Teen <https://drugfree.org/article/connecting-with-your-teen/>

Vaping Conversation Guide <https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/helping-teens-quit/talk-about-vaping/conversation-guide>

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www.drugabuse.gov

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www.ncadd.org/family-friends/there-is-help/talking-with-children

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