



Talking to Kids About Alcohol and Other Drugs: 5 Conversation Goals

Research suggests that one of the most important factors in healthy child development is a strong, open relationship with a parent. It is important to start talking to your children about alcohol and other drugs before they are exposed to them—as early as 9 years old.

Young people are more likely to listen when they know you're on their side. Reinforce why you don't want your child to drink or use other drugs—because you want your child to be happy and safe. The conversation will go a lot better if you're open and you show concern.



1 Show you disapprove of underage drinking and other drug misuse.

Over 80 percent of young people ages 10–18 say their parents are the leading influence on their decision whether to drink. Send a clear and strong message that you disapprove of underage drinking and use or misuse of other drugs.

2 Show you care about your child's health, wellness, and success.

3 Show you're a good source of information about alcohol and other drugs.

You want your child to make informed decisions about alcohol and other drugs with reliable information about its dangers. You don't want your child to learn about alcohol and other drugs from unreliable sources. Establish yourself as a trustworthy source of information.

4

Show you're paying attention and you'll discourage risky behaviors.

Show you're aware of what your child is up to, as young people are more likely to drink or use other drugs if they think no one will notice. Do this in a subtle way, without prying.



5

Build your child's skills and strategies for avoiding drinking and drug use.

Even if you don't think your child wants to drink or try other drugs, peer pressure is a powerful thing. Having a plan to avoid alcohol and drug use can help children make better choices. Talk with your child about what they would do if faced with a decision about alcohol and drugs, such as texting a code word to a family member or practicing how they'll say "no thanks."

Keep it low-key. Don't worry, you don't have to get everything across in one talk. Plan to have many short talks.



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