



# TALK EARLY TALK OFTEN

Normalizing the Drug and Alcohol  
Conversation with Your Teen

## Before Talking to Your Teen

Set a time to speak with your child about drugs and alcohol. Sometimes springing serious conversations on teenagers can result in defensiveness as a result of feeling ambushed. Let your child know what you'll be discussing, that they're not in trouble, and that you're hoping to open an ongoing dialogue with them about the topic.

## Conversation Starters About Substance Use

- *How do you feel about drugs and alcohol? Do you see them as separate? Why or why not?*
- *Where have you learned about drugs and alcohol?*
- *Do you feel you're able to talk openly with me about drugs and alcohol? Why or why not?*

If they say no, remember that this is them being vulnerable with you and inviting you in closer.

Follow up question if they say no:

*Thank you for telling me. Is there anything I could do to make you feel more comfortable opening up to me about this topic?*

Try not to be visibly upset by their response; it is more information to help you both move through hard conversations together.

- *Why do you think people use drugs and alcohol?*
- *How do you hear people talking about drugs and alcohol at school?*
- *How do you think peer pressure influences young people to try drugs and alcohol?*

## After Talking to Your Teen

After the conversation, if you're shifting to educating on different substances, try to focus on concerns of the health and safety of your child and come at it from the perspective of learning together as to avoid lecturing.

It's also effective to develop a plan if your teen finds themselves in an unsafe situation. You can create a deal with your teen that if your teen calls for help, you won't be mad at them or punish them that day, but will instead talk about what happened the next day. This focuses on their health and safety and sets you up to be the trusted person that they'll reach out to if they're in trouble.

In addition it's helpful to discuss with your teen what their consequence should be if they are caught using. This way if it ever happens it is more about holding them accountable and less about their being punished.

# Various Substances: Myths vs. Facts

When talking to teens about drugs and alcohol, it's important that we're informed about the myths vs. facts about various substances. Many teens believe these myths and it's important that we're aware of current drug trends and their impact on youth so as to best support our teens. If they see we've heard of the myths, they'll be more likely to be engaged when we talk about some of the evidence informed facts and their adverse health impacts on teens.

## NICOTINE/VAPING

MYTH	FACT
It won't hurt me	Vaping is really harmful to your developing body and brain
It's better than cigarettes	Vaping is just as harmful, if not more harmful than cigarettes
I'll only smoke with my friends	Nicotine can lead to trying other substances

## MARIJUANA

MYTH	FACT
It's not addictive	It's very emotionally addictive
You can't overdose	Weed can be laced with harder drugs
There are no real consequences	Marijuana use can result in DUIs, legal issues and health issues

## ALCOHOL

MYTH	FACT
I won't get in that much trouble	There are legal, physical and emotional consequences
It's not as bad as using drugs	It is the second most deadly drug in the U.S.
It's not a big deal	Drinking affects the ability to control your mind, body and make decisions

## PRESCRIPTION PILLS

MYTH	FACT
They're fine if I use them to study or de-stress	The use of pills when not prescribed can seriously affect your brain and cause dependence/addiction
It's not that serious to share prescription pills	Sharing pills is illegal and can be harmful
They aren't as bad as street drugs	Prescription pills can be very dangerous if misused or abused

## Book Recommendations

The following books come highly recommended for improving communication with your teen and supporting them through this phase in life.

*The Parallel Process* by Krissy Pozatek

*Positive Discipline* by Jane Nelsen

*Parenting Teens With Love and Logic* by Jim Fay and Foster Cline

*Motivational Interviewing* by William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick

*Verbal Judo* by George Thompson PhD

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SOURCE: *How to Talk to Your Teen About Substance Use* | Child Mind Institute  
<https://childmind.org/article/talk-teenager-substance-use-abuse/>

For more information visit  
[knowthetruthmn.org](http://knowthetruthmn.org)  
[mnpra.org](http://mnpra.org)

