

THE POWER OF

TALKING



Families, parents, guardians, and teachers are a big influence in a teen's life. It's important to build trust, understanding, and support. This is a time to show them you're on their side.

START THE DISCUSSION

Show them you understand what they're going through. Teens live with stress, peer pressure, and temptation. You've probably been there too. When they know this, they're more likely to listen.

Show them that you're worried but don't want to be controlling. If you push too hard, they may become distant. Make sure they know that you're doing this because you care.

Encourage them to make their own decisions to avoid drugs and alcohol and other risky behaviors. Let them know that if they have questions, they can come to you openly.

GIVE THEM TIPS

Know how to refuse. Work with your teen to develop a plan for how to react if they're offered drugs and how to get out of a bad situation. It can help to ask, "What do you think you would do?" and work through the problem together.

Life is hard. But talking is easier. You may not always know what your teen is going through, but you can show that you're ready to listen and learn without judging.

Support teens to "cope ahead." Discuss with your teen how substance use can feel like a solution to stressors and how it is not an effective way to manage stress.

Teach skills on how to prepare for stressful situations. Talk through how to manage stress to help reduce risk. Stress management skills can include going for a walk, talking with a trusted adult, and expressing emotions through writing or art.

Choose the right crew. Friends and peers are a big influence on teen behavior. Teach them to choose their friends wisely.

- Even if your teen isn't using drugs, if they're with someone else who is and get caught, they could be in trouble too.
- Is there a friend whose company your teen enjoys, but when drugs or alcohol are involved, the behavior becomes riskier, unsafe, or extreme in other ways?
- Does your teen ever feel pressured by a friend to use drugs or alcohol — even if the answer was already no? A good friend would never do that.



SET LIMITS AND STICK TO THEM

- **Be open to talking with your teen and support them in saying no to negative influences.** And be willing to enforce consequences if they make bad choices.
- **Make sure they clearly understand the consequences if they're caught using drugs or alcohol.** And make sure those consequences are ones you will and can carry out.
- **Stay in the know. Show them that you know the people they hang out with and where they spend their time.** Show them you're interested in their online activity. Engage in conversations about these topics, even if you receive limited responses. They deserve some independence, but you deserve to look after their well-being and safety.

NOW I'VE GOT THE FACTS — WHAT'S NEXT?

You can visit talk2kidsaboutdrugs.com for trusted, factual information for families and educators.