

Turn Downtime into Talk Time

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR KIDS

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One of the most important ways you can help your kids stay away from dangerous behaviors is to talk openly with them. Talking to your kids about the dangers of drugs, alcohol, stealing, and other illegal or risky choices can really make a difference. It's not easy talking to your children about these subjects – especially when they are already teenagers – but the good news is, it's never too late to start!

Here are some helpful hints for good communication with your kids:

- You should start to **talk to your children about your values and beliefs** at an early age. It is important that you do before anyone else can confuse them with wrong information.
- You can **start by talking with your child in a casual, natural way**. Not every conversation has to be a “big talk.”
- **Use everyday “downtime” opportunities** to talk: walking or driving your child to or from school; at breakfast or dinner; homework time; tucking into bed.
- **Really listen to your children when they speak to you**. Put down the newspaper or magazine, hang up the phone, turn off the television or radio, and give them your full attention.
- Always use **simple, short words** and **direct explanations** while talking to your child.
- Tell your child that he or she can ask you any question -- on any subject -- freely and **without fear of getting into trouble**.
- **Give honest answers**. Don't make up an answer. Offer to find out what you don't know.
- **Be careful not to scare or confuse** younger kids with too much information. Younger children only need the answer to their specific question. They do not need a detailed explanation of the whole topic.

Talking to Your Kids about Drugs and Alcohol

Use TV reports, anti-drug commercials, or school discussions to help you start a conversation about drugs and drinking in a natural, unforced way.

Help your child to understand the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse.

Tell your children they are not allowed to drink, smoke or use other drugs. Make sure they understand that selling, buying or using drugs is against the law.

Teach your child ways to say NO to drugs and alcohol. Practice with them so they feel comfortable saying NO.

If your child says something to challenge or shock you about drugs or alcohol, you should try to **stay calm**. Use your child's comment to start a discussion of why your child thinks people use drugs, or whether they are worth the risk.

Do not make up information about drugs or alcohol to scare your children. **Just tell them the facts**.

Be clear and consistent in your own beliefs about alcohol and drug use. If you have had, or are having, problems with drugs or alcohol yourself, do not lie to your children. Be honest with them, explain the problem and what you are doing to try to get better.



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Talking to Your Kids About Peer Pressure

Discuss what makes someone a good friend: loyalty, kindness, compassion, acceptance.

Explain to your child that even good friends can be wrong sometimes.

Tell your child that he or she doesn't have to go along with the crowd just to be popular.

Help your children practice ways they can say "no" and feel confident about themselves and their decisions.

Make sure that your children understand that they can reject their friends' choices without giving up the friends.

Help your child develop self-esteem and self-confidence: praise his or her kind or thoughtful actions; set realistic goals for schoolwork and other activities; and take a true interest in the activities they enjoy most.

Help your child to develop strong values that can give him or her the courage to handle peer pressure.

Tell your children that they can always come to you with problems and ask for your help.

Talking to your kids is just part of the job. You should learn to listen to your child. The only way to keep the lines of communication open is by knowing how and when to listen.

Some ways to do this include:

- Repeat your child's comments in your own words so he knows that you have understood him.
- Give support and encouragement by nodding, smiling and hugging.
- Use a caring tone of voice to answer a child.
- Use encouraging words to let him know you're interested in what he's saying. This helps to keep the conversation going.

Sources: Theantidrug.com
Talkingwithkids.org
Health.org
Ctclearinghouse.org



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