

Talking with your teen about drugs and alcohol

Consider these facts from The Partnership at Drugfree.org:

- ◆ Teens who learn about the risks of drugs or alcohol from their parents are 50% less likely to use drugs or alcohol than those who do not.
- ◆ Two-thirds of teens say losing their parents' respect and pride is one of the main reasons they choose not to drink or use alcohol.
- ◆ **However**, only 30% of teens report learning about the risks of drugs or alcohol from their parents.

Some parents feel they are not getting through to their teen or that they simply are not listening, but [research shows otherwise](#). Our teens are listening and watching what you say and do. Sometimes for parents, the hardest part of talking to their teen is getting the conversation started and knowing how to keep the conversation going.

Below is the DESK conversation model which helps parents to have a clear plan for what they want to say, and equally as important, how to say it. The DESK model was explained in more detail in [last month's newsletter](#), but the suggestions below will help get you started.



Parenting Power Tips:

D Describe the behavior - what you see happening. Be specific and to the point.

- Clearly communicate to your teen that you are proud of them and the healthy choices they routinely make
- Emphasize good choices. Talk about how being drug free, having friends who share your values and getting involved in positive activities are great ways to keep drug free
- Ask your child what he/she thinks about different drugs. Get specific. It's too easy for teens to say that all drugs are bad, but then think that some are worse than others. Ask about prescription drugs (not prescribed to them) and over-the-counter drugs such as sleeping aids, diet pills and cough syrup.
- When talking to younger teens (ages 10-15) continue to bring up this topic since kids this age can often change their minds about drugs, being more open to it than before

E Express your feelings about the behavior and your reaction to the behavior.

- Make sure all adults in the house are in agreement about expectations and consequences regarding underage alcohol, tobacco and other drug use and takes responsibility for communicating these important messages.
- Talk about why you want them to be drug free. See article from [American Academy of Pediatrics](http://AmericanAcademyofPediatrics).

S State how you will help your teen stay drug free.

- Demonstrate, by words and actions, your expectations and trust that if you need to do more to address problems, you will seek out the necessary education, guidance and support to do the next right thing. The Power of Choice [Parent Resource Pages](#) can help.
- Pay attention to their needs...are they depressed, anxious, struggling in some way...help them get help to learn how to cope with their challenges in a healthy manner.
- Make the rules and consequences stand no matter who is using. Your home and cars are drug-free zones!
- Having these important talks is all about love! You care deeply about your teen and you are letting them know that you take your role as a parent seriously. Your goal is to do what you can to keep them safe and on a healthy path for today and for a future with open options.
- Make sure your teen understands your expectations about underage drinking and other drug use and related issues (riding in cars with someone who has been drinking, arriving at a party where underage drinking is happening, etc.) and develop a plan to help them deal with those situations. Talk about ways you can help them safely move away from those situations.
- If you find your teen experimenting with alcohol or drugs, be careful not to overreact. Talk about why it's important to be drug-free. Find out what your child did and why...then address those issue. Do not ignore this behavior. Early intervention is key.

K Know your limits- Agree together as parents—what are your consequences

- Clearly define family consequences related to underage drinking and other drug use, ensuring that you can and will follow through.
- Your teen should understand that you will allow them to experience the natural, school and legal consequences in the event of poor choices by the teen.
- Understand that consequences might include pursuing outside help, education and assessments.

Watch for February's newsletter:
Saying "No" can be positive!



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