

Get the Conversation Going

Starting a conversation about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs with your kids is never easy — but it's also not as difficult as you may think.

Your teens may be pressing for independence but the truth is they need to hear from you. Use blocks of time such as after dinner, before bedtime, before school or on the drive to or from school and extracurricular activities to talk about drugs and why they're harmful. Take advantage of everyday “teachable moments” and, in no time at all, you'll have developed an ongoing dialogue with your child. Teachable moments refer to using every day events in your life to point out things you'd like your child to know about.

Use the following “teachable moments” as a starting point, but develop others based on your own life:



Point out alcohol, tobacco, and drug-related situations going on in your own neighborhood. If you and your child are at the park and see a group of kids drinking or smoking, use the moment to talk about the negative effects of alcohol and tobacco.



Use newspaper headlines or TV news stories as a conversation starter. The daily news is filled with stories that detail the consequences of alcohol and drug abuse. Talk to your child about the mother who used drugs and was arrested. Who will take care of her baby now? Did she make a good decision when she used drugs?



Watch TV with your kids, and ask them what they think. Do the shows and advertising make drug use look acceptable and routine? Or do they show its downside? How did that program make your child feel about drugs? Write a letter with your child to companies or TV networks about the messages they put out about drugs. Also remember that anti-drug advertising — such as that from the Partnership for a Drug-Free America — is a great kickoff to discussion.