

PARENTS.

THE ANTI-DRUG.

Conversations: What to Say

The major reason you have to have a conversation with your child about drugs and alcohol is because your kids need to be educated by you. They need to hear from their parents that teen drug and alcohol use is not condoned in your family. They need to learn from their parents about the consequences of drug and alcohol use. Most importantly, they need to be held accountable for their actions with drugs and alcohol use.

What happens if you suspect that your teen is already using alcohol and drugs? What do you say to them? The conversation is the same: parents need to tell their kids that drug and alcohol use by teens is not allowed in your family.

The issue won't go away until you do something. You will get to the point where you can't deny that the problem exists. You'll have a continuous nagging feeling in the pit of your stomach. You will simply have to acknowledge that your child has a problem — your child is using drugs and that won't get any better until you take action on your child's behalf. It is OK to ask for help. In fact, getting help may make it easier for you to have the conversation.

Working with Your Spouse Beforehand

Sometimes the beginning of a conversation is harder than the middle — that dreaded conversation with your spouse or partner during which you acknowledge that you know your child has a problem with drugs or alcohol. That is a pretty profound conversation and is often laden with sadness, anger and regret. Denial plays a big part in that first conversation, as does finger-pointing. Neither reaction is helpful. The most important thing you can do is move on and figure out what you both can do to help your child.



This is a time for you and your spouse or partner to *establish rules* and consequences for your child if he or she uses drugs or alcohol. The rules should be simple: no drug or alcohol use by teens will be allowed in your family. The consequences should be straightforward and meaningful to the teen. Don't go to extremes in setting consequences — choose those that you are able to carry out.

Need Help Finding the Right Words?

[Review these talking points.](#)

Practice the conversation with each other ahead of time. You may have to have a couple of “practice runs.” These conversations are not easy but they are worthwhile. Talking it over with your spouse/partner beforehand will help you keep a level head and speak to the issue. (Review some [talking points](#) and practice these [sample conversations](#)

beforehand.)

Make Agreements with Yourself

Tell yourself that you won't "lose it" with your child. Anger and hostility won't get you anywhere in this conversation. Stay as calm as possible. Remember, you are the parent and you are in charge. Be kind, simple, and direct in your statements to your child. Above all, remember to tell your child that you love him or her! The conversation will not be perfect — no conversation ever is. Know that you are doing the right thing for your child. That's what matters most!

Here are some suggested things to keep in mind when you talk to your child:

- Tell your son or daughter that you LOVE him/her, and you are worried that he/she might be using drugs or alcohol;
- You KNOW that drugs may seem like the thing to do, but doing drugs can have serious consequences;
- It makes you FEEL worried and concerned about them when they do drugs;
- You are there to LISTEN to them;
- You WANT them to be a part of the solution;
- You tell him or her what you WILL do to help them.
- KNOW that you will have this discussion many, many times. Talking to your kid about drugs and alcohol is not a one-time event.

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