

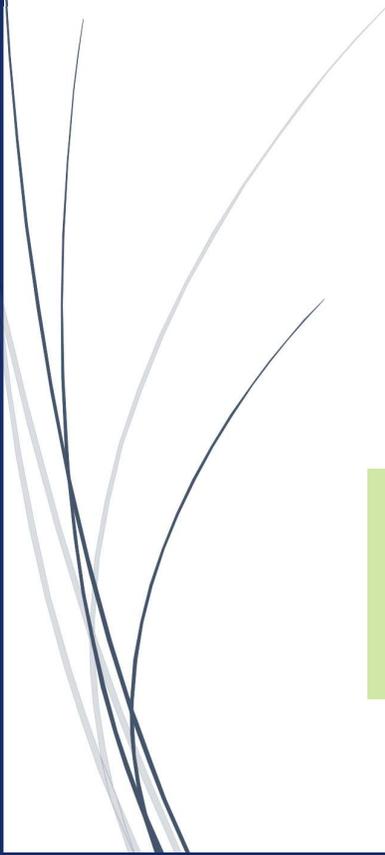


How to Talk to Your Teenager about Alcohol & Drugs



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As parents we fear the thoughts of our teenager trying alcohol or drugs but the truth of the matter is that they are going to come in contact with alcohol and drugs somewhere along the line. Maybe they will even try them, we have to accept that possibility also.

As parents having the conversation about alcohol and drugs should start before the teenage years but it's never too late to start having that conversation.

Here come my tips for having that conversation with your teenager.

❖ **Look for Opportunities.**

Watch for opportunities where you can talk about alcohol and drugs. There may be something on the news, television, school or in your local community.

❖ **Start Early.**

It's never too early to have age appropriate conversations with your child. If they ask questions answer them in an open and honest way using clear language. If you don't know the answer that's ok, just tell them you will find out and get back to them.

❖ **Be Respectful.**

Speak with respect about people who have alcohol or drug problems. Remember you never know who in your family is affected so always remain respectful.

❖ **Get Educated.**

Don't just rely on school to teach them about alcohol or drugs. Have information at hand and remember your teenager will mimic your attitudes to alcohol and drugs so be very aware of how your beliefs influence them. Remember you are one of the biggest influencers in your child's life.

❖ **Know Your Stuff.**

Make sure all information you have is fact based and not based on myths. Have your research done beforehand.

❖ **Set the Scene.**

Make sure you create an open and honest environment where your teenager can come to you with any problems or questions they may have.

❖ **Have Rules.**

Be clear on the rules around alcohol and drugs in your home and the consequences of breaking these rules. You are letting your teenager know before any problems occur.

❖ **Talk about the Pitfalls.**

Talk about what can go wrong about using alcohol or drug i.e. hangovers, doing something you regret, getting into trouble with the law, poor academic or sports performance, overdose or becoming addicted. You know where your teenager's interests lie so talk about how that could be affected. Clearly communicate that you do not want you teenager using alcohol or drugs. This sets a clear boundary.

❖ **Encourage Uniqueness.**

Encourage your teenager to be a leader, not to follow the crowd and to be their own person. Acknowledge the power of peer pressure and wanting to fit in. Teach them how to respond (without losing friends) if they are offered alcohol or drugs. Teach them how to say no.

❖ **Be Honest.**

Be honest if there is a history of addiction in the family. Without going into all the details explain that there is an increased risk of developing an alcohol or drug problem because it's in the family. If you share your experience, make sure you explain the negative consequences and why you stopped.

❖ **Get Real.**

Assume your teenager knows as much as you about alcohol and drugs. Don't preach to them and ask for their input into the conversation. Assume they know someone using alcohol or drugs and assume they know where to get them if they want to.

❖ **Show Empathy.**

Remind your teenager that you understand how difficult it can be to be separate from the crowd. Show empathy and tell your teenager that you understand that everyone has struggles from time to time but using alcohol or drugs to cope isn't a healthy way to cope. Don't react badly if they do get into trouble, this will only make them more secretive.

❖ **Be There.**

Remind your teenager that you are there for guidance, advice and support when they need it. Stress how it is important to you that they are happy and make healthy and safe choices and if they need help making those choices that it's ok to come to you.

PS. Don't forget to join Proactive Parents, a FREE online support group for parents of preteen and teenagers. Click here to join now <https://bit.ly/2LaTVNo>