

THE TIME BETWEEN CHOOSING YOUR WORDS & USING YOUR WORDS.



Preventing Teen Drug Use - How to Talk With Your Teen

Talking with teens can be challenging. Having meaningful, ongoing conversations about drugs and alcohol, however, is key to helping keep your son or daughter healthy and safe. Here are some tips from The Partnership for Drug-Free Kids that can be helpful with those important conversations.

Choose a Good Time & Place

- **Look for blocks of time to talk.** After dinner, before bed, before school or on the way to or from school and extracurricular activities can work well.
- **Take a walk or go for a drive together.** With less eye contact, your teen won't feel like he's under a microscope.

Approach Your Talk with Openness, Active Listening & "I" Statements

- **Keep an open mind.** If you want to have a productive conversation with your teen, try to keep an open mind and remain curious and calm. That way, your child is more likely to be receptive to what you have to say.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** For a more engaging conversation, you'll want to get more than just a "yes" or "no" response from your child.
- **Use active listening.** Let your teen know he or she is understood by reflecting back what you hear — either verbatim or just the sentiment. It works like this: You listen without interrupting (no matter what), then sum up what you've heard to allow him or her to confirm. Try these phrases:



"It seems like you're feeling..."
"I hear you say you're feeling..."
"Am I right that you're feeling..."

Use "I" statements to keep the flow going. "I" statements let you express yourself without your teenager feeling judged, blamed or attacked. You describe his behavior, how you feel about it and how it affects you. Then you spell out what you need. Like this:

- "When you don't come home on time, I worry that something terrible has happened. What I need is for you to call me as soon as you know you're going to be late so that I know you're okay."
- "I feel like you can't hear what I have to say when you're so mad. Then I get frustrated. I need to talk about this later when we're both able to listen."
- "Because I love you and I want to keep you safe, I worry about you going to the concert. I need to know that you will obey our rules about not drinking or using drugs."

"I" statements allow you to use persuasion (not control or blame) to cause a change in his behavior. You also allow him to help decide what happens next — another key to bonding.

Understand Your Influence as a Parent

Keep in mind that teens say that when it comes to drugs and alcohol, their parents are the most important influence. That's why it's important to talk — and listen — to your teen. So, try to talk. A lot.

Understand Your Influence as a Parent (Continued)

- **Discuss the negative effects of drugs and alcohol.** Clearly communicate that you do not want your teen using drugs. Talk about the short- and long-term effects drugs and alcohol can have to his or her mental and physical health, safety and ability to make good decisions. Explain to your child that experimenting with drugs or alcohol during this time is risky to their still-developing brain.



Parents, you are the biggest influence in your teen's life. Kids who say they learn a lot about the risks of drugs at home are significantly less likely to use drugs.

- **Ask your child what might happen if he or she does use drugs or alcohol.** This gets your teen to think about her future, what her boundaries are around substance use – and some possible negative consequences (she may be late to practice, do something stupid in front of her friends, have a hangover). It will also give you insight into what's important to her.
- **Take advantage of “teachable moments.”** Use every day events in your life to point out things you'd like your child to know about. Point out alcohol and drug-related situations in celebrity headlines, or stories going on your own community that show the consequences of alcohol and drug use. If you and your child are at the park and see a group of kids drinking, use the moment to talk about the negative effects of alcohol. When watching TV together, ask if 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?
- **If there is a history of addiction or alcoholism in your family,** then your child has a much greater risk of developing a problem. Be aware of this elevated risk and discuss it with your child regularly, as you would with any disease. Learn about other risks and why teens use.

Offer Empathy & Support

- **Offer empathy and compassion.** Let your child know you understand. The teen years can be tough. Acknowledge that everyone struggles sometimes, but drugs and alcohol are not a useful or healthy way to cope with problems. Let your child know that he/she can trust you.
- **Remind your child that you are there for support and guidance** – and that it's important to you that she/he is healthy, happy and makes safe choices.

Keep in Mind Your Teen's Brain is Still Developing

- **The human brain doesn't fully develop until about age 25.** This helps to explain a lot about the way your teen communicates. Because the prefrontal cortex isn't mature, your child may have a terrible time interpreting facial expressions. (You may feel surprised, but he or she thinks you're angry.) Add that to impulsivity (over-reactive amygdala) and limited emotional control, and you've got a recipe for major communication problems. Once you learn to recognize typical teen behavior, you can control your automatic reactions to it and communicate more clearly.
- **Typical teen behavior can trigger a lot of emotion in parents.** Identifying the behavior you see in your teen can help you manage our own impulses; we avoid giving our teens control. Plus, we communicate better because our messages aren't clouded by emotion.
- **Learn to spot typical teen behavior so you won't over-react.** Once you know that brain development can affect teen behavior in some pretty bizarre ways, you may see your teen in a new light. Start keeping a list of the things your teen does that make you feel frustrated, impatient, angry or threatened. (Include specific words, emotions, gestures and body language.) Writing things down will make it easier for you recognize the same scene later and say, “I'm not falling into this trap again.” Pay attention to yourself. What happens when your teen mouths off? Does your heart race? Do your cheeks burn? Does your neck get stiff? These are the warning signs of a gut reaction. As soon as you feel the cues, take a deep breath (or three) or take a break to cool down. Before you do, though, set a time when you'll both come back and continue talking.

THE TIME BETWEEN READING THIS FLYER & REMEMBERING WHAT IT SAYS.



You may have heard this before, “Talk early and often” to your teen about underage drinking. Truth is, sometimes that is easier said than done. What do they need to know? Do I know enough to answer their questions? Do I even understand the risks involved with underage drinking? Luckily, there are resources to help us navigate the ‘parenting our teen’ years. The Partnership for Drug-Free Kids offers some guidance:

Know the Risks

Most underage drinking – 90 percent of it – is in the form of binge drinking. People ages 12-20 drink 11 percent of all alcohol consumed in the U.S. ² Although young people drink less often than adults do, when they do drink, they drink more, exponentially increasing risks to health and safety. Drinking impairs judgment and can lead to poor decisions about engaging in risky behaviors that put one’s self and others at risk.



Each year, 4,358 young people die in alcohol-related deaths as a result of underage drinking (car crashes, homicides, alcohol poisoning, falls, burns, drowning and suicides). ³

Other important risk factors to consider, and to help your son or daughter understand:

- **Teen brains are more vulnerable to alcohol.** Research shows that the teen brain doesn’t fully develop until 25. Alcohol can alter this development, potentially affecting brain structure and function.
- **Underage drinking increases the risk of alcohol problems later in life.** Research shows that people who start drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to meet the criteria for alcohol dependence at some point in their lives. ⁴
- **Mixing alcohol and marijuana is dangerous and can significantly impair judgment.** The level of intoxication and secondary effects experienced can be unpredictable.
- **Mixing alcohol and prescription medicine is especially dangerous.** It can cause nausea and vomiting, headaches, drowsiness, fainting and loss of coordination and puts you at risk for internal bleeding, heart problems and breathing difficulties.

What You Can Do

If you choose to drink, model responsible drinking behavior. A child with a parent who binge drinks is much more likely to binge drink than a child whose parents do not. Try to avoid sending any unintended messages — find ways to celebrate and relax without alcohol.

- **Don’t make alcohol available to your child or their friends.** This isn’t only a matter of safety, depending on where you live, it could be the law.
- **Kids ages 11-14 see approximately 1,000 alcohol ads a year.** ⁵ Discuss what you see and help put context around the alcohol messaging your child receives from friends and the media.
- **Supervise any parties in your home to make sure there is no alcohol** – and make sure your teens know the rules ahead of time. Learn more about social hosting laws and what they can mean for your personal liability in the event of underage drinking in the home.

What You Can Do (Continued)

- **Is your child socializing at someone else's home?** Know where he or she will be. Call the parents in advance to verify the occasion and location and that there will be supervision. If the activity seems inappropriate, express concern and keep your child home.
- **Communicate your expectations and rules** for when your teen goes out with friends, and include regular check-ins.
- **Assure your child** that he or she can call you to be picked up whenever needed.
- **Create a contract** establishing rules about drugs and alcohol.

Foster Regular and Productive Communication

Productive communication with your teen or young adult doesn't always have to feel like you're giving them the third degree. Remain calm, relax and follow the tips below to ensure that your child hears what you have to say — and vice versa.

- **Try to be objective and open.** If you want to have a productive conversation with your child, do your best to keep an open mind and remain curious. Your child is more likely to be receptive this way.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** These are questions that elicit more than just a “yes” or “no” response and will lead to a more engaging conversation.



Let your teen know they're being heard. Use active listening and reflect back what you are hearing — either verbatim, or just the sentiment. For example, you can say, I'm hearing that you feel overwhelmed, and that you think drinking helps you relax. Is that right?

- **Discuss the negative effects of alcohol,** and what that means in terms of mental and physical health, safety and making good decisions. Talk about the long-term effects.
- **If your child's interested in drinking, ask why** — and what might happen if she does. This gets your teen to think about her future, what her boundaries are around drinking — and some of the possible negative consequences (she may be late to practice, do something stupid in front of her friends, feel hung over). It will also give you insight into what's important to her.
- **Offer empathy and compassion.** Let your child know you understand. The teen years can be tough. Acknowledge that everyone struggles sometimes, but alcohol is not a useful or healthy way to cope with problems. Let your child know that he or she can trust you.
- **Remind your child that you are there for support and guidance** — and that it's important to you that she or he is healthy and happy and makes safe choices.
- **If there is a history of addiction or alcoholism in your family,** then your child has a much greater risk of developing a problem. Be aware of this elevated risk and discuss it with your child regularly, as you would with any disease.
- **Keep an eye on how your child is coping.** Does he or she seem withdrawn or uninterested in the usual activities? These are signs that your child might be hiding something or need some guidance.

1. PATS 2013 <https://www.drugfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/PATS-2013-FULL-REPORT.pdf>
2. CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/underage-drinking.htm>
3. CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/underage-drinking.htm>
4. CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/underage-drinking.htm>
5. JSAD <http://www.jsad.com/doi/10.15288/jsad.2016.77.384>



THE TIME BETWEEN ESTABLISHING A CURFEW & YOUR KIDS COMING HOME LATE.



Lots of parents are afraid to set limits. They think it will build a wall between them and their teen. In truth, limits actually show your teen that you care. The tricky part is finding a balance between your need for control and your teen's need for independence. The team at Partnership for Drug-Free Kids provides helpful tips for parents.

Every Teen is Different. Figure Out Where Yours Needs Limits.

Some of our teens need a lot of structure to be successful; others don't. Depending on your teen's personality and routine, you might consider setting boundaries that spell out:

- What they can and can't do after school*.
- When they need to do homework.
- When they can use the computer and what she can use it for.
- When and how long they can use the phone.
- When they need be home at night on weekends.
- What kinds of parties they can go to and who she can go with.
- When and why they can use a car and ride in one.



**This is prime time for experimenting with drugs and alcohol. Having an adult around during these hours is one of the most effective ways to prevent drug use.*

Let Your Teen Help Create the Rules. (They'll Work Better.)

Teens are much more likely to obey rules and limits that they help to create. Work with your teen to figure out what you both can live with. Be open-minded about her goals and needs — and crystal clear about yours. Remember, each rule or limit has to:

- **Work for both of you.** If they have an after-school job, setting a rule that says homework has to be done by dinnertime isn't practical. Neither is giving them until 8 a.m. Find a middle ground.
- **Make your expectations clear.** Saying, "Be civil to people" is vague. Saying, "Don't yell, swear, hit, or break things" spells out what you expect.

Work Together on Consequences, Too.

There's got to be a price for stepping over the line. Otherwise, why would a teen pay attention to limits? Let your teen help you define the consequences. Here are a few questions to keep in mind as you go:

- **Does the punishment fit the crime?** Grounding for a week may be too harsh when they are 20 minutes late for dinner, but reasonable when missed curfew by two hours.
- **Can you enforce the consequence?** If your teen stays home alone while you work a night shift, saying they have to be in bed by 8 p.m. isn't very enforceable.

Work Together on Consequences, Too. (Continued)

- Is the consequence clear? Saying, “If you miss curfew, you can’t use the car.” is vague. Saying, “For every 30 minutes you’re late, you lose your right to use the car for one day.” makes the cost clear.

As a wrap up, make sure you’re both on the same page. Ask your teen to say each limit and consequence out loud. You may even want to put the details in writing.

Prepare Yourself. She Will Cross a Line. It’s Only Natural.

All teens make mistakes. That’s how they learn. And when your teen does, you’re bound to be mad. But keep your emotions in check. Avoid making empty threats or you’ll lose credibility. Take time to cool off, then calmly tell her about your disappointment, anger, or frustration. (Your feelings can be a very powerful motivator for her.) And in the end, remember your agreement — only enforce the consequences you talked about, no surprises. When things are going well — which will be most of the time — be sure to tell her you noticed. Everyone likes a pat on the back, a word of thanks, or a compliment. Who knows? She might do the same for you some day.

The Basics of Monitoring

The idea of “monitoring” may sound sinister, but it’s actually a very simple idea that leads to great things: knowing where your child is at all times (especially after school), knowing his friends, and knowing his plans. By staying in-the-know about your child’s daily schedule, you’re taking an important step in keeping him free from issues of substance use. Kids who are not regularly monitored are four times more likely to use drugs, than kids who are.

Strike a Balance

Because monitoring conflicts with your child’s desire to be independent, they are likely to resist attempts to find out the details of their daily whereabouts. Don’t let this deter you. They may accept the idea more easily if you present it as a means of ensuring safety or interest in who they are and what they like to do, rather than as a means of control.



The most important time of day to monitor is after school. Kids are at the greatest risk for using drugs or alcohol during these hours. Call your child’s school to find out about adult-supervised activities they can take part in during these hours. Encourage them to get involved with youth groups, art or music programs, organized sports, community service or academic clubs. Follow up with your child to make sure they are actually going to the program chosen.



THE TIME BETWEEN GIVING THEM AN INCH & THEM TAKING A MILE.



Underage Drinking Prevention: Setting Limits and Monitoring your Teen

Teens and young adults want freedom. You don't want to be a nag. When it comes to underage drinking, however, there is a lot at risk. Our friends at Partnership for Drug-Free Kids provides helpful points to setting limits and monitoring your teen.

Establish Rules & Consequences

Rules provide a concrete way to let your child understand what's expected of him or her and to learn self-control. Don't just assume they "know" you don't want them to drink or do drugs. Teens and young adults don't deal well with gray areas, so when they're offered alcohol or drugs, you don't want any confusion in their minds.



If you're a parent who feels bad about setting limits, remember that deep down, your child actually wants them. Rules mean that you care about your child and his or her safety. And consequences actually help – not hurt them. A firm consequence, such as getting grounded or having to give up a fun privilege, will remind your child what not to do in the future.



When you lay out rules and consequences, make sure you're clear – and that your child understands the limits you've set before there's opportunity to do something wrong. One great way to do this is to actually write out the things you expect from one another (being home before curfew, getting a ride home from a party if things get out of hand), and jointly sign off on them, in effect, creating a contract.

Monitor

How will you know that your son or daughter is following the rules? By keeping a close eye on him or her and communicating regularly about their whereabouts, friends, activities, and more. Here are a few ways to keep closer tabs on your child:

- **Finding subtle ways to "drop in"** while his or her friends are at your house.
- **Ask questions before he or she leaves.** Find out where they're going, who will be there and what they'll be doing.
- **Check in while they're out.** Call to say hello and include a reminder that you expect rules to be followed.
- **Ask questions when he or she gets home.** Make eye contact, smell his or her hair and ask about the night to gauge sobriety and truthfulness.
- **Reach out to other parents in your community.** This way you can all keep an eye on one another's kids.

To find more information about monitoring and consequences, visit Partnership for Drug-Free Kids at www.drugfree.org.