TIPS FOR TALKING TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS (15-18 YEARS OLD)

- By this age, most youth have had many opportunities to try alcohol or other drugs. Even if they haven't tried, they have probably seen others do it, sometimes to excess and perhaps with serious consequences, whether in person or on social media.
- Teens this age typically understand what can happen if they use drugs. As they think about their future, remind them that substance use can jeopardize their dreams.
- Teens want independence but still need appropriate limits. Have them help you set those limits (such as curfews). Ask them what consequences they think are fair for breaking the rules.
- Tell your children often that you care about them, and they are important to you. A strong bond will make your child more likely to come to you with questions or concerns about drugs, including alcohol, or other issues.
- Know what's trending. Ask your teen about drugs that are an issue at their school, in friends' homes, and at parties.
- Emphasize the dangers of buying pills or any medicine through Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, X, YouTube, or other social media platforms. Visit DEA.gov/onepill with your teen to learn more about the prevalence of fake pills.
- Your children may try to draw you into a debate about marijuana use for medical or other reasons. Use this opportunity to have an informed conversation with them. Make sure your child knows that marijuana use in any form is illegal for youth and young adults under 21, has harmful effects on the developing teen brain, and is prohibited by federal law.
- As with youth at any age, praise them for making good choices. If they know you support them and care about their health and well-being, it can motivate them to stay drug free. Parenting does not stop when your child goes to college or moves out. Many colleges have programs for first-year students that cover the school's alcohol and other drug misuse prevention policies, programs, and services. If so, attend with your child; if not, find out which office is responsible for providing that information and go with your child to obtain it.

For more information, go to Chapter 4 of *Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent's Guide to Substance Use Prevention.*

HOW DO I TALK TO MY CHILD ABOUT DRUGS? – CONVERSATION STARTERS

Some parents find it difficult to talk with their children about alcohol and other drugs. But it is important to teach them about these substances and about your expectations if they are offered drugs.

These conversations are not a one-time event. Start talking with your children when they are young; continue as they grow older and their level of interest and understanding changes. Your willingness to talk (and listen) tells them you care about what they are interested in, and it provides you with insight into their world.

DO	DON'T
Explain the dangers using language they understand.	React in anger—even if your child makes statements that shock you.
Explain why you do not want them to use the substance(s). For example, explain that substances can mess up their concentration, memory, and motor skills and can lead to poor grades.	Expect all conversations with your children to be perfect. They won't be.
Be there when your child wants to talk, no matter the time of day or night or other demands on your time.	Assume your children know how to handle temptation. Instead, educate them about risks and alternatives so they can make healthy decisions. Encourage them to practice saying no ahead of time so they're prepared.
Believe in your own power to help your child grow up without using drugs, including alcohol.	Talk without listening.
Praise your children when they deserve it. This builds their self-esteem and makes them feel good without using drugs, including alcohol.	Make stuff up. If your child asks a question you can't answer, promise to find the answer so you can learn together. Then follow up.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Talking to your children about alcohol and other drugs does not have to be hard. The following opportunities can serve as teaching moments:

- If you see a young person smoking, talk about the negative effects of tobacco.
- If you see an interesting news story, discuss it with your child. Ask how your child feels about situations and the potential consequences.
- While watching a movie or TV show with your children, ask if they think it makes using drugs, including alcohol, look fun. Talk about what happens to those characters, or what happens in reality.
- If you read, hear about, or know someone affected by substance use, remind your child almost anyone can develop a substance use disorder. Discuss the importance of treatment and supporting people in recovery from their substance use disorder.