



Talk to Your Kids About Drugs

More than half of all American kids will try drugs at least once between first and 12th grade. You can influence your child's decision. Here are some tips to help you steer your child in the right direction.

1. Recognize that this is your job. You have the greatest influence on your kids. Don't leave drug prevention to the school.
2. Start early. Help your kids form attitudes toward drugs early. If they know drugs are bad long before they're offered any, it will be easier for them to say no when that time comes.
3. Keep it simple. Be firm and clear about what you believe and the behavior you expect from your kids.
4. Encourage personal responsibility. Self-reliance begins when kids take on some degree of responsibility. Responsible kids make wise choices about drug use.
5. Be a good role model. No matter what you tell your children, behavior speaks volumes.
6. Know how to handle your own substance abuse history. While it may be tempting, avoid talking about your own experimentation with alcohol or drugs. Your child may take this as evidence that such behavior is acceptable or harmless. However, if you are in recovery yourself, you may want to share your experience and describe how you were able to overcome addiction.
7. Reason with your kids. As your children grow up, rules won't be enough. They need information about the use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs. Talk with them, not just to them.
8. Listen. Listen to your child; encourage them to tell you what they think.
9. Know your kids' friends. Are the friends likely to try whatever is offered to them?
10. Don't worry. Taking a firm stand against drug use will not damage your relationship with your child. Many kids are looking for a good reason to avoid trying drugs, so it helps if they can explain, "My folks would kill me, if I did."