

Parent/Child Communication

Train your child to tell you: *who, what, where, when and how*, by prompting them when they ask to do something saying, “Who will you be with...What will you be doing...etc.?” Make it a condition of getting permission.

Communicate with other parents. Be proactive and make this another condition of your child going to a friend’s house. Talk with parents about access to alcohol and drugs (including prescription) and regulate alcohol and drugs in your home.

The first use of alcohol is usually alcohol from the home. Children are impulsive and fitting in is important to them, so safeguard home as much as possible.

Warning signs that your teen maybe using drugs

- Changes in friends
- Negative changes in schoolwork, missing school, or declining grades
- Increased secrecy about possessions or activities
- Use of incense, room deodorant, or perfume to hide smoke or chemical odors
- Subtle changes in conversations with friends, e.g. more secretive, using “coded” language
- Change in clothing choices: new fascination with clothes that highlight drug use
- Increase in borrowing money
- Evidence of drug paraphernalia such as pipes, rolling papers, etc.
- Evidence of use of inhalant products (such as hairspray, nail polish, correction fluid, common household products); Rags and paper bags are sometimes used as accessories
- Bottles of eye drops, which may be used to mask bloodshot eyes or dilated pupils
- New use of mouthwash or breath mints to cover up the smell of alcohol
- Missing prescription drugs—especially narcotics and mood stabilizers

Effective Conversations

It is important to spend time together as a family. Let them know that they are an important and a valued member of the family. Allow them to make decisions and take responsibility for activities, chores and privileges.

Fight Fair - Winning and losing does not happen in healthy relationships. Use conflicts as an opportunity to solve a problem. ASK your child for a solution to getting up in the morning or whatever the situation. Listen and let them have a say in what the consequence is for not following through.

Model positive communication - Do not use or allow: yelling, put downs, profanity or violence. Arguing rarely solves a problem. Calm discussion with constructive input does.

Be very clear in your expectations. Do not assume that they know your stance on drug and alcohol use or other issues. The teenage brain does not do well with ambiguity. The statement, “*I don’t mind if you drink at home.*” is interpreted in the teen brain as, “*I don’t mind if you drink.*”

Only set a consequence you are willing to enforce. **THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT!** It is better to say that you will take their cell phone away for one day and stick to it, rather than saying you will take it away for a week and giving it back after two days.