

How do I talk to my child about drugs and alcohol?

Exposure to drugs and alcohol is a common occurrence and often a result of peer pressure during adolescence. The most effective and most important prevention tool for parents is communication with their teenager. Talking to your child about their choices in regard to substance use is not a one time conversation. Parents are encouraged to bring up substance use during a time that conversation naturally occurs, such as at the dinner table or while driving in the car. Speak with your teenager about the effects of substance use and ways in which they can refuse to participate in these activities. Rather than overreacting to what they have to say, ask questions and provide support and understanding when needed.

If you suspect that your child is engaging in substance abuse, speak with them about it and create house rules to discourage this behavior. This may include implementing a curfew or placing limitations on their driving privileges. Always focus on the goal which is to help your child recover and not engage in further substance abuse. If the situation appears to be of greater concern beyond experimentation, parents are encouraged to seek the aid of a professional counselor to assess whether your child is chemically dependent. It's important for parents to not blame themselves for their children's choices. Focus on what you are doing to help them now and not what you might have done wrong in the past. Don't be hesitant to reach out for support for you and your child.