

# The NH Prevention Talk Kit

*Begin conversations with your child before they are confronted with drugs and alcohol. Talking to your children is one of the most powerful tools parents and caregivers can use to connect with — and protect — their kids. When tackling some of life's tougher topics, especially those about drugs and alcohol and just figuring out what to say can be a challenge. Following are tips for talking to your child at any age.*

*Here is an abbreviated guide to building a positive relationship with your kids and starting conversations with them about alcohol and drugs.*

## 1. **Talk with your kids often and maintain good communication.**

**Why?** The better you know your children, the easier it will be to guide them towards positive activities and friendships.

### **How?**

- Talk to your children every day. Share what happened to you and ask what happened to them during the day.
- Ask questions that kids can't answer with "yes" or "no." For example, "what was your favorite part of the day?" Ask your children their opinions and include them in making decisions. Show your children that you value their thoughts and input.
- Listen to your child's or teen's concerns non-judgmentally. Repeat their concerns back to them to make it clear that you understand. Don't preach.
- Aim for a 50/50 conversation - you talk half the time and listen the other half.

## 2. **Get involved in your children's lives.**

**Why?** Young people are less likely to get involved with drugs when caring adults are a part of their life.

### **How?**

- Support your children's activities by attending special events, like recitals and games, and praising them for their efforts.
- Help your children manage problems by asking what is wrong when they seem upset and letting them know you are there to help. When your child seems angry or upset, start a conversation with an observation like "you seem sad" or "you seem stressed."
- Be patient and understanding about their problems with friends.
- Know your children's friends by name and know their parents name and contact information.
- When your child is going to someone's house, call to make sure a trusted adult is there.
- Encourage your child to call any time they feel uncomfortable.

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### **3. Make clear rules and enforce them consistently.**

**Why?** Research shows that when parents set harsh rules or no rules, kids are more likely to try drugs.

**How?**

- Talk to your child about rules at a calm time. Explain the rules, for example what time they must come home, and the consequence for breaking the rule.
- If a rule is broken, be sure to enforce the consequences. This teaches children to take responsibility for their actions.
- Give praise when your children follow rules and meet expectations.



### **4. Be a positive role model.**

**Why?** Children learn from what they see. Their attitudes about substance use will be shaped by your attitudes and actions.

**How?**

- Demonstrate ways to solve problems, have fun, and manage stress without using alcohol, tobacco or drugs. Exercising, listening to music, engaging in a hobby and talking issues over with a friend are some examples. If you occasionally drink alcohol, do so in moderation and never imply that alcohol is a good way to handle problems.
- Treatment works and recovery is possible. If you are struggling with substance abuse, seek help.



### **5. Talk to your children about drugs.**

**Why?** When parents talk to their kids early and often about substance abuse, kids are less likely to try drugs.

**How?**

- Educate yourself about alcohol, tobacco, and drug use before talking to your children. If you child asks you a question that you don't know the answer to, promise to find the right answer so that you can learn together.
- Short discussions go a long way. Engage your children in a conversation. Ask what they know, how they feel, and what they think about the issue.
- Tell them the dangers of using drugs & alcohol using age-appropriate explanations.
- Explain why you don't want them to use drugs and alcohol. For example, explain how drugs and alcohol can interfere with young people's concentration, memory and motor skills, and that it leads to poor school performance.
- Don't react in anger – even if your child makes statements that shock you.

Visit [DrugFreeNH.org](http://DrugFreeNH.org) for more tips on talking to your child at any age; to find contact information for resources in your area; and to view statistics on teen drug and alcohol use in New Hampshire.



## What to Say to Your 2 to 4 Year Old

**Scenario:** Giving your child a daily vitamin.

**What to Say:** Vitamins help your body grow. You need to take them every day so that you'll grow up big and strong like Mommy and Daddy, but you should only take what I give you. Too many vitamins can hurt you and make you sick.

**Scenario:** Your kids are curious about medicine bottles around the house.

**What to Say:** You should only take medicines that we give you or that your doctor has chosen just for you and has your name on them. If you take medicine that belongs to somebody else, it could be dangerous and make you sick.

## What to Say to Your 5 to 8 Year Old

**Scenario:** Your child tells you he was offered prescription drugs by a classmate — but said no.

**What to Say:** After praising your child for making a good choice and for telling you about it, let him know that in the future, he can always blame you to get out of a bad situation. Say, "If you're ever offered drugs at school, tell that person, 'My mother would kill me if I took that and then she wouldn't let me play baseball.'" Also, let them know that they should only take medicines that you give them or that and has their name on them, emphasizing that if they take medicine that belongs to somebody else, it could be dangerous and make them sick.

## What to Say to Your 9 to 12 Year Old

**Scenario:** Your child is just starting middle school and you know that eventually, he will be offered drugs and alcohol.

**What to Say:** There are a lot of changes ahead of you in middle school. I know we talked about drinking and drugs when you were younger, but now is when they're probably going to be an issue. I'm guessing you'll at least hear about kids who are experimenting, if not finding yourself some place where kids are doing stuff that is risky. I just want you to remember that I'm here for you and the best thing you can do is just talk to me about the stuff you hear or see. Don't think there's anything I can't handle or that you can't talk about with me, okay?

## What to Say to Your 13 to 15 Year Old

**Scenario:** Your teen is starting high school — and you want to remind him that he doesn't have to give in to peer pressure to drink or use drugs.

**What to Say:** You must be so excited about starting high school...it's going to be a ton of fun, and we want you to have a great time. We also know there's going to be some pressure to start drinking, smoking pot or taking other drugs. A lot of people feel like this is just what high school kids do, but not all high school kids drink! Many don't, which means it won't make you weird to choose not to drink, either. You can still have a lot of fun if you don't drink.

You'll have a lot of decisions to make about what you want to do in high school and you might even make some mistakes. Just know that you can talk to us about anything — even if you DO make a mistake. We won't freak out. We want you to count on us to help you make smart decisions and stay safe, okay?

**Scenario:** Every time you ask your teen how his day was, you get a mumbled, "Whatever, it was okay," in return.

**What to Say:** Skip asking general questions like "How's school?" every day. Instead, ask more specific questions on topics that interest both you and your teen ("Tell me about the pep rally yesterday." "Are there a lot of cliques in your school?" "Fill me in on your Chemistry lab test.") You can also use humor and even some gentle sarcasm to get the conversation flowing.