

TALKING TO ADOLESCENTS: TIPS FOR CARING ADULTS

CONNECTION: STRONG RELATIONSHIPS PREVENT SUBSTANCE MISUSE

NOVEMBER 2021

SPOTLIGHT FACTSHEET

Open communication is the foundation for a healthy relationship. Often we find talking with our teenager impossible! This approach can make all the difference: practice Active/Empathic Listening.

Talk when they are ready. It may not be first-thing when they walk through the door. It often is late, when you are ready for bed or when you are running out the door. Make the time. Be available. Talk when they are ready.

Be present. Put down your cell phone. Turn off the TV. Stop cooking dinner. Focus on your teen. Make eye contact and use body language to show you are open and available.

Manage your emotions. Only talk when you are CALM¹ and can listen to your child.

C - Control your thoughts & actions

A - Assess & decide if you are too upset to continue

L - Leave the situation if you are feeling too angry/upset

M - Make a plan to deal with the situation

Listen for details. Focus on the present and avoid making assumptions or jumping to conclusions. Avoid making judgements about the situation or the people involved.

Ask open-ended questions. “How did you feel when that happened? What do you think they were trying to tell you? Tell me more about that. What did that look like?”

Restate what you heard. Show you are listening and you understand what was said. “It seems like you’re feeling ...” or “Am I right that you were feeling” or “I want to make sure I understand...”

Encourage your child to problem solve. As parents, we often want to fix problems. This can be a roadblock in communication. We can empower our kids to problem solve and find solutions by asking: “How do you want to handle this?” “What do you think you should do next?”

Avoid doing these things:

- Being sarcastic or negative about a child’s ability to be successful.
- Comparing a child to siblings or friends
- Taking over the conversation
- Reminding them of past failures

Resources for Caring Adults

Keeping communication open with adolescents can be really difficult. You are not alone. There are books and websites devoted to helping adults navigate these years. Below are a few recommended resources you can explore to learn more.

Visit The Partnership @drugfreeNH to:

- Explore engaging and evidence-based prevention resources on the Partnership @drugfreeNH.org where you’ll discover ways to prevent an overdose emergency and learn tips, tools and talking points for starting conversations with your adolescent.
- Listen to how local experts across NH are making a difference in the podcast series Power of Prevention. These experts share what they are doing to help young people and others avoid problematic substance use, promote resilience and wellbeing and connect to local resources.
- Browse the Spotlight Factsheets series that address the concerns, trends and issues on various substances, understand how they impact NH and learn how to talk to young people about avoiding them.
- Watch our video series designed to raise awareness about prevention and show you how to get involved. Use the watch guides to further the conversation in your community about prevention and wellness.

1 NIDA. 2020, May 29. Communication. Retrieved from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/family-checkup/communication> on 2021, November 1, 2021

Visit The Partnership @drugfreeNH continued:

- Connect with a community of prevention minded people on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or YouTube. Stay up-to-date on the latest events, campaigns and resources.
- Inform yourself on the latest prevention topics through our virtual and in-person learning events.
- Join [The Partnership @drugfreeNH](#) where you can influence the prevention priorities that are addressed in NH! Together we collaborate, communicate and coordinate with partners working in community coalitions, family support and strengthening services, schools, court diversion, health care and mental health services.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

National Institute on Drug Abuse Family Checkup

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/family-checkup/introduction>

A Parent's Guide to Raising Resilient Kids

<https://drugfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/A-Parents-Guide-to-Raising-Resilient-Kids-10.2021-FINAL.pdf>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Talk They Hear You

<https://www.samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you/parent-resources>

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: Teens and Suicide: What parents should know.

<https://afsp.org/teens-and-suicide-what-parents-should-know#how-can-i-talk-to-my-teen-about-mental-health-and-suicide->



Extension



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