

Conversations are one of the most powerful tools parents can use to connect with — and protect — their kids. But, when tackling some of life’s tougher topics, especially those about drugs and alcohol, just figuring out what to say can be a challenge. We’ve provided tips for conversations on what to say to your child, no matter their age.

Helpful to Note:

- Always keep conversations open and honest.
- Come from a place of love, even when you’re having tough conversations.
- Balance positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement.
- Keep in mind that teachable moments come up all of the time.
- For further coaching and questions on prevention please visit: <https://drugfree.org/landing-page/learn/prevention/>

Mission

Fairfield CARES, established in 2009, is a town-wide coalition of parents, school representatives, local business leaders, law enforcement, clergy, counseling professionals and youth services organizations.

Fairfield CARES is dedicated to preventing underage drinking and substance abuse, increasing awareness of the risks of addiction, promoting healthy choices and behaviors to increase personal wellness, and strengthening community well-being and resilience.

Positive Directions, The Center for Prevention and Counseling in partnership with Fairfield CARES were provided grant funding from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) to develop a social media campaign to help shift our social norms and change the following behaviors and grant goals:

#lifenotwasted Campaign Goals

- Decrease in 30-day use by students
- Increase in reporting parental disapproval
- Increase in perception of harm
- Increase merchant compliance checks
- Decrease DUI citations
- Increase Social Host Law awareness

Fairfield CARES meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at the BOE Conference Room, 501 Kings Highway East, Fairfield, Connecticut. Please refer to the town meetings calendar to confirm. All are Welcome!



Website: www.fairfieldct.org/fairfieldcares

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Tough Topics

Talking Tips for Every Age



2-4 What to Say to Your Preschooler About Drugs

Since the foundation for all healthy habits — from nutrition to toothbrushing— is laid down during the preschool years, this is a great time to set the stage for a drug-free life. ‘

Tips for Conversations with Your Preschooler

- ✓ Explain the importance of taking good care of our bodies – eating right, exercising and getting a good night’s sleep. Discuss how good you feel when you take care of yourself — how you can run, jump, play and work for many hours.
- ✓ Celebrate your child’s decision-making skills.
- ✓ Help your child steer clear of dangerous substances that exist in her immediate world. Explain that she should only eat or smell food or a medicine from a doctor that you, or other known caregivers give to her. Also, explain that drugs from the doctor help the person the doctor gives them to but that they can harm someone else.
- ✓ Teach your child how to cope with frustration in a healthy way and remember that emotions often result in a response from the body. If possible, turn frustration into a learning opportunity and help them find possible alternative solutions.

5-8 What to Say to Your Early Elementary School Aged Child About Drugs

5- to-8-year-olds are still tied to family and eager to please, but they’re also beginning to explore their individuality.

Tips for Conversations with Your Early Elementary School Child

- ✓ Talk to your kids about the drug-related messages they receive through advertisements, the news media and entertainment sources.
- ✓ Keep your discussions about substances focused on the present — long-term consequences are too distant to have any meaning. Talk about the differences between the medicinal uses and illegal uses of drugs, and how drugs can negatively impact the families and friends of people who use them.

- ✓ Set clear rules and explain the reasons for your rules. If you use tobacco or alcohol, be mindful of the message you are sending to your children.
- ✓ Work on problem solving: Help them find long-lasting solutions to homework trouble, a fight with a friend, or in dealing with a bully. Be sure to point out that quick fixes are not long-term solutions.
- ✓ Give your kids the power to escape from situations that make them feel bad. Make sure they know that they shouldn’t stay in a place that makes them feel uncomfortable or bad about themselves. Also let them know that they don’t need to stick with friends who don’t support them.

9-12 What to Say to Your Preteen About Drugs

Preteens, on their quest to figure out their place in the world, tend to give their friends’ opinions a great deal of power, while at the same time starting to question their parents’ views and messages.

Tips for Conversations with Your Preteen

- ✓ Make sure your child knows your rules — and that you’ll enforce the consequences if rules are broken. Research shows that kids are less likely to use tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs if their parents have established a pattern of setting clear rules and consequences for breaking those rules.
- ✓ Kids who don’t know what to say when someone offers them drugs are more likely to give in to peer pressure. Let her know that she can always use you as an excuse and say: “No, my mom [or dad, aunt, etc.] will kill me if I smoke a cigarette.”
- ✓ Feelings of insecurity, doubt and pressure may creep in during puberty. Offset those feelings with a lot of positive comments about who he is as an individual — and not just when he brings home an A.
- ✓ Get to know your child’s friends — and their friends’ parents. Check in by phone or a visit once in awhile to make sure they are on the same page with prohibiting drug or alcohol use, particularly when their home is to be used for a party or sleepover.

13-18 What to Say to Your Teenager About Drugs

This is a pivotal time for parents in helping kids make positive choices when faced with drugs and alcohol. Teens are a savvy bunch when it comes to this topic, and they need detailed and reality-driven messages from you.

Tips for Conversations with Your Teenager

- ✓ Make sure your teen knows your rules and the consequences for breaking those rules — and, most importantly, that you really will enforce those consequences if the rules are broken. Research shows that kids are less likely to use tobacco, alcohol and other drugs if their parents have established a pattern of setting clear rules and consequences for breaking those rules. Kids who are not regularly monitored by their parents are four times more likely to use drugs.
- ✓ Make it clear that you disapprove of all alcohol, tobacco and drug use.
- ✓ Let your teen in on all the things you find wonderful about him. He needs to hear a lot of positive comments about his life and who he is as an individual — and not just when he makes the basketball team or does well on a test. Positive reinforcement can go a long way in preventing drug use among teens.
- ✓ Show interest in and discuss your child’s daily ups and downs. You’ll earn your child’s trust, learn how to talk to each other, and won’t take your child by surprise when you voice a strong point of view about drugs.
- ✓ Don’t just leave your child’s anti-drug education up to her school. Ask your teen what she’s learned about drugs in school and then build on that with additional topics, such as how and why chemical dependence occurs; the unpredictable nature of dependency and how it varies from person to person; the impact of drug use on maintaining a healthy lifestyle; or positive approaches to stress reduction.

Source: For more information, please visit <https://drugfree.org/article/prevention-tips-for-every-age/>