

Conversing with Your Teen about Drug Use

For some reason, as a culture we avoid talking about things that can be both lifesaving and life changing, such as finances, drugs, and other topics that make us uncomfortable. What do you wish you knew when you were younger that can be shared with your teenager now? Here's a few tips for talking about drugs with your teenager.

What to Avoid:

- Overgeneralizations/horror stories
Ex: "People who use drugs go to jail and end up homeless." -That's not true for most people.
- Sharing about how you used to do drugs
Ex: "I smoked in high school, so I understand wanting to experiment." -THC content is much higher than when you may have used marijuana.
- Having loose boundaries
Ex: "It's okay if you do it at home, but not anywhere else." -Too much room for grey area.

What to Do:

- Have a united front
Both parents need to communicate the same message. No good cop, bad cop.
- Recognize addiction in your family
Speak the unspoken. Share information that could help your teen make an informed decision about "playing with fire" since they're genetically predisposed.
- Set a desired outcome for the conversation
What do you want your teen to understand before you get into the heavy convo?
- Focus on health, not behavior
Avoid finger pointing, literally and figuratively.
- Set firm expectations & boundaries
Clearly explain what is and isn't acceptable for your household and the associated consequences.
- Keep a "cool head"
- Withhold judgment
- Be direct
- Be prepared for your teen's reaction.

Resources:

- Helpful Info to Quit Vaping: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/free-e-cigarette-quit-program>
- FCPS video on Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs:
https://dl.ebmcdn.net/fcps/courses/ATODParentPresentationRequired103119b/story_html5.html
- Knowing the signs of Substance Abuse:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VWGxTZrpCU>

For general questions about the FCPS Substance Abuse Prevention Program, please contact the Office of Student Safety & Wellness at: (571) 423-4270.

For further Information & support:
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