

Start An Ongoing Conversation

No loving relationship can exist without communication. Teens believe they have valuable things to say and, when a parent listens genuinely, it helps self-esteem and confidence. **The most important thing to remember when it comes to talking about difficult subjects like drinking and drugs is that it's not a five-minute "talk"** — it's about building an ongoing dialogue. As your children grow up, they will need more and more information, so start early and build on the conversation as your teen matures.

Virtually all parents in America (98 percent) say they've talked with their children about drugs; however, only 27 percent of teens (roughly one in four) say they're learning a lot at home about the risks of drugs, according to a national study by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America (PDFA).

There aren't enough hours in the day. Sometimes it's frustrating how few chances there are to have conversations about drugs with our children. In our busy culture, with families juggling the multiple demands of work, school, after-school activities, and religious and social commitments, it can be a challenge for parents and children to be in the same place at the same time.

Yet the better you communicate, the more at ease your teen will feel about discussing drugs and other sensitive issues with you.

START TALKING BEFORE THEY START DRINKING

www.kccn-dfc.com

Parenting Resources

- Local Start Talking Before They Start Drinking Campaign
www.kccndfc.com
- National site with information for families on health issues,
www.family.samhsa.gov
- Underage Drinking Family Guide Booklet,
www.family.samhsa.gov/
- National Start Talking Before They Start Drinking Campaign,
www.stopalcoholabuse.gov
- Washington state website for the Start Talking Before They Start Drinking Campaign
www.starttalkingnow.org
- Parents the Anti Drug Campaign
www.theantidrug.com

Kittitas County Community Network & Drug Free Communities
104 W. 6th Ave Ellensburg, WA 98926 (509) 962-9775

Tips for Parents on Communication



You Are the Most Powerful Influence on Your Child's Behavior

Tips for talking:

- 1 Be absolutely clear with your kids that you don't want them using alcohol or drugs.** Ever. Anywhere. Don't leave room for interpretation. And talk often about the dangers and results of drug and alcohol abuse. Once or twice a year won't do it. Get more specifics on setting the rules.
- 2 Be a better listener.** Ask questions - and encourage them. Paraphrase what your teen says to you. Ask for their input about family decisions. Showing your willingness to listen will make your teen feel more comfortable about opening up to you.
- 3 Give honest answers.** Don't make up what you don't know; offer to find out. If asked whether you've ever taken drugs, let them know what's important: That you don't want them using alcohol or drugs. Get the facts on alcohol and drugs by visiting www.kccn-dfc.com.
- 4 Use TV reports, anti-drug commercials, or school discussions** about drugs to help you introduce the subject in a natural, unforced way. Get more specifics on using teachable moments.
- 5 Don't react in a way that will cut off further discussion.** If your teen makes statements that challenge or shock you, turn them into a calm discussion of why your teen thinks people use drugs, or whether the effect is worth the risk.
- 6 Role-play with your teen** and practice ways to refuse drugs in different situations. Acknowledge how tough these moments can be. Get more specifics on using role-playing.

Learn to Listen

Just talking to your child is only half the job. You can keep the lines of communication open by knowing how to listen and when to talk. Your teen will tell you about the sights and sounds that influence him or her every day. They are the experts about fashion, music, TV, and movies that people their age follow.

Ask your teen what music groups are popular and what their songs are about, what his friends like to do after school, what's cool and what's not and why. Encourage your teen with phrases such as: "That's interesting" or "I didn't know that" and by asking follow-up questions.

- 1 Try these tips:**
1 Encourage your children to feel comfortable telling you about problems they may be having and asking you for help.
- 2** You might try rephrasing your teen's comments to indicate that you have understood or **give nonverbal support and encouragement by nodding and smiling.**
- 3 Use a caring tone of voice** to answer your teen and use encouraging phrases to express interest and to keep the conversation going.