

SILENCE ISN'T GOLDEN. IT'S PERMISSION.

It's probably not just "going to come up," but a conversation about the risks of drug use has to occur between you and your teen. And since you are the parent, it begins with you. The good news is that with a little practice and a little preparation, you will find it's a conversation that not only gets easier and easier over time, but one that can also save lives.

TALK EARLY AND OFTEN

Kids are tempted to use alcohol, illicit drugs, and intentionally misuse prescription drugs at much younger ages than you would like to believe. The key is to discuss and agree on boundaries like curfews and choice of friends before negative influences can grab hold. Also, monitor your teens' activities by checking in and checking up on them. If the rules and restrictions are put in place early, they will be easier to enforce later on.

GET OFF TO A GOOD START

It's also important to remember that it's not just whether you talk to your kids about drugs, but how you talk to them about it. It's a lot easier to break through if you:

- Try to set a positive tone
- Start with the facts, not judgments
- Avoid using accusatory language, and
- Never call them names or label them

AND THEN TALK SOME MORE

It's not going to be a one-time conversation. The key is to keep discussing, keep asking and keep monitoring your teens as they grow up and encounter different situations. And while it might get repetitive and frustrating it will also get easier, more comfortable and inevitably give you and your teen a better understanding of each other. The truth is that kids who learn a lot about the risks of drugs from their parents are up to 50 percent less likely to use drugs!¹ Unfortunately, less than one third of teens actually do get their drug education from their parents and that needs to change.²

YOU MATTER

Parents are the most powerful influence on their teens when it comes to drug use. Not friends. Not school. You. And it's up to you to be proactive and use that influence early and often. It's a conversation that needs to happen so that your teenager knows where you stand on this critical issue. For more information, including sample conversation starters, and to sign up for a Parenting Tips e-newsletter, visit www.TheAntiDrug.com or call 1-800-788-2800.

SIGNED,

American Academy of Family Physicians
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¹The Partnership for a Drug-Free America, 2005 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study: Key Findings on Teen Drug Trends (May 2006) http://www.drugfree.org/Portal/DrugIssue/Research/Teens_2005/Key_Findings_on_Teen_Drug_Abuse. ²The Partnership for a Drug-Free America, 2005 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study: Teens (2006). Table: Sources of Information on the Risks of Drugs, p.11. http://www.drugfree.org/Files/Full_Teen_Report.

**For more information and parenting tips, contact the Roanoke County Prevention Council
at <http://www.preventioncouncil4youth.org>**