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You are a role model for your children and your views on substance use can strongly affect how your children think about them. Make talking about drugs and alcohol a part of your general health and safety conversations. Remember to keep a calm tone and use vocabulary that is understandable by your children. Teach your kids early on how to say no if someone offers them something they know is dangerous.

Check out these ten tips for talking to your child about substance use!

DO...

Remember that this is about your child's health and well-being.

It is not about bad behavior or punishments. "I am worried that this has become a pattern and will lead to you being unable to participate on the team."

Come from a place of love and concern, not anger.

"Honey, I am concerned about your choices lately and how they may affect you."

Be direct.

Teens have a hard time grasping the abstract. "I can smell marijuana on you."
"Your breath smells of alcohol."

Withhold judgment so that your teen feels he/she can tell you the truth.

"Only losers smoke pot" sounds judgmental and leads to defensiveness. "So you said the events of the night happened in this manner..." comes across as less judgmental. Stick to factual or reported information without using derogatory references or name calling.

Remain calm.

If you start yelling, you'll give your child a reason to leave the room or end the conversation. "I need to take a 5-minute break before we continue this conversation."

Emphasize the importance of honesty.

"I intend to do what it takes to find out the truth. This is your chance to come clean and save yourself from embarrassment when I start questioning your friends and their parents about this story."

Focus on the behavior, not the person.

"This choice concerns me" "This situation is alarming" as opposed to "What were you thinking?!!!"

DON'T...**Get defensive when your teen makes a remark that feels like a personal attack — use it as a discussion point instead.**

Instead of starting the sentence with "you", consider saying something like "I am angry that" ... or "Yes, I am upset about this!"

Just take what your child says at face value – listen to your child's tone of voice, pay attention to his/her facial expressions and body language and word choices.

"I need the names and numbers of everyone involved as I intend to fact check the situation."

Allow your teen to confuse you with his/her remarks or questions.

If you do not know an answer, it is appropriate to state that you will get back to him/her with a response. "I need some time to think about this; I will get back to you."

