



Preventing drug abuse really begins with preventing drug use. Some children as young as third and fourth grades feel pressured to try drugs - especially gateway drugs like alcohol, nicotine (tobacco), and marijuana. Research shows that each of these can increase the chance that the user will turn to even more dangerous drugs like crack or other forms of cocaine, and stimulant or depressant pills. The average age of the first use of illicit drugs (including alcohol) is 12 years!

Constructive communication is one of the most effective tools you can use in helping your child avoid drug use. The very act of regular two-way communication shows your child that he or she means a great deal to you.

What to Communicate

- The facts about how drugs harm people - young people especially. Physical harm - slowed growth, impaired coordination, etc. Social harm - being disconnected from society, loss of friendships, lost of interest. Educational harm - impaired memory and attention levels, and reduced motivation.
- The fact that you do not find drug use acceptable. Many children say their parents never stated this simple principle. Don't forget to point out that these drugs are against the law.
- The fact that there are lots of positive, drug free alternatives, and you will help your children explore them.
- The fact that you place high value on your child's good, special qualities - Qualities that drugs can and will destroy or diminish.



Can we talk please?



- The power to say no - A clear message about the behavior you expect; your trust in your child to live up to your hopes; the belief that your child, knowing right from wrong, is smart enough to choose the right and say no to drugs.

Ways to Communicate

- Calmly and openly - Discuss frankly and without anger the facts about drugs. Don't exaggerate. The facts are chilling in and of themselves.
- In terms of subject matter, not personalities - Challenging current friends might lead to defensive or defiant behavior.
- Face to face, exchanging information and understandings - Be an active listener and let your child tell you what he or she knows about drugs, what his or her own experiences have been, what fears or concerns already exist.
- Through "teachable moments" - In contrast to a formal sit-down lecture, use a variety of situations - television news, TV dramas, books, newspapers, local situations. Capitalize on one point. You'll have opportunities to make other points. Ask the child how he or she would have reacted, what else might have been done or might have happened.
- As an ongoing dialogue - Communication won't be as effective if the subject is brought up in one massive lecture. Anti-drug use messages should be an ongoing theme when you talk with your child. The content and intent should be repeated as an accepted family value. But be sure you encourage and allow for two-way communication.
 - Remember that you set the example - your child will compare your actions with your words and be guided accordingly. If you choose to drink, never mix drinking with driving or any other activity requiring skill and coordination. If you smoke, it would help you and your child if you could quit. And don't use illegal drugs. Period!

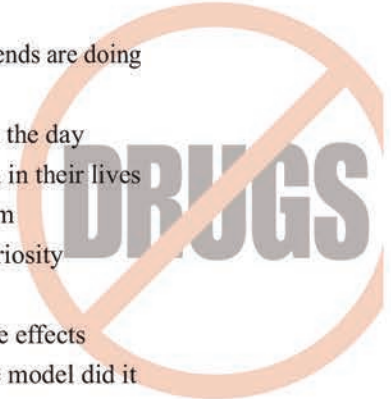


- Be creative! You and your child might act out various situations in which someone tries to pressure someone else to take a drug. Figure out two or three ways to handle each situation and talk about which is best. Role-playing is one way to practice decision making skills.

Understanding Reasons Kids Use Drugs

Kids may turn to drugs for one or more these reasons:

- for fun
- To do what friends are doing
- to fit in
- to get through the day
- to escape pain in their lives
- out of boredom
- because of curiosity
- to take risks
- unaware of the effects
- because a role model did it

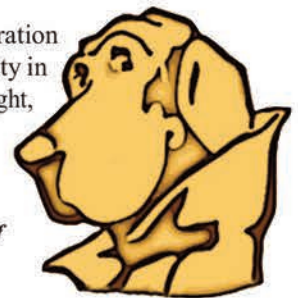


How can I Tell If Someone Is Using Drugs?

Identifying possible signs of drug use may help prevent further use. Possible signs:

- Change in moods (more irritable, secretive, withdrawn, overly sensitive, inappropriately angry)
- Less reasonable (late coming home, late for school or class, involved in more accidents than usual, dishonest)
- Changing friends or changing lifestyles (new interests, unexplained increases in cash)
- Difficult to communicate with (refuses to discuss changes in behavior, becomes defensive if asked about drug use)
- Shows physical deterioration (memory losses, difficulty in concentration, loss of weight, unhealthy appearance)

Talk with your kids about drugs, and help me, McGruff take a bite out of crime.



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Crime Prevention Tips from:

The National Crime Prevention Council

1000 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.

13th Floor

Washington, D.C. 20036

and



Plano Police Department

Crime Prevention Unit

909 14th Street

Plano, Texas 75074

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For additional information please call the:

Plano Police Department

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www.planopolice.org

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PLANO POLICE DEPARTMENT

Talking With Your Kids About Drugs



Some Ideas From McGruff