

Conversing with Teens about Substance Use

Avoid:

- Overgeneralizations/horror stories
Ex: “People who use drugs go to jail and end up homeless.” -That is 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.” - The THC content in marijuana is much higher than when you may have used.
- Having loose boundaries
Ex: “It’s okay if you do it at home, but not anywhere else.” -This creates a gray area and demonstrates an acceptance for not following rules and established boundaries.

Tips:

- Have a united front or if alone be consistent.
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 start the conversation?
- Focus on their health as important and a concern versus 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.ebmcndn.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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