

Conversation Guide

A Conversation Guide for You:

When starting a conversation with a student or teenager in your care, stay calm with your questions and your responses. Create a safe space where they can answer and ask questions honestly.

Make a “Date”

Plan to have a conversation with your teenager, give them a heads up beforehand, and make sure they are clear about what the conversation will be about. This way everyone is on the same page. “ Tomorrow night let’s have a talk about drinking and drugs. you are not in trouble. I just want to talk about where you stand and hear any concerns you may be having.”

Obey the golden rule

Speak to your teens the way you’d like to be spoken to. Teenagers are acutely sensitive to condescension, and it is important to remember that at the end of the day they are the ones who will make the final decisions. Treat them like the adults you want them to become. By showing respect you are modeling good behavior and letting them know you expect them to act responsibly, not just for your sake, but for their own as well.

Do your homework! You have to present a compelling argument to dispel myths. Use facts and research to support your conversation. Show evidence of what substance misuse and abuse can do to your brain.

Have conversations – and have lots of them! They do not have to be long lectures, just frequent and factual! Talking to your teens about substance use and abuse should be a process and not a single time event. Find teachable moments when you can and use them.

Let them speak

Give teens a chance to express their concerns and feelings. They may have been hoping for a chance to ask questions or check in about something troubling. Opening an equal, active dialogue will increase the chances that your teen will feel comfortable being honest with you in the future.

Make sure that your message is clear, and show how choices made now can affect their goals later in life.

Sample open ended questions you can ask::

If you found someone misusing prescription drugs, what would you do?

Do you know where there is a safe and convenient pill drop box in your community?

What do you think are steps to take to make sure you, your friends and family can stay safe and addiction free?

What is your "exit plan" if you ever find yourself in a peer-pressure situation?

What is the word you will text us so we know to come and get you, no questions asked?

Which friends do you consider your "safe friends" who are on the same page in peer pressure situations?

How can we support you?

How do you wish we would respond when you are making unhealthy choices for yourself? This does not mean you will not respond. This just means you are giving your teen a chance to voice how they would like you to respond.

If your teen admits to prescription drug use, tell them you are going to help them get the help they need. And ask them if there is anything else you can do to support them through the process of getting help. This is a delicate balance between telling and asking.

If your teen is struggling with addiction or knows someone who is, there is help out there. Reach out to a School Counselor or Local treatment center for next steps.

