

# Prevention *for parents*



## Setting Goals Around Substance Use

It's the time of year when we are setting our intentions and making goals for ourselves.

If your teen does use, and wants to make a change, it's important to set realistic and manageable goals so they don't become discouraged.

Goals should be

specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and have a time limit or date to complete.



Quitting or reducing substance use is a tricky business, so encourage your

teen to share their goals with you so you can help keep them accountable.

They need support to make a lasting change.

Giving encouragement when they slip up or need to restart is a valuable effort.

When they're not in it alone, they have a better chance of achieving their goal.



### Points of Interest

- *Help your teen achieve their goals around reducing substance use*
- *How to keep teen safe if they choose to use*
- *What works in prevention science*
- *What DOESN'T work in prevention (and actually causes harm)*



## Keeping Teens Safe If They DO Use

Teens make better decisions around substance use when they know their parent has their back if they get into an unsafe situation.

Let your teen know your expectations, but make sure they also know you will help them

if they do slip up.

When teens don't know how their parents will react, they make poor decisions like getting into a car under the influence.

Let them know you won't be happy, but that you

would rather them be safe.

One strategy is to have a pre-planned code word, so that if they are in a social situation but want to get out they can get your help and save face with peers.

Take a moment to

have a conversation with your teen and let them know your expectations and consequences they can expect, but also that you have their back.

When they're not worried about unknown consequences and know what to expect, they make safer decisions.

## What Works in Prevention

It's important to know which strategies are effective in preventing substance use, as our time and resources are often scarce. Here are a few tried and true principles to implement in your family:



- Build communication skills
- Teach refusal skills
- Reinforce anti-drug attitudes
- Increase study skills and academic support
- Increase social and emotional skills
- Promote healthy alternatives to drug use
- Enhance bonding with positive adults

## What DOESN'T Work in Prevention

Perhaps even more importantly, knowing what *doesn't* work is necessary so that we don't do more harm than good. Sometimes, what we think is effective actually makes the problem worse. Here are some of the *don'ts* in prevention:



- Scare tactics (scary images, mock car crashes, etc.)
- One-time events
- Personal testimony from people in recovery
- Sensationalizing information about use rates (reporting how many people DO use)
- Appealing to young people's morals
- Giving detailed information about substances (how to use it, potential benefits of use, street names, etc.)
- Role play where youth are asked to play the part of drug users or dealers

## What Would You Like To See In The Next Issue?

Contact Colleen Chan with any suggestions, comments, or questions.

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## Parent Resources

### Prevention Tips For Every Age

<https://drugfree.org/article/prevention-tips-for-every-age/>

### What Works and What Doesn't in Prevention

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/SESA/publications/documents/22-1662.pdf>

### What Works in Prevention Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtNClqr-hMA>