

SAYING NO TO ALCOHOL, DRUGS, & TOBACCO

5 REASONS TO SAY NO

1. YOUR HEALTH

Whether it's a short-term issue like being hungover or a long-term health issue like lung or liver disease, substance abuse can take a toll on your body.

2. CONTROL AND JUDGMENT

Using alcohol or drugs can cause you to lose control and make bad decisions, and possibly do things you know to be wrong or harmful.

3. RISK OF ADDICTION

When you use drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or vapes, you run the risk of becoming addicted. Addiction can be dangerous and expensive. It can also hurt your relationships and your chances for success.

4. CONSEQUENCES

Whether it's getting a DUI, being charged with illegal drug possession, dealing with an addiction, or a drop in grades, there are often negative consequences to using alcohol, drugs, or tobacco.

5. YOUR FUTURE

You have your whole life ahead of you. You don't want anything to get in the way of your goals and the life you want. So do yourself a favor and don't put unnecessary road blocks in your way.

IT ISN'T ALWAYS EASY

Making smart decisions about alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and vaping can be hard—and more complicated than “just saying no.” Keep reading for tips on how you can stay smart and safe.

BUILDING REFUSAL SKILLS

People don't like feeling like outsiders—we all want to feel like we're part of the group. That's why it can sometimes be hard to say no when you're offered a drink, vape, marijuana, or something you know you shouldn't do.

DEALING WITH PEER PRESSURE

If you're attending a party or hanging out with friends and you think you'll be around drugs and/or alcohol, figure out what you're going to say or do if you're offered something. Here are some ideas.

- ▶ **Give an excuse.** *"No way. If my parents found out I'd never be able to leave the house again" or "I'm not feeling very well. That'll probably make it worse."*
- ▶ **Arrange a plan with a parent.** Come up with a code phrase you can say to your parent(s) so they'll come and get you, such as *"I've got a bad headache. Can you pick me up?"*

As you become more confident dealing with peer pressure, you'll feel more comfortable with a simple "no thanks."

LISTEN TO YOUR INSTINCTS

If it doesn't feel right, don't do it. Even if you're curious or a lot of your friends are trying it, a big part of growing up is learning how to make decisions that are right for you.

NEED HELP?

If you or someone you know is struggling with substance abuse, **help is available.**

- ▶ **National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens:** Call 1-800-662-HELP
- ▶ **Al-Anon.org** can connect you with resources if a parent or family member is an alcoholic.
- ▶ **Crisis Text Line:** Text "START" to 741741 or call 1-800-273-TALK.

BUILDING REFUSAL SKILLS

You've likely heard all the reasons you should say no to drugs and alcohol. But in certain circumstances it can be really hard to say no, even if you want to and know you should.

The following are tips for building refusal skills—confidently saying no to drugs and alcohol if you're ever offered. These are ways to say no without feeling pressured, anxious, or uncool.

GIVE A REASON

If you don't feel confident just saying, "No thanks, I don't do that," give an excuse like, "No thanks, I don't like the way it makes me feel" or "I'm kinda on a health kick now, so no thanks."

KEEP IT SIMPLE

You might feel more comfortable not giving a reason. For some people, "Nah, I'm good" is easier than having to say why. And, of course, you don't owe anyone an excuse or a reason.

SUGGEST SOMETHING ELSE

If you'd like to change things up, suggest doing something else. "I'm hungry. Let's get some food" or "I'm bored. Anyone want to go to the movies?"

BLAME YOUR PARENTS

Putting the responsibility on someone else can take the pressure off of you. "No way. My mom would ground me forever if she found out."

PLAN AHEAD

If you're going to be somewhere and you think you'll be around drugs and/or alcohol, figure out ahead of time how you're going to handle it.

JUST LEAVE

You don't owe it to anyone to do something that makes you uncomfortable.

FACTS AND STATS:

THE TRUTH ABOUT DRUGS, ALCOHOL, AND TOBACCO USE

Sometimes it can feel like everyone is drinking, vaping, smoking marijuana, or using other drugs. But that couldn't be farther from the truth! Here's what's really going on with young people and drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.

20%
5%

20% of high school students use vapes. And only about 5% of middle schoolers vape. *The vast majority of students do not vape.*

33% of high schoolers and 8% of middle schoolers drink. *The vast majority of students do not drink.*

33%
8%

25%
7%

25% of high school students and about 7% of middle schoolers use tobacco. *The vast majority of students do not use tobacco.*

23% of high schoolers and 6% of middle schoolers use marijuana. *The vast majority of students do not use marijuana.*

23%
6%

2%
>1%

About 2% of high school students and less than 1% of middle schoolers use hard drugs. *The vast majority of students do not use hard drugs.*

Remember, you will not be alone in your decision to say no.
Most young people do!

Parents Make the Difference

Help Your Child Avoid Drugs and Alcohol

Parents are the #1 deterrent to young people becoming involved with alcohol and drugs.

Most parents have concerns about their children using tobacco, alcohol, or illicit drugs. There is, however, a great deal that parents can do to keep their children safe and on the right track.

To help keep your child safe:

- ▶ be involved in your child's life
- ▶ set guidelines and limits
- ▶ be informed
- ▶ know the warning signs
- ▶ take action if needed

Most importantly, spend quality time with your child. Children who have a good relationship with their parents are less likely to do things that would betray their parents' trust.

Keep Your Child Safe

- ▶ Encourage your child to be involved in school and community activities.
- ▶ Have well-defined rules regarding acceptable social activities, having friends over, and curfews.
- ▶ Find “teachable moments” to talk about the dangers of alcohol, drugs, smoking, and vaping. *One discussion about drugs and alcohol isn’t enough.*
- ▶ Know what activities your child is involved in and who your child’s friends are.
- ▶ Be clear about your position on tobacco, alcohol, vaping, and drugs. Let your child know that the use of these substances will not be permitted.
- ▶ Know what’s happening in your school and in your community. Talk to other parents, and be aware of the places teens go “to party.”
- ▶ Let your child know that there will be consequences for tobacco, alcohol, or drug use. *Knowing there will be consequences gives your child a reason to “say no.”*
- ▶ Make prescription drugs inaccessible, and talk about the dangers of taking other people’s medications.
- ▶ Understand that your number one responsibility is to keep your child safe. If you have reason to believe that your child is involved in risky behavior, you need to take action to ensure his/her safety—even if that means violating your child’s privacy.

Warning Signs

When students are using alcohol or drugs, there are often warning signs. The following are some of the most common warning signs:

- ▶ drop in grades
- ▶ change in behavior
- ▶ more defiant attitude
- ▶ change in friends
- ▶ getting in trouble at school
- ▶ talking about alcohol or drugs
- ▶ change in physical appearance (e.g., weight loss, red eyes)
- ▶ lack of interest in activities that were previously enjoyed
- ▶ change in sleeping or eating patterns
- ▶ physical evidence of use (e.g., beer cans, drug paraphernalia, odors on clothing, eye drops, extra cold medicines, extra aerosol cans, vaporizer pens that resemble USB sticks, drawings of alcohol or drug related items)
- ▶ dropping out of school activities and/or sports

If you suspect that your child is vaping or using alcohol, drugs, or tobacco, talk to your child about your concerns. For help and advice, talk to your child's counselor or physician.

