

How to Talk to Your Child About Drinking, Smoking and Substance Abuse from K-12th Grade

Risk Factors & Protective Factors

- ▶ Risk factors are things that increase risk of developing substance abuse, smoking addiction or alcohol issues. Your child could be born with these things (genetics), they could be habits (smoking) or could be because of your environment (living in a poorer community). It has also been noted that teens who start abusing substances often have psychiatric illnesses such as depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, etc.
- ▶ Protective factors are things that decrease the risk of developing substance abuse, smoking addiction or alcohol issues. These things are also genetic, habits and environmental.

What to Look for

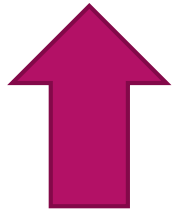
Risk Factors

- ▶ Early aggressive behaviors
- ▶ Lack of parental supervision
- ▶ Substance abuse by peers
- ▶ Drug availability (in school)
- ▶ Poverty (in community)

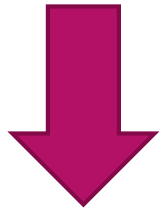
Protective Factors

- ▶ Impulse control
- ▶ Parental monitoring
- ▶ Academic competence
- ▶ Anti-drug policies (school & sports programs)
- ▶ Strong neighborhood/community attachment

How Do We Help?

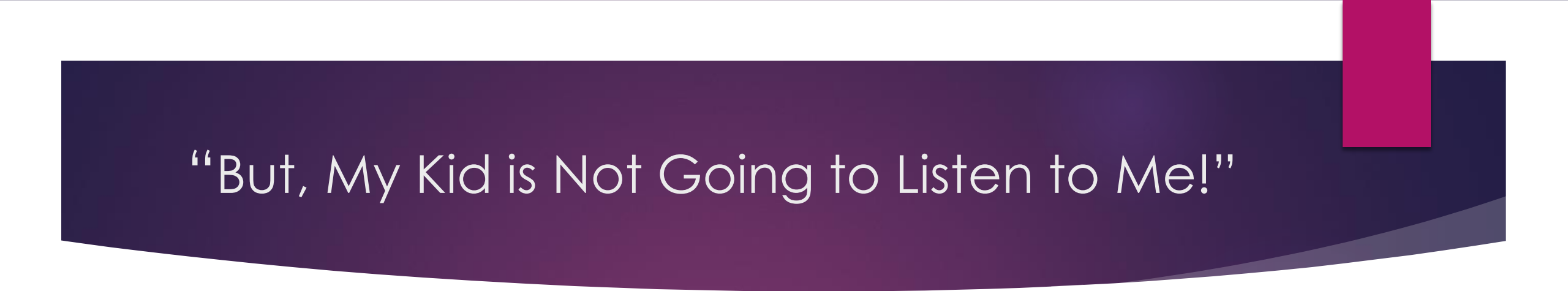


Protective Factors



Risk Factors

The earlier you get involved, the greater the impact!



“But, My Kid is Not Going to Listen to Me!”

- ▶ According to drugfree.org, kids who learn the basics of substance abuse from their parents are up to **50% less likely** to use drugs. However, only 37% report getting educated by parents. (2015)

Rules to Live By (kids of any age) for Prevention

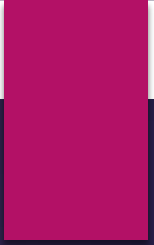
- ▶ Talk to your kids.
- ▶ Monitor what they're doing. You're their parent, not their friend!
- ▶ Get to know their friends and their friends' parents.
- ▶ Understand (try) and ask about their problems and concerns.
- ▶ Be consistent with rules and discipline.
- ▶ Be active and involved with their education.

How to Talk to Your K- 3rd Grader

- ▶ This is when kids start to explore their individuality
- ▶ Talk about tobacco, alcohol and drug info in the present only. They will not understand future consequences. Try saying statements such as, "Drinking too much beer can make you feel sick and throw up."
- ▶ Talk to your children about TV shows/commercials that show drug use/alcohol/tobacco & ask how they feel about it.
- ▶ Know your children's friends and their friends' parents.
- ▶ Help your children problem solve. (i.e.: if they are fighting with a friend).
- ▶ Set clear rules and be mindful of doing things you tell them not to do.

How to Talk to Your 4th-6th Grader

- ▶ This age group of children value friends' opinions and challenge parental advice.
- ▶ Make sure child knows the rules and that consequences for breaking rules will be enforced.
- ▶ Role play with your child on how to say no. Encourage them to use you as an excuse. (i.e.: "My mom would kill me if I smoked a cigarette!")
- ▶ Remind your child as often as possible that he/she is special.
- ▶ Base drug and alcohol knowledge on FACTS, not fear.
- ▶ Focus on how drugs/alcohol/tobacco can effect appearance and performance (athletic and academic) because these are important things to children at this age.
- ▶ Know your children's friends!



“

90% of addiction starts in the
teen years.

”

CASA COLUMBIA, 2012

How to Talk to Your 1st Year Middle School Child

- ▶ This is a critical transitional period. Peer pressure is at an increased rate.
- ▶ Set clear rules against tobacco, drug and alcohol use.
- ▶ Know your children's friends (including online friends).
- ▶ Hold family weekly meetings to check in.
- ▶ Involve your child in adult supervised after school activities.
- ▶ Call houses of parties your child is to attend to ensure there will be no alcohol or drugs.
- ▶ Set & enforce curfews.
- ▶ Encourage your children to feel able to talk to you about their experiences.

How to Talk to Your 13-15 Year Old

- ▶ The average age kids try drugs for the first time is age 13.
- ▶ Make sure child knows consequences for breaking rules & that they will be enforced.
- ▶ Give your child positive feedback and not only when they get an A.
- ▶ Show interest in your child and discuss his/her up's and down's.
- ▶ Tell your child the negative effects that drugs/tobacco/alcohol can have on his/her appearance (teens are very focused on their appearance).
- ▶ Do not rely on just school for anti-drug/tobacco/alcohol education.

How to Talk to Your 16-18 Year Old

- ▶ Use detailed & reality-based messages. (i.e.: “Using a drug once can cause serious harm. Anyone can become an addict.”)
- ▶ Emphasize that drugs can effect the future. (i.e.: getting into college or obtaining a dream job).
- ▶ Challenge them to be a leader.
- ▶ Encourage your child to volunteer somewhere he/she can see the impact of drugs (homeless shelter, victim service center).
- ▶ Compliment your child on things he/she does well and the positive choices he/she makes.
- ▶ Write a “contract” with them. (see next slide)

Write a Contract with Your Kids

Because teenagers are more likely to follow guidelines they help create, get together to design rules and consequences that work for you both. Then consider putting the details in writing to make sure you're on the same page (now and in the future). Use the sample contract below as a guide to establish rules about drugs and alcohol.

Create a Contract

Set clear rules about drinking and drug use for your teen - and provide guidelines for open communications for both of you.

Your Child's Name: _____

Your Name: _____

_____ agrees:
[Child's Name]

- ☐ I will not drink or take drugs
- ☐ I will not drive while under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- ☐ I will not get in a car with someone who has been drinking or using drugs
- ☐ If I feel unsafe or uncomfortable, I will call you, my parent or guardian, for a ride home
- ☐ I will be honest
- ☐ I will talk to you when I am upset, scared, or confused - even if I'm afraid you'll be angry or disappointed
- ☐ I will be accountable for my actions

_____ agrees:
[Parent's Name]

- ☐ I will make myself available to you whenever you need me
- ☐ I will provide a comfortable, safe, respectful place to talk honestly
- ☐ I will keep an open mind
- ☐ I will listen
- ☐ I will not overreact or judge you for things that don't make sense to me
- ☐ I will love you for who you are

_____ agrees:
[Child's Name]

I commit to this agreement and recognize there are consequences for every decision I make. I promise to respect you and honor our relationship.

Child's Signature

Date

_____ agrees:
[Parent's Name]

As your parent/guardian I commit to this agreement. I promise to honor our relationship and agree to respect you and help you in any way I can.

Parent/Guardian's Signature

Date

Key Risk Periods

- ▶ Puberty
- ▶ Parents or parental figures divorce
- ▶ Elementary school → Junior High School

Remember...

- ▶ If your child is not using drugs/alcohol/tobacco, tell him how proud you are of his smart decision and encourage the continuation of that decision!

What If My Child Is Using?

- ▶ Follow through with consequences that you originally set.
- ▶ Talk with your child about his/her use and try to find out the circumstances surrounding the time/times of the use. Express concern, but also let your child feel open to talk about his feelings.
- ▶ Make an appointment with his/her primary care provider for a screening and possible mental health referral. However, you must understand that your child's provider can only disclose information to you if your child raises an issue of harm to herself or others.
- ▶ Stay involved with your child's activities (education, friends, after-school activities).

Parent Resources

- ▶ Parent Support Network: 1-855-DRUGFREE or <http://www.drugfree.org>

OTHER RESOURCES:

- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/alcoholdrug/>
- Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information & Education Helpline:
1-800-327-5050 or <http://helpline-online.com/>
- US Dept. Of Health & Human Services:
<http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-health-topics/substance-abuse/states/ma.html>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA):
<http://www.samhsa.gov/>

References

Partnership for Drug Free Kids. (2015). Guides and resources. Retrieved from:
<http://www.drugfree.org/resources/>