

# How to Talk to Your Teen About Drugs and Alcohol

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According to the [Partnership for a Drug-Free America](#), ***kids who learn about drugs from parents are significantly less likely to use drugs—and yet 20 percent of kids say they’ve never had that important conversation even once.*** That statistic illustrates one of the key challenges—and opportunities—families have in keeping their children safe. Having “the talk” (or, even better, talks) isn’t that difficult. With drug and alcohol references all over popular culture—in films, television, music and on the Internet—you have plenty of conversational openings. It’s not the opportunity, but the substance and style of your conversation that matters. Here are a few tips for getting started and making your best case in a way that your teenagers won’t automatically reject.

## Remain Calm

Yes, it’s an emotional topic, especially if you fear the worst—that your child is already using. But don’t make the situation worse for yourself. Ever notice how your child’s volume tends to match your own? If you start yelling and sounding stressed, you’ll put your teen on the defensive and he or she will give you as much negative energy as they receive. ***Remember: it’s a conversation, not a lecture. The tone should be rational, even-tempered, non-accusatory and informative. You should show love and support, not condemnation.*** If you’re not in the mood to keep anger at bay—or the talk has already gotten out of hand—walk away and save it for another day.

## Use Every Day “Teachable Moments”

**If you and your kids are watching the news together and you run across a report of a fatal car accident due to someone driving under the influence, that’s a natural teachable moment.** Another would be if you’re discussing the misfortunes of a friend of your child’s or yours plagued with drug involvement. It’s times like these that make an impression. The ills of drugs or underage alcohol use are most apparent as such moments, and your child is more likely to respond positively, or at least not reject out of hand your good advice.

## Say What You Mean to Say

It’s natural to want to avoid confrontation, but that attitude might result in conversations so vague that your teen

barely knows you've addressed the topic. As mentioned earlier, keep calm and positive, but ***make sure you have a point and that your child understands it. And that point is, ultimately, that you don't want your kids using drugs or alcohol. You can be firm without losing control.*** If it would be helpful, rehearse the conversation in your head before starting it. Be clear what the rules are, and what's going to happen if they break the rule.

## Monitor Your Child's Behaviors

"Trust, but verify," as the politicians say. Observe your child's moods, activities and behavior. The teenage years are difficult for parents and child alike as hormones kick in, so don't automatically assume that sullenness, secrecy and withdrawal are signs of drug use. But emotional changes are of possible concern.

Be on the lookout for a new circle of friends. And don't discount your suspicions of a particular friend, even if you have no evidence of bad activity. Your instincts mean a lot here. Call or text to stay in touch when your child is out of the house, and don't be hesitant to verify stated plans. Is he really spending the night with a best friend? Call the friend's parent to be sure.

Many parents consider "snooping" to be a serious violation of the parent-child relationship. But if you have a serious suspicion that your child is doing drugs, they are the one who's violated the trust. You can feel perfectly justified to search their bedroom. Other places to look include the car your child uses, backpacks, coat and pants pockets, computers and phone. You can also ask school authorities to search your child's locker. Yes, your suspicions may cause ripples in your relationship, but there will come a day when your child will thank you if he or she is saved from drug addiction because of your firm, loving concern.

## Open the Dialogue

Talking about drugs and alcohol with your growing kids isn't always a comfortable conversation. But it's critical. So open the dialogue, be firm but loving and unafraid of making waves. Your courage, strength, and tenacity can make the difference in keeping your kids safe from the multiple dangers of illicit drinking and drug use.

If you think your teen is already doing drugs, don't hesitate to contact Renaissance Ranch Ogden. We are an [adolescent treatment and recovery center in Utah](#).

## Renaissance Ranch Ogden

We treat both the individuals suffering from the disease of addiction, and their families who often share in the struggle with them. Through our faith-based approach we use industry best practices to help you regain control of your life and give you the tools and training to achieve long-term sobriety and find peace again. Call us to start your recovery today! Our number is (385) 222-3737. We look forward to hearing from you!

