

Tips for Parents to Avoid Alcohol, Tobacco, or Other Drug Problems in Children

Talk to your children.

Give accurate information. Start early and keep talking.

Listen to your children.

You will learn what they are dealing with and what they need to know.

State clearly that you do not want and do not expect your child to use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. [All are illegal for underage children.]

Be aware of and discuss alcoholism in the family, or other factors that put your children at risk.

Build on the assets in your child, family, school, and community.

Every child, family, school, and community has strengths and positive qualities to celebrate and nurture.

Have family rules.

Enforce them and carry out logical and clearly stated consequences.

Provide good role modeling.

Parent behavior is the biggest influence on a child's use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs.

Start early by preventing tobacco use.

Tobacco is a highly addicting drug. Many children try tobacco at an early age and become hooked. Smoking is also an indicator for later marijuana use and other risky behaviors.

Emphasize the risk of alcohol.

A child's belief that a drug is harmless or acceptable increases their risk of using. Emphasize that alcohol—

- is illegal for persons under 21
- is immediately harmful to health
- alters judgment and perception

- has effects which interfere with physical, emotional and social growth and brain development
- can cause inappropriate, risky, and unintended behavior, and dependence, addiction, and death from intoxication.

Know what your children are doing—

The people they associate with, what they do after school, what's in their bedroom.

Know your children's friends and their parents. Supervise activities and after school hours.

Help your child deal with media, peer, and social pressures.

Rehearse with them how to make a good decision, say "no," and avoid risky situations. Participate in and discuss TV, movies, and music with them.

Talk to your children even if you have used alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs yourself.

- Don't lie, but don't dwell on the subject either.
- Avoid discussion which could glamorize use, or give an unintended "I survived, you can too" message.
- Stress that today we know better about the hazards of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- If you smoke, express your wish that you were not dependent.
- Say the discussion is not about your past mistakes, but about mistakes your child must avoid.

Hug your children and tell them that you love them!

Their world is not an easy place to be in. They need your supervision and your love.