



Prevention Tips for Your Young Ones

Here are a few ways you can prevent your young loved one from using drugs

Be Honest, Be Direct

Have direct, open and honest conversations with your young ones about alcohol and other drugs, temptations, addiction, and your feeling and beliefs about drug (including alcohol) use. This can be a tough conversation, but discuss your experiences about your past use and your or a family members struggles with addiction.

Give Positive Affirmations

If you have a great young person, tell them and tell them often. Affirmations can be as simple as “I love you”, “great job”, “you are a wonderful kid”, and “you are so smart”. Your positive reinforcement may become their inner voice, which can give them the strength to decline drug offers. Those with higher self-esteem are more likely to decline drug offers.

Know Your Facts

Do your homework before diving in too deep on the topic. Young ones are very curious and you will want to make sure you know the facts about drugs so you are prepared to talk to your young one. Remember that legal drugs can be addictive too, so talk about those when talking about all other drugs, including alcohol too. Monitoring the Future is a great resource to find out what drugs are popular in your young one’s age group. For soon to be college students, you can reach out to substance abuse professionals on or near the college campus to find out what drugs may be popular there. SAMHSA has a series of “Tips for Teens” that is valuable information in language for young people. ([https://store.samhsa.gov/?f\[0\]=series:5567](https://store.samhsa.gov/?f[0]=series:5567))

Make Sure They Understand the Legal Consequences of Using

There are of course legal consequences that can occur from a young ones drug use, including a possible detention/ jail sentence. For your soon to be college student these legal consequences can also lead to college’s imposing their own sanctions, including the loss of financial aid or expulsion. Have your young one research about young one’s drug use and report to you some of what they have learned, and talk about it with them. This is not meant to scare them, it is to educate them.

Make Sure They Understand the Life-Long Consequences of Addiction

Make sure they know that drug use can lead to addiction, which can ruin a young person’s life. It is important that your young one know that addiction is not something that can be reversed or cured only managed day by day with a lot of help. You can watch a documentary with them about young one’s addiction, such as “Chasing

the Dragon” which shows the reality of youth drug addiction. Make sure to talk about the documentary with your young one. Again this is not meant to scare them, but educate them.

Practice Ways to Say “No”

Saying “No” can be difficult in the moment and that is why it is important to practice techniques during normal situations. There are several ways to say “No” here are a few:

- Simply say “no” or “no thank you”
- Make an excuse: “I have to babysit tonight/early in the morning” – replace with other excuse.
- Provide an alternative: “How about we go play laser tag instead” – replace with other activity.
- Place blame: “My mother would kill me if she knew I was using” – replace with other person or reason.
- Make drug use seem uncool: “Why would I want to kill my brain cells for something so senseless as using drugs.” – replace with any other language to make drug use seem like a bad idea.

Have One-on-One Time

Spend quality time with your young one alone. One-on-one time allows for meaningful conversations to naturally occur. Don’t go in with an agenda, but let your time together be free flowing and have fun. During these one-on-one times your young one is more likely to open up about what is going on in their life. This quality time helps build a stronger bond, which means your young one will be more likely to reach out to you for advice when they encounter problems.

Remain Calm

A young one’s attitudes can be trying on your patience. Rolled eyes, heavy sighs, selective hearing (ignoring), or defiance are all things you may be met with when trying to talk to them about drugs. When your young one behaves less than desirable **remain calm**, do your research for other approaches and try, try again.

Supportive and Safe Adults

I cannot stress enough the importance for your young ones to have other trusted, supportive and safe adults in their lives other than you. This may sound disappointing but they may feel more comfortable talking to someone other than you sometimes. That is why it is important to help your young one identify other supportive and safe adults that they can talk to about things happening in their lives, so you have confidence in their advice too. These supportive and safe adults can be aunts, uncles, a coach, grandparents, a teacher, a friend’s parent, a spiritual leader, etc. Connect them with the “We R Native” (<https://www.wernative.org/>) a Native resource on various healthy behaviors, and an “Ask Auntie” section for getting advice.

Connect with Other Adults

It’s likely that other parents will have the same concerns you have and may have advice that worked for them with talking to their young one. You can connect with other parents to share ideas, thoughts, frustrations, successes, etc. about talking to your young one about drugs.