

# SCHOOL AGE STRATEGIES

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## 1 FOSTER HEALTHY FRIENDSHIPS

Encouraging healthy friendships is important both for development of social skills and for creating a safe and healthy group to rely on when they are away from home. Get to know your child's friends and discuss with them what qualities they value in good friends.

## 2 CLARITY AND CONSISTENCY ARE KEY

When setting rules and expectations for your child, it is important to be clear and consistent with your message. Changing the rules without notice creates confusion and instability. Also, be sure that all of your child's caregivers are consistent with the rules and messages being provided to your child.

## 3 CREATE A CODE WORD

Come up with a plan for your child to notify you if they find themselves faced with the opportunity to try drugs or alcohol. Finding a code word that they can send via text or use in a phone call is an easy way for them to get out of a difficult situation. If they have to use their code word, follow up with a conversation and be sure to praise them for making a good decision under pressure.

## 4 PRACTICE FOR PEER PRESSURE

Another way to help your child navigate difficult situations is to practice what they will say when faced with peer pressure. Come up with a few phrases together that they feel comfortable using and practice role playing so they feel confident putting them to use.

## 5 ANSWER THE "WHY"

"Why?" is a common question for school age children as they are curious to learn more about the world around them. Try not to dismiss them or answer with "because I said so." Rather, encourage them to think critically and find the answer together. This helps them build problem solving skills they can apply in other situations as well.

## 6 SHOW AN INTEREST IN THEIR INTERESTS

Encouraging your child to follow their passions is a great way to promote healthy growth and development. It is also important to participate and learn about those interests yourself. This will build more trust and a stronger bond with your child.

## 7 CONNECT WITH OTHER PARENTS

Get to know the parents of your child's friends and have conversations about what they are doing to prevent their child from experimenting with drugs and alcohol. These relationships could help you learn tips for prevention or simply help you to identify safe places to allow your child to play.