

TALKING TO YOUR TEEN

1 PROVIDE STRUCTURE

Your teen is likely seeking more independence and trying to push boundaries. While it is important to let them learn how to be independent adults, it is equally important to provide a stable, structured home environment. Encourage your teen to contribute to the household's structure through setting routines, chores/responsibilities, and curfews.

2 BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR EXPECTATIONS AND RULES

While your teen is probably trying to test their boundaries, it is important to establish rules and be up front and clear about your expectations of them. Leaving your teen guessing about what is expected of them can create ambiguity about what is acceptable behavior and lead to unhealthy behaviors. It can be helpful to explain the "why" behind your rules and include teens in conversations to develop house rules so that they feel heard and respected.

3 DEVELOP AN "ESCAPE PLAN"

Take time to develop a plan for them to remove themselves from risky situations. This could be a code word they can text you that prompts you to ask them to come home or go pick them up.

4 DELIVER A CONSISTENT MESSAGE

Ensure that all of your teen's caregivers are consistently delivering a message to promote healthy behaviors and prevent substance abuse. Inconsistencies in this message could confuse your teen or encourage risky behavior.

5 EXPECT QUESTIONS

Be prepared to answer questions about drug abuse, addiction, and various "what if" scenarios. If you do not know the answer to their question, offer to find the answer together and use the opportunity to teach your teen how to find accurate information from reputable sources.

6 GET PERSONAL

Your teen may ask questions about your past experiences with alcohol and drugs. It is up to you to examine your relationship with your teen and determine what is appropriate to share. Sometimes being open about your experiences and the consequences or lessons you learned can be a powerful learning tool.