

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Talk With Kids About Alcohol

Parent Tip #1

Get and stay involved.

As children move from elementary-to middle school, there's a temptation to back away from participating in their activities. While they can seem quite grown-up, they aren't done yet! They need and welcome parental involvement. This is the time when kids are exposed to alcohol and other drugs. Attend every activity you possibly can from games to performances to PTA meetings. Your commitment assures that your child knows how much you care.



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Parent Tip #2

Get to know your children's friends and their parents.

Invite their friends and their parents to a cookout at your home or a local park. Or invite the parents to meet for coffee or lunch. Work with other parents to get a list of everyone's addresses, emails, and phone numbers so you can keep in touch with your child. Find out other parents' values regarding alcohol and other drugs. Hope that they have the same no use rules as you do, but don't assume. Find out!



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Parent Tip #3

Don't wait for the "Drug Talk".

Don't wait to have "The Drug Talk" with your child. Make discussions about tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs part of your normal conversation. Know the facts about how drugs can harm your child. Clear up any wrong information, such as "everybody drinks" or "marijuana won't hurt you". Be clear about family rules for use of tobacco, alcohol or other drugs. Have a no use policy and be clear about the consequences if your child doesn't follow the rule.



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Parent Tip #4

You CAN influence your child's behavior.

Parents who send a clear message of "no drug use" are setting expectations for their kids, and this will help their kids stay away from drugs. Kids who learn about the risks of drug abuse from their parents or caregivers are about 36 percent less likely to smoke marijuana, 50 percent less likely to use cocaine, and 65% less likely to use LSD.



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Parent Tip #5

Monitor children closely. Don't be an ostrich.

Everybody thinks their child is beyond taking drugs... nobody's beyond it. Know what your children are doing - their activities and how they spend their time. Know whom they are with and where they are. Your kids might not like your keeping tabs on where they are and what they're doing. Even good kids can get into trouble - parents need to trust but also verify. It's not pestering, it's parenting.



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Parent Tip #6

Establish rules for driving.

Sign a contract with your young driver including a strict "no drinking" provision. One-quarter of fatally injured teen drivers (16-20 year-olds) had a blood alcohol concentration of .10 or above even though all were below the legal drinking age. It's not o.k. - Not even once!



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Parent Tip #7

It's never TOO early to start talking.

The average age Kansas kids begin drinking is 12 ½. Start talking in elementary school and continue to talk to them through middle school and high school. Children look to parents for information about life decisions and choices, such as how to succeed in school and why they shouldn't use drugs. They look to other kids for information about popular culture, such as fashion fads or what's cool. Teens who learn anti-drug messages at home are 42 percent less likely to use drugs.



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Parent Tip #8

The FEAR factor.

Children who perceive that they will get caught if they drink or use other drugs are much less likely to use. It's much easier for a youth to say no if they can say to their peers "My mom or dad will ground me forever". Make it clear to your child's friends that you do not allow underage drinking in your home. Make it clear that you will check to see if there is parental supervision at parties... then follow through.



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Parent Tip #9

Establish and keep family rituals.

Establish daily rituals for connecting with your children that will continue throughout adolescence. For example: Eat dinner as a family, check in with your kids at the high and low points of their days, and hug them each time they come home.



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Parent Tip #10

Take time to listen.

It's important to take time to listen to your kids. Try to find time to be with your child when he or she asks to talk to you. Don't say "in just a minute or "not right now." Devote your attention to what your son or daughter is saying, because kids know when you're pretending to listen.



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Parent Tip #11

Set limits.

Part of what you can do as a parent is set limits. Let your kids know that you do not want them in risky situations. Tell them you don't want them to ride in a car with a driver who's been using drugs or who's been drinking. Tell them you will not put up with them being in a place where drugs are being used. Be specific. Don't assume they know what you want unless you tell them.



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Parent Tip #12

Be honest.

What do you say if your child asks, "Did you ever do drugs?" Experts agree that it's best to be honest. Answering this question untruthfully can cause you to lose credibility with your kids if they ever discover that you've lied to them. Tell them what you have learned from your experience. Let them know that if you'd known about the consequences you would have made different choices. As a parent, you want to save your children from making the same mistakes. Help them make healthy choices.



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