

# Talking to your kids about drugs

## *what parents need to know*

Children look to their parents and other adult role models for guidance and support. Although it may not always seem that way, your influence is very powerful. So, when it comes to issues regarding drug and alcohol use, letting them know about the dangers can protect them from causing harm to themselves and others.

### **Let them know you disapprove of underage drinking and other drug misuse.**

According to the Portage County Community Health Assessment, 55% of the youth surveyed said they would not drink alcohol and 68% of kids would not try drugs if they knew their parents would be disappointed. Take a stance on drug and alcohol use and express that opinion frequently; you want to make sure that your child has a clear picture on how you feel about drug and alcohol use before they encounter a situation where substances are present.

### **Show them you care about their health, wellness, and success.**

Because there are many dangerous short- and long-term effects to drugs and alcohol use, express to them you care about their future and only want the best for their well-being. Keep the conversations positive. Talk about how excited you are for their future and you don't want to see something like using drugs or alcohol to get in their way and control their lives.

### **Talk frequently, be clear and consistent.**

Instead of sitting down for one big talk, use opportunities as they arise to have little talks - such as something happening on a TV show or a school event. As you continue to talk with children as they grow, be sure you've established clear family rules about alcohol and substance use and follow through when the rules are broken.

### **Know the facts about vaping, drugs, and alcohol.**

Do your research before you talk to your child, so when it's time to have a conversation, you can provide information on why drug and alcohol use has consequences.

### **Scare tactics don't work.**

The use of fear alone will not prevent your child from trying risky behaviors. These kinds of warnings can send unintended messages, or your children will dismiss these messages to avoid the feeling of fear. Research shows that because their brains aren't fully developed like adults, youth are prone to high-risk behaviors and are naturally hardwired to defend against negative messaging.



Most youth at this age aren't concerned about long-term consequences of drug use such as the possibility of interfering with brain development or limited academic achievement. They are concerned about consequences like embarrassing themselves, smelling bad, disappointing people they care for, and getting into trouble.

### **Learn more:**

[www.mental-health-recovery.org](http://www.mental-health-recovery.org)

Questions or concerns?

Call helpline at 330-678-HELP

***Did you know that the majority of young people do not use alcohol or other drugs?***



***It's true. In survey after survey of Ohio youth, the results show that the majority of young people make the healthy choice to avoid drinking, vaping, prescription drug misuse, and other drug use.***

### **Other ways to keep youth drug-free:**

*Be a role model:* Do not make drinking the sole focus of social gatherings when children are present. Explain why adults may choose to drink alcohol, but children may not. For example, it is illegal for children, and it is harmful for their growing brain.

*Be home when your teen has a party.* If they go out, stay up until they return home.

*Host safe, alcohol/drug free activities for youth.* Never allow underage drinking in your home. It is illegal to allow another person's child to consumer alcohol, even with their parent's permission.