

Tips for talking to your children about drugs

1. Don't panic

If you find out that your child has tried drugs, your first reaction may be anger or panic. Wait until you're calm before discussing it with them, and show them love and concern rather than anger.

2. Do your homework about drugs

Make sure you know enough about drugs to talk to your child in an informed way.

3. Pick a good time

Don't try to talk to your child about drugs before they rush off to school, for example. Or, if they're using drugs, don't confront them when they're high. It may help to do it when the subject comes up during TV programmes or in the news. Mealtimes can also be a good time for chatting. It's often easier to have a conversation side-by-side, such as when you're driving in the car, washing up together or preparing food.

4. Let them know your values

It's important for your children to know where you stand on drug taking. Be clear about your opinions on drugs and let them know your boundaries. For example, you may say that you don't want any drugs in the house.

5. Avoid scare tactics

Teenage children often know more about drugs than you do, so there's no point in saying, "Smoking cannabis will kill you". Pointing out that cannabis can cause mental health problems, especially if you start smoking it in your teens, may be more of a deterrent.

6. Know your child's friends

Get to know your child's friends. Invite them to the house and take an interest in what's going on in their lives. If you have good reason to think your child's friends are involved in drugs, you may need to support your child to find new friends.

7. Let them know you're always there for them

If your child knows you're there for them whatever, they're more likely to be honest with you. They won't just tell you what they think you want to hear.

8. Listen as well as talk

Don't preach or make assumptions about what your child does. Let them tell you about their experiences, and try to listen without judging.

9. Don't give up

Don't be put off talking if they argue, get embarrassed or storm off. Parents' opinions matter to their children. Go back to the subject when they're calmer.

10. Let them be responsible for their actions

You're trying to help your child make good choices in life about drugs. But only they can say no to drugs. Make sure they know you support them, but it's up to them to make positive decisions.

11. Be realistic

Lots of teenagers experiment with drugs. But only a small proportion of those who experiment will develop a drug problem.

Source: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/talking-about-drugs-with-your-child/>