



## Why Small Conversations Make a Big Impression

Short, frequent discussions can have a positive impact on your child’s decisions about alcohol and other drug use.



Talking with your child about the risks and dangers of underage drinking and other drug use at an early age is the first step toward keeping them substance-free. But as they enter middle school and

high school, the pressure to try alcohol and other drugs increases. It’s important to continue these conversations throughout the middle school, high school, and young adult years. The lessons they learn early on will influence the decisions they make about substance use in adulthood.

Ongoing conversations build an open, trusting relationship with your child.

Kids are more likely to avoid drinking alcohol and using other drugs when they have a strong, trusting relationship with their parents or caregivers. Get into the habit of chatting with your child every day. It will make it easier to have

serious conversations about underage drinking and other drug use and will encourage them to come to you for advice.

Lots of little talks are more effective than one “big talk.”



Sitting down for the “big talk” about alcohol and other drugs can be intimidating for both you and your child. Try using everyday opportunities to talk with them—in the car, on the bus or subway, during dinner, or while watching TV or playing video games. Having many little talks takes the pressure off trying to get all the information out in one lengthy discussion, and they will be less likely to tune you out.

Make your views and rules clear.

Take the time to discuss your beliefs and expectations about underage drinking and other drug use with your child. Review the risks and dangers of drinking alcohol and using other drugs so you’re prepared to answer any of their questions. Be honest and express a clear, consistent message that all substance use is unacceptable. When they feel that you’re being real and honest with them, they’ll be more likely to respect your rules.

## As kids get older, the conversation changes.

What you say to a 9-year-old about alcohol and other drugs is different from what you say to a 15-year-old. Make sure the information you share with your child is age-appropriate. As they get older, you can give them more information and reinforce your rules and expectations. As they become a young adult, shift the conversation based on their level of understanding about the consequences and long-term effects of alcohol and other drug use.

## Remember that the conversation goes both ways.



Although sharing your thoughts about underage drinking and other drug use is essential, it's also important to hear your child's point of view. Give them the opportunity to ask questions, and listen to what they have to say. Kids with parents and caregivers who listen to their feelings and concerns are more likely to say “no” to alcohol and other drugs.

## What you do is just as important as what you say.

In addition to talking with your child about these issues, it's also important to set a good example. If you choose to drink alcohol around them, be sure to do so in moderation and avoid driving or getting in a car if the driver has been drinking or using other drugs. Know where you keep all of your alcohol and prescription medication, and always remind them that these substances are off-limits.



## Use Screen4Success if you think your child needs more support.

Having frequent conversations with kids about the risks and dangers of underage drinking and other drug use can help keep them safe. But how do you know if your child needs more support, and where do you go to find it? Screen4Success will help you better understand your child's health, wellness, and wellbeing and find resources to help address their needs.

## HELPFUL RESOURCES



Use and share Screen4Success.



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Subscribe and listen to the “What Parents Are Saying” podcast.



Download and order “Talk. They Hear You.” materials online from SAMHSA Store.



Download and read other SAMHSA underage drinking prevention and reduction materials.



Download and read full “Tips for Teens” fact sheet series.