Why You Should Talk With Your Child About Alcohol and Other Drugs

Parents Have a Significant Influence in Their Children's Decisions to Experiment With Alcohol and Other Drugs

One of the most influential factors during a child's adolescence is maintaining a strong, open relationship with a parent.[1] When parents create supportive and nurturing environments, children make better decisions. Though it may not always seem like it, children really hear their parents' concerns, which is why it's important that parents discuss the risks of using alcohol and other drugs.

It's Better to Talk Before Children Are Exposed to Alcohol and Other Drugs

If you talk to your kids directly and honestly, they are more likely to respect your rules and advice about alcohol and drug use. When parents talk with their children early and often about alcohol and other drugs, they can protect their children from many of the high-risk behaviors associated with using these drugs.

Some Children May Try Alcohol or Other Drugs at a Very Young Age

It is never too early to talk to your children about alcohol and other drugs. Children as young as nine years old already start viewing alcohol in a more positive way, and approximately 3,300 kids as young as 12 try marijuana each day.[2] Additionally, about

five in 10 kids as young as 12 obtain prescription pain relievers for nonmedical purposes.[3] The earlier you start talking, the better.

The Older Kids Get, the More Likely They'll Try Alcohol or Drugs

About 10 percent of 12-year-olds say they have tried alcohol, but by age 15, that number jumps to 50 percent. Additionally, by the time they are seniors, almost 70 percent of high school students will have tried alcohol, half will have taken an illegal drug, and more than 20 percent will have used a prescription drug for a nonmedical purpose.[4] The sooner you talk to your children about alcohol and other drugs, the greater chance you have of influencing their decisions about drinking and substance use.[5]

Not Talking About Alcohol and Other Drugs Still Sends Kids a Message

Kids don't always have all the facts when it comes to alcohol and other drugs. If parents don't talk about the risks of underage drinking and substance use, their kids might not see any harm in trying alcohol and other substances. Having a conversation allows parents to set clear rules about what they expect from their kids when it comes to alcohol and other drugs.

References

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SMA-18-5076