



CHILDREN ARE SMART. THEY HAVE ACCESS TO MORE INFORMATION NOW THAN EVER BEFORE.

THEY REPORT THAT MUCH OF WHAT THEY KNOW, THEY LEARN ONLINE. FROM THE MEDIA AND FROM THEIR PEERS.

THEY ALSO REPORT THAT THEY WISH THEY HAD MORE INFORMATION THEY COULD TRUST, FROM PEOPLE THEY TRUST, TO INFORM THE DECISIONS THEY MAKE EACH DAY.

SOMETIMES STARTING A CONVERSATION ON A SENSITIVE TOPIC CAN BE AWKWARD.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN GET THE CONVERSATION STARTED.





MARIJUANA'S NEGATIVE EFFECTS
ON ATTENTION, MEMORY AND
LEARNING CAN LAST DAYS AND
WEEKS, RESULTING IN POOR
ACADEMIC SUCCESS. RESEARCH
SHOWS THAT REGULAR USE
DURING FORMATIVE TEEN YEARS
CAN PERMANENTLY LOWER IQ.

AS MARIJUANA USE HAS
BECOME MORE COMMON,
THE PERCEPTION OF RISK
HAS DECREASED, DESPITE
EVIDENCE THAT USE
PERMANENTLY AFFECTS THE
DEVELOPING TEEN BRAIN.



PARENTS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT ALCOHOL AND MARIJUANA USE BECAUSE...





ALCOHOL ABUSE IS A LEADING CAUSE OF PREVENTABLE DEATH.

USE OVER TIME
CONTRIBUTES TO BREAST
CANCER, LIVER DISEASE,
AND HEART DISEASE.

USE OF ALCOHOL AND
MARIJUANA DURING
ADOLESCENCE MAKES THE
POTENTIAL FOR ADDICTION
5 TIMES MORE LIKELY THAN
FOR A PERSON WHO DELAYS
USE UNTIL AFTER THE BRAIN
IS FULLY DEVELOPED.



19,000 YOUTH ARE DELIVERED TO THE E.R. EACH YEAR FOR ALCOHOL-RELATED INJURIES.

YOUTH WHO DRINK ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE THE PERPETRATORS AND VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT.



USE OF MARIJUNA AND ALCOHOL INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF OTHER RISK-TAKING BEHAVIORS, SUCH AS RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIOR. TEENS EXPERIENCE A LOT OF
PEER AND ACADEMIC PRESSURE.
SUBSTANCE USE MAY SEEM LIKE
AN EASY WAY TO RELAX, BUT
STUDIES SHOW THAT ABUSE OF
ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS
CONTRIBUTES TO DEPRESSION,
ANXIETY, SUICIDE AND HOMICIDE.

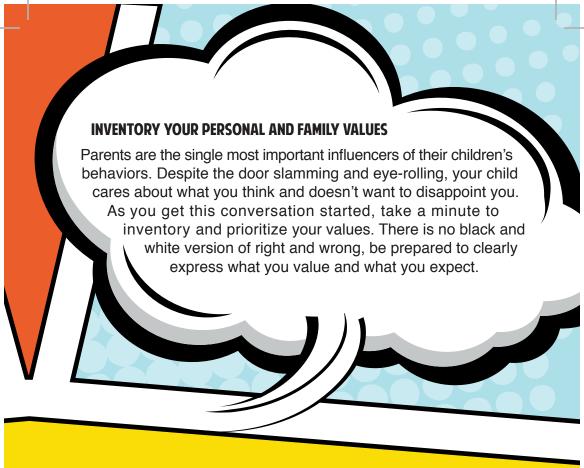


set the tone

In order to have productive conversations with your children, they need to know that it is safe for them to talk honestly about their experiences. Be calm and prepared to listen, not lecture. You can explain that you understand and appreciate that it's normal for teens to explore, experiment, and seek excitement and adventure. It is the brain's natural way to launch them into adulthood. The reason for your conversation is to better understand their experiences and to help them to develop strategies for staying safe and healthy, while fully exploring this exciting time in their lives.

WHAT NOT TO DO

We find that teens can easily express what parents are doing wrong! Although every child and family is different, here are a few things we've heard you should avoid.



DON'T GANG UP ON ME.

The mom and dad, "two-on-one" conversation puts them on the defensive. Teens feel most comfortable discussing complicated topics in a group of family members or one-on-one with a parent.

DON'T TALK TO US BY APPOINTMENT.

When parents say, "We need to have a talk," the tone and anticipation builds pressure and discomfort. Just ease into it at dinner...when they're distracted by food.

DON'T ASK WHAT OUR FRIENDS ARE DOING.

They know you won't approve and they don't want to tattle. Anyway, you're not there to collect evidence. You're there to show that you're there...always, no matter what.

DON'T WAIT FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT.

Anytime is a good time to talk to your child, comfortably, casually and with the best intentions of showing them love and support.



maximize existing opportunities

The most productive conversation is one that evolves naturally. Here are a few examples of teachable moments. You don't have to have all the "right" answers to the questions. The point is to explore ideas and come to the answer that's right for you and your family.

A FICTIONAL CHARACTER FROM A SHOW OR MOVIE IS SHOWN DRINKING AND SMOKING.

Ask: "Did you think that was cool, or did it seem to you that the character might have a problem? Does what you see in the media influence you? Who do you see or know that models good habits and qualities?"



A POPULAR PUBLIC FIGURE, SUCH AS AN ACTOR, IS REPORTEDLY A BIG PARTIER.

Ask: "What do you think makes this person popular? Do you or your peers admire them for their values, or is it just their fame and affluence that are impressive? Should we idolize people who can't cope without abusing substances?"

A PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE IS IN THE NEWS FOR TAKING DRUGS.

Ask: "How do you feel about professional athletes using illegal substances? Do you see how illegal use of substances can hurt a person's career and reputation?"

KIDS FROM YOUR COMMUNITY GET CAUGHT WITH DRUGS OR ALCOHOL BY THEIR SCHOOL OR THE POLICE.

Ask: "Do you know why marijuana and alcohol can be so dangerous for teens? Do you know that you can also get into trouble by being with a user, even if you are not using? Are you aware of the possible consequences? Why do you think teens use? If you were in a situation where people were using, would you feel comfortable making the healthy choice?"

A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IS STRUGGLING WITH ADDICTION.

Ask: "Do you understand how difficult the disease of addiction is to overcome? How have you noticed that one person's drug or alcohol problem can affect a lot of other people? Can you say some ways in which our family has been touched by addiction?"

YOUR CHILD IS TRANSITIONING TO A NEW SCHOOL OR NEIGHBORHOOD.

Ask: "Are you ready for this big step? Changes like this are really exciting, but can be stressful and come with challenges. What do you think some challenges may be? Do you have some ideas for how to manage your stress in a healthy way?"

YOUR CHILD SEEMS TO HAVE MADE A DRAMATIC SHIFT IN FRIENDSHIPS OR SOCIAL HABITS.

Ask: "Is something up with your old friends, or are you just including new friends? What do you like about these new people? What are the qualities you see in them that you appreciate? What kinds of things do they like to do?"

YOU SUSPECT THAT YOUR CHILD OR HIS SOCIAL CIRCLE ARE EXPERIMENTING WITH DRUGS OR ALCOHOL.

Ask: "Do you understand how serious this can be for your health and future? I'll be sad and worried if you've chosen to drink or use other substances. Do you know why? Although some kids use substances, most don't. Can I help you to create a strategy for negotiating the pressure to experiment with alcohol and drugs? How can you gracefully decline when your peers are succumbing to the pressure to drink or use drugs?"

YOUR CHILD IS VISIBLY OVERWHELMED BY THE DEMANDS OF SCHOOL OR OTHER ACTIVITIES.

Ask: "What are some healthy ways you like to blow off steam and relax? Can we help you to eliminate some of the things you're doing that don't make you happy? Of the things that you enjoy doing, which make you feel confident? Are there ways that I can support healthy choices so you aren't at risk for alcohol or drug use?"

YOUR CHILD INDICATES THAT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND THEIR EXPERIENCES (SIGH, SLAM, EYE-ROLL).

Ask: "In what ways do you think being a teen today is similar or different than when I was your age? Can you help me to better understand what you're experiencing? Are there things I've done that made you feel misunderstood? How can I do better?"

substance abuse risks

Teens are more likely to use and abuse substances when they are exposed to certain risk factors. When faced with those factors, a parent or trusted adult may balance them with protective factors. The presence of risk factors does not mean that a person will abuse drugs, but identifying the risks can help adults to implement strategies for reducing risk.

risk factors

protective factors

OME

A FAMILY HISTORY OF SUBSTANCE
ABUSE OR AN ENVIRONMENT IN
WHICH THERE IS VIOLENCE AND
CONFLICT, UNREALISTIC
EXPECTATIONS, ISOLATION OR
POOR SUPERVISION

A POSITIVE AND LOVING BOND WITH YOUR CHILD, AND CLEAR STANDARDS FOR BEHAVIOR

ONGOING ACADEMIC OR SOCIAL FAILURE, LAX OR INCONSISTENT SCHOOL SUPERVISION, OR EASY ACCESS TO SUBSTANCES THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
HEALTHY SCHOOL RULES AND
VARIED OPPORTUNITIES FOR
SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC
SUPPORT AND SUCCESS

EERS

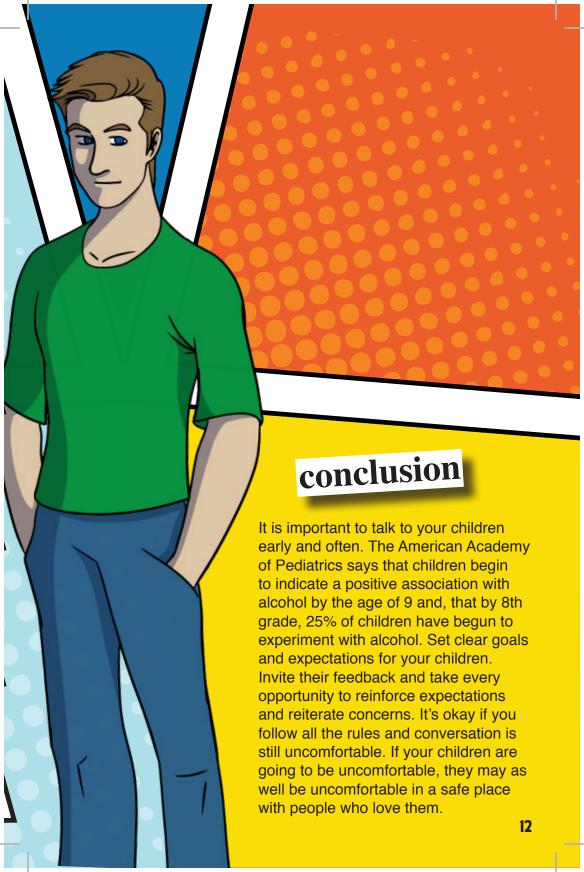
FRIENDS THAT ARE IMPULSIVE AND OFTEN
IN TROUBLE AND HAVE NEGATIVE,
REBELLIOUS RELATIONSHIPS WITH
ADULTS; ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR SUCH
AS LYING, STEALING, OR FIGHTING

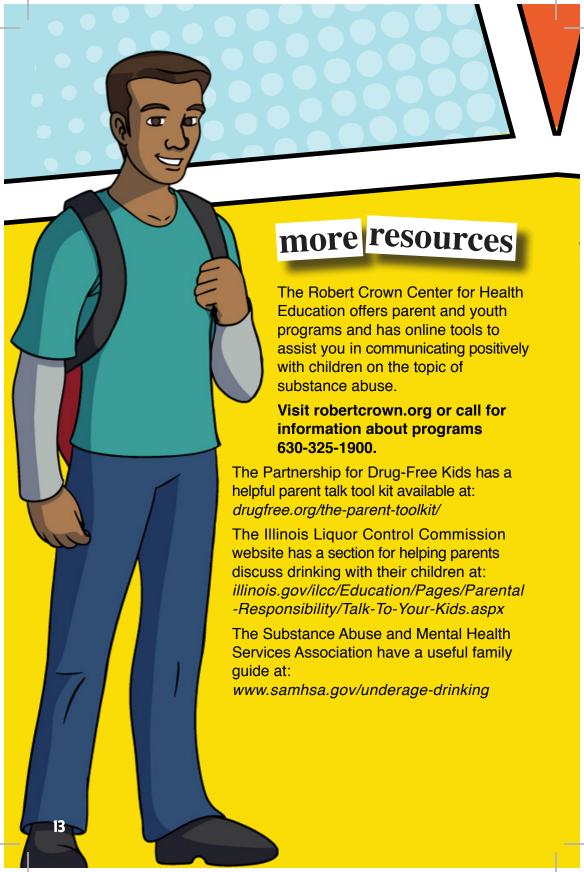
HEALTHY SOCIAL
OPPORTUNITIES;
REINFORCING THAT
USE OF DRUGS AND
ALCOHOL IS
UNACCEPTABLE

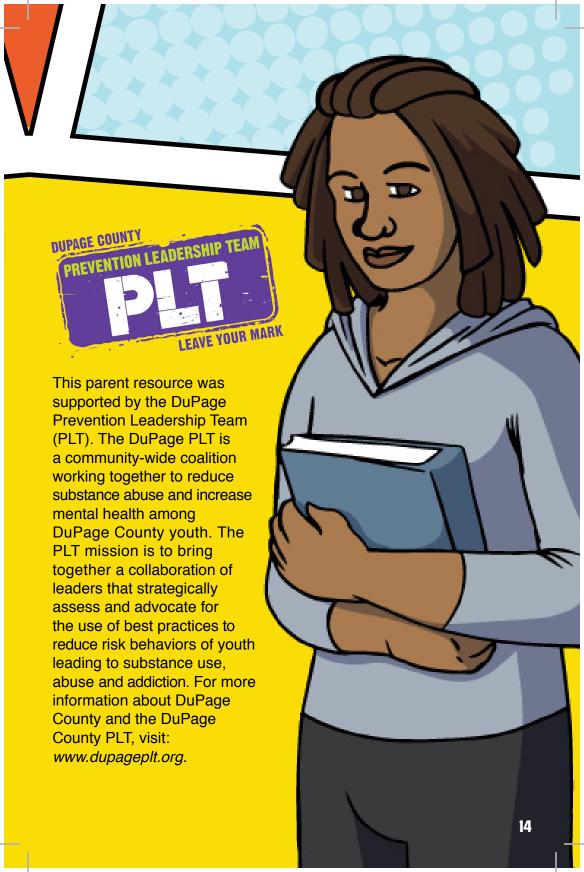


MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY
ACCEPT DRUG AND ALCOHOL
USE: THERE IS A HIGH RATE OF
UNEMPLOYMENT, ECONOMIC
HARDSHIP, TRANSIENCE,
DISCRIMINATION

DECREASE ACCESSIBILITY TO
DRUGS AND ALCOHOL AND
ESTABLISH SOBER EXPECTATIONS;
HAVE HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR
HEALTHY COMMUNITY
INVOLVEMENT









The Robert Crown Center is the largest provider of health education for school-age children and young adults (Grades Pre K - 12) in the Chicago metropolitan area. Each year we reach approximately 90,000 students from over 600 schools in eight counties in the Chicago metropolitan area. Professional health educators teach a full spectrum of wellness programs that meet community needs, state learning objectives and national health priorities. Scientifically-accurate, age-appropriate programs are offered in three topic areas:

- Family Life (puberty, reproduction and teen sexual health)
- Substance Abuse Prevention (abuse of alcohol, tobacco, drugs)
- General Health (nutrition, body systems)

In addition to providing these core programs, RCC has a strong history of working with community partners to respond to emerging health issues. In recent years, programs have been developed for the special needs community, the non-English speaking population and to address the growing heroin epidemic. These innovative, interactive programs are proven to increase social-emotional skill building and scientific understanding of the sort of risk-taking behavior that can negatively impact health. Research shows that students are better prepared to make healthy choices after receiving these prevention programs.