

Help Your Kids Turn Down Drugs

There's almost no way you can shield your kids from finding out that illegal drugs, alcohol and tobacco exist — but you can help your child reject offers to try substances.

Before you work with your child on this issue, there's one thing you need to know: Kids don't usually get drugs from strangers. They get drugs from their friends. And that's the toughest issue of all — as you have to teach your kids that it's OK to say no to their friends, to the people they look to for validation, recognition, and fun. Strongly encourage them to avoid friendships with kids who use drugs.

A great way to help kids prepare for drug-related situations is by acting out — also known as role playing — scenarios with them. It's important to practice these scenarios with your kids before these situations really happen.

Remember, teens rarely verbally pressure or chastise each other into drinking or doing drugs — the offer is usually casual. "Peer pressure" is more internal. For example your child sees other teens that she wants to be friends with enjoying a drink or a drug and she feels like she wants to be part of it too. Or she may be afraid that the other teens will think she is less cool if she doesn't join them. Try to include this dynamic when you act out scenarios with your teens.

Use the following two scenarios as a starting point, but create new ones based on your child's life:



Scenario #1

Your son goes to a party at his friend's house and someone has brought a bottle of vodka or some beer. Lots of the guys there, including older high school guys, are drinking and they ask him, "You want some?" Take the role of the older teens or of your son's friends who casually offer a can of beer or a shot of vodka to your son.

Help your child develop firm but friendly responses. Reassure him that his friends will respect his decision not to get involved. Remind him that people are pretty focused on themselves, which leaves much less space for them to be concerned with what others do.



Possible answers:

"No, thanks."

“No, I’m not into that.”

“Nah man, I’m ok. Thanks.”

“No, thanks. I’m on the _____ team and I don’t want to risk it.”

“Nah, I’m training for _____.”

“No. I gotta go in a bit.”



Scenario #2

Your daughter is at her friend’s house with a few close pals and one of them pulls out a joint. Take the role of her friend offering it to the group.

Again, help her develop firm but friendly responses and reassure her that good friends will respect her decision not to try it.



Possible answers:

“No, thanks. I’m not into that.”

“No, thanks. I’m on the _____ team and I don’t want to risk it.”

“Nah, I’m training for _____.”

“Nah. I get tested at work/school and I don’t want to risk it.”

“No, thanks. I don’t like how it makes people not act themselves.”

“No, I’m trying to stay healthy for _____.”

Your kids will need to be prepared for protests from their peers. Suggest that they meet them with a “broken record” technique — just keep repeating the reason they don’t want to drink, smoke, or do drugs. Then they can try to change the subject or, if all else fails, they should say they have to go home or ask their friend to leave.