



Parents. The Anti-Drug

Bannockburn, Deerfield, Highland Park, Highwood, and Riverwoods

September 29, 2009

Dear Parent,

Talking with your teen about alcohol and drugs can be tough. Here are a couple helpful thoughts and resources.

Answering the Question: “Did you drink or do drugs?”

For many parents, a teen’s “Did you ever use drugs?” question is a tough one to answer. Unless the answer is no, many parents stutter and stammer through a response and leave their teens feeling like they haven’t learned anything—or, even worse, that their parents are hypocrites. Yes, it’s difficult to know what to say. You want your teens to follow your rules and you don’t want them to hold your history up as an example to follow—or as a tool to use against you. The conversation doesn’t have to be awkward, and you can use it to your advantage by creating a teachable moment.

- Many experts recommend that you give an honest answer—but you don’t have to tell your teen every detail. As with conversations about sex, some details should remain private.
- Avoid giving your teen more information than she asked for. Ask her a lot of questions to make sure you understand exactly why she’s asking about your drug history. Limit your response to that exchange of information.
- For more information about this topic and helpful strategies, please visit TimeToTalk.org.

Your teen comes home smelling of alcohol or marijuana for the first time.

“The response should be measured, quiet and serious—not yelling, shouting or overly emotional,” says parenting expert Marybeth Hicks. *“Your child should realize that this isn’t just a frustrating moment like when he doesn’t do a chore you asked for; it’s very big, very important, and very serious.”*

Have this discussion without getting mad or accusing your teen of being stupid or bad. Knowing that teens are naturally private about their lives, try to find out what’s going on in your teen’s life. What is he doing? When was the last time she used? Did he do anything that he regrets? Try not to make the discussion an inquisition, rather simply try to connect with your teen. Find out if friends or others offered your teen drugs at a party or school. Did they try it just out of curiosity, or did they take the initiative to use marijuana or alcohol for some other reason? That alone will be a signal to your teen that you take your responsibility as a parent seriously and that you will exercise your parental rights.

Resources

There are lots of resources for parents. Along with your teen’s principal and teachers, school social workers and psychologists are incredibly helpful. Not only can they work with you, but they also have access to local professionals outside of the school.

When searching for information about prevention strategies or use/abuse, we suggest starting here:

Partnership for a Drug-Free America – www.drugfree.org (Tips on [Raising Drug-Free Teens](#))

Parents. The Anti-Drug – www.theantidrug.org

Stop Underage Drinking - <http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/default.aspx>

We encourage everyone to **Take Time to Talk** every day, and especially on October 4, 2009. Do you have a question for us? Contact us at Parents.TheAntiDrug@gmail.com.

Your Friends at...

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