

# COMMUNICATION

No loving relationship can exist without communication. Teens believe they have valuable things to say and, when a parent listens genuinely, it helps self-esteem and confidence. **The most important thing to remember when it comes to talking about difficult subjects like drinking and drugs is that it's not a five-minute "talk"** — it's about building an ongoing dialogue. As your children grow up, they will need more and more information, so start early and build on the conversation as your teen matures.

Virtually all parents in America (**98 percent**) say they've talked with their children about drugs; however, only **27 percent** of teens (roughly one in four) say they're learning a lot at home about the risks of drugs, according to a national study by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America (PDFA).

There aren't enough hours in the day. Sometimes it's frustrating how few chances there are to have conversations about drugs with our children. In our busy culture, with families juggling the multiple demands of work, school, after-school activities, and religious and social commitments, it can be a challenge for parents and children to be in the same place at the same time.

Yet the better you communicate, the more at ease your teen will feel about discussing drugs and other sensitive issues with you.

## HERE ARE SOME TIPS:

- **Be absolutely clear with your kids that you don't want them using drugs.** Ever. Anywhere. Don't leave room for interpretation. And talk often about the dangers and results of drug and alcohol abuse. Once or twice a year won't do it. Get more specifics on [setting the rules](#).
- **Be a better listener.** Ask questions – and encourage them. Paraphrase what your teen says to you. Ask for their input about family decisions. Showing your willingness to listen will make your teen feel more comfortable about opening up to you.
- **Give honest answers.** Don't make up what you don't know; offer to find out. If asked whether you've ever taken drugs, let them know what's important: That you don't want them using drugs. Get the facts on drugs by visiting the [Drug Information](#) section.
- **Use TV reports, anti-drug commercials, or school discussions** about drugs to help you introduce the subject in a natural, unforced way. Get more specifics on using [teachable moments](#).
- **Don't react in a way that will cut off further discussion.** If your teen makes statements that challenge or shock you, turn them into a calm discussion of why your teen thinks people use drugs, or whether the effect is worth the risk.
- **Role-play with your teen** and practice ways to refuse drugs in different situations. Acknowledge how tough these moments can be. Get more specifics on using [role-playing](#).

This article is provided to you from [www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com). If you would like more information on how to talk to your children please visit the website or contact Lisa Cannon, Gratiot County Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator at 989-462-0142 or [lisa@linkforfamilies.org](mailto:lisa@linkforfamilies.org).