



HOW TO TALK ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE: Start the Conversation, Stop the Risk

Having conversations about substance use allows you to learn more about different types of substances and their impact, talk through potential risks and find ways to minimize harm from substance use. These conversations are also an opportunity to establish attitudes and boundaries regarding substance use.



How to Talk to a Friend Who is Using Substances

Be Kind and Accepting

Even if you don't accept their behavior, show that you care by speaking with kindness and understanding. You want to use respectful language and empathize with their situation.

Listen More than You Talk

- Try to listen without interrupting or judging the person.
- Offer a non-judgmental listening ear.
- For example, you can ask, "How can I support you?"

Set Clear Boundaries

Communicate through your actions as well as your words. Remain consistent in your message so that they don't misunderstand what you want or expect of them.



How to Talk to a Family Member Who is Using Substances

Express How You Feel

- Explain your concerns using "I" statements.
- Example: "I feel, I am concerned about..."
- Explain how you feel. "I feel..."
- "When this happens, I feel..."

Listen

- It is important to listen non-judgmentally.
- Offer support where you can, discuss treatment options if they are open to it, and let them know you are there for them.



How to Talk to a Child Who is Using Substances

Create a Safe Space to Talk

Remain calm, put phones away, consider writing down your goals for the conversation before sitting down with your child.

Things to Consider

- Express how much you care. Explain that the reason you're talking and asking questions is because you want them to be healthy, safe and happy.
- Let your child know you value their honesty and are willing to listen without judgment.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Let them know you're listening.
- Offer empathy and compassion.
- Demonstrate understanding, and show your child you get it.
- Clearly state any evidence you've found.
- Give lots of praise and positive feedback.
- Reassure your child that you can always be counted on for support and that your child can confide in you whenever needed.
- Thank your child for talking with you.