

SUBSTANCE USE & MENTAL HEALTH

Having those difficult
conversations with your child



Communication tips

1 Talk less, listen more

2 Ask open-ended
questions

3 Use "I" statements

"I know you may feel..."

"I understand."

"I feel scared when I do not know where you
are at night"

4 No distractions:
put your phone away

Your child's brain

Large changes in brain development leading to more risk taking, stronger emotions, & impulsivity

For healthy brain development, promote...



Even though your child may be distancing from you, they still need encouragement and support for their decisions

Your child's brain

During adolescence, there are significant developments in the...

- Limbic system (emotions and hormones)
- Prefrontal cortex (decision making)
- Increase of neural connections & eliminations of those not used

TIPS

- ☐ Be patient
- ☐ Give them time to think
- ☐ Have clear expectations
- ☐ Encourage careful decision making



All about alcohol

1. **Cerebral cortex:** lose emotional control & blurry vision
2. **Hippocampus:** impaired memory & blackouts
3. **Cerebellum:** worsened balance & coordination
4. **Central nervous system:** slurred speech & slower reactions



1.5 oz liquor
40% alcohol



12 oz beer
5% alcohol



12 oz hard seltzer
4-6% alcohol

All about alcohol

**ALCOHOL IS THE MOST
USED & ACCESSIBLE
SUBSTANCE FOR TEENS**

Risks of addiction

Genetic predisposition?

Lack coping skills?

Peer pressure?

Poor modeling from parents and
family?

More on marijuana

- **Hippocampus:** poor memory storage and recall
- **Hypothalamus:** increases appetite/cravings
- **Cerebral cortex:** alters perceptual awareness & thinking
- **Cerebellum:** slows coordination and muscle control



For discussion

If there's drinking or marijuana at the party, what will you do?

Can you tell me about his/her parents?

What do you think about marijuana?

More on marijuana

**TODAY MORE TEENS
SMOKE MARIJUANA THAN
CIGARETTES**



Smoked: many vapes now contain marijuana



Edibles: marijuana is often put into cookies or sweet treats



Oils: this form has the highest level of THC which contributes to paranoia and hallucinations

What about vapes?



Nicotine dependence disrupts impulse control, mood, and attention



Increases risk for anxiety and depression



Exposes you to harmful chemicals and metals

What's in it?

- Highly addictive nicotine
- Various metals
- Often water to create the vapor
- Flavoring

Excuses to use

Your child may be nervous to say “no” when offered a substance, these reasons can be used instead!

“My mom is up waiting for me”

“That stuff makes me feel sick”

“I’ll get kicked off the team”

“I have to do ___ tomorrow”

“I’m not into that”



Oh no, opioids

Painkillers such as Oxycontin,
Percocet, & Morphine



Fentanyl

50x more potent than heroin

100x more potent than morphine

Often laced with other drugs

For discussion

Why the interest in opioids?

Are you aware of the opioid reversal spray,
Narcan?

Opioids are unsafe when not prescribed.

Addiction awareness

**90% of addictions begin with
teenage substance use**

The earlier someone uses substances, the
more likely they are to...
struggle in school,
have unprotected sex,
drive while intoxicated,
and be victims of violence.



Talk with your child about their use

Discuss contraception

Always have a designated driver

A lot of anxiety

About 1 in 5 children struggle with their mental health, know some of the indicators!

Increased pressure to fit in

Irritability

Intense fear over life transitions

Trouble concentrating



**What
can you
do?**

Listen, offer support, a simple hug



Depression data

SIGNS

Low self esteem

Often unhappy

Mood swings

Change in sleeping/eating

TIPS

Talk/vent about stress

Exercise

Eat a healthy meal

Try to follow a routine when feeling in a rut

13% of US teens said they had at least one major depressive episode.

If mental health is untreated, it can lead to substance misuse!

Social media & Substances



Youth often use substances in order to feel grown up or due to influence from peers. More independence is important yet must also include guidance on decision making.

Providing guidance

- 1 Listen, don't lecture! If you need clarification, ask questions.
- 2 Use terms like "healthy" vs "unhealthy" rather than "good" or "bad" for choices.
- 3 Avoid stigmatizing language. Focus on the unhealthy behavior rather than labeling a person.

Resources

Prevention Action Alliance (2014). *Empowering parents to raise their children to be substance free.*
www.preventionactionalliance.org

NJ Prevent. (2023). *How to talk to your kids about the dangers of alcohol and drugs.* <https://publuu.com/flip-book/70106/539368/page/18>

Operation Parent. (2019). *The parent handbook.* Kentucky: Operation Parent