

PRESS RELEASE

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TALKING TO YOUR TEENS ABOUT ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JACKSON (March 10, 2010) –

If you Google the word “parenting” there are hundreds of sites that appear about helpful advice on nutrition, potty training, sibling conflicts, fun family activities, nurturing a child’s creativity, manners and family friendly pets. Most parenting sites offer you step-by-step guides and “how to” advice that’s easy to follow and even easier to track the results. For example, if you’re looking for advice on potty training, several websites offer clear “how to” advice that is consistent among the various sites. However, if you’re looking for advice on how to talk to your kids about alcohol and other drugs, the advice varies among the sites and it’s not always clear. One thing that is clear is that talking with your kids about drugs and alcohol can be difficult. It is a highly sensitive topic, but the possible consequences of drinking and taking drugs are far too dire for you to ignore.

Communicating your beliefs and values about drugs and alcohol gives your children a set of guidelines and limits to help them make healthy decisions. One "big talk" (like the "birds and bees" lecture) is not necessary and not the best route to follow; you can find many opportunities through everyday “teachable moments” to introduce your opinions, beliefs and questions. Television shows, news reports, movies and newspaper stories are good starting points for a conversation.

Parents shouldn’t wait for their children to approach them with questions about alcohol or drug use. Parental silence can often be interpreted as a lack of concern or a perception that it’s “just what kids do.” Kids want their parents to set limits and convey their expectations regarding alcohol or drug use. Bringing up the subject with your child helps you convey your values, set expectations about alcohol and drug use and open up a line of communication. More importantly, it allows you, as the parent, to provide and “out” for your child. When your child is approached and offered alcohol or drugs, he/she can use you as an excuse.

Discussions about these issues should begin in early childhood, long before the teenage years. Adolescence is not really the best time to begin talking to kids about drugs and alcohol because teens are already beginning to struggle with their parent's influence versus their peers. In spite of this, it's never too late to begin the dialogue.

"Just say no" shouldn’t be the only thing you tell your child when it comes to drugs and alcohol. It grossly simplifies a very complex issue. Parents should tell their kids what they are saying no to, what they gain from not drinking or using drugs and what the parents expect from them. Additionally, kids need help in avoiding situations where they may be tempted or pressured to drink or use drugs. This help includes:

Choosing friends that don’t drink or use drugs

Avoiding places where there may be alcohol or drugs

Making it clear where you stand (if you don’t want to drink or use drugs then tell your friends so that it reduces the likelihood that you will be asked)

More information about:

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