

# Tackling the drugs issue

It can be difficult to talk about drugs with your kids, but a few key pointers can make it a whole lot easier. Use these tips to help you talk openly about drugs with your child.

Drugs help and information

Call the Frank helpline on 0800 776600 for more information about drugs and the different options available for help and support. The confidential helpline is open every day, 24 hours a day.

## 1. Do your homework

Make sure you understand enough about drugs, including why your child might experiment with them, so you can talk to your child in an informed way. Understanding the facts about drugs will also help you keep calm in a crisis.

Get your information from reliable, credible sources such as the drugs website Frank.

## 2. Pick a good time

Don't do it before they rush off to school. Or, if they are using drugs, don't confront them when they're high on drugs.

## 3. Take the opportunities to talk when they arise

It may help to do it when the subject comes up during TV programmes or in the news. Mealtimes can also be a good forum for discussion.

## 4. Let them know your values and boundaries

It's important for your children to know where you stand on drug taking. Be clear about your opinions on drugs so that they know your boundaries.

## 5. It's never too early to talk about drugs

It's a good idea to start talking about the issue before they start experimenting with drugs. Make them feel strong and independent enough to be able to say no.

## 6. Avoid scare tactics

Your teenage children often know more people who take drugs than you do, so there's no point in saying, "Smoking cannabis will kill you". But if you point out that cannabis can cause mental health problems and make people forgetful and unmotivated, that will seem realistic to them and be more of a deterrent.

## 7. Know their friends

Peer pressure is the single most powerful factor in determining whether or not your child will take drugs. Get to know their friends. Invite them to the house and take an interest in what's going on in their lives. If you have good reason to think your child's friends are involved in drugs, you may need to support your child to find a new circle of friends.

## 8. Let them know you're always there for them

That way they can be honest with you about what they're up to and they won't just tell you what they think you want to hear.

## 9. Listen as well as talk

Talking to teenagers can be hard. When you're discussing drugs, don't preach or give a speech and don't make assumptions about what they know or do. Let your child tell you about his or her experiences. It's often easier not to talk face-to-face, but to have a conversation side-by-side, such as when you're driving in the car, washing up together or preparing food.

## 10. Persevere

Don't be provoked or put off talking if they argue, get embarrassed or storm off.

Parents' opinions matter to their children. Revisit the subject when they've calmed down.

## **11. Make sure they know that the responsibility for their actions rests with them.**

You're trying to help your child make good choices in life about drugs. But only they can say no to drugs. Be sure they know you support them, but emphasise that it's up to them to make the positive decision to be drug free.

## **12. Be realistic**

It's common for teenagers to experiment with drugs. Remember that only a small proportion of those who experiment will develop a drug problem.

## **13. Don't panic**

If you find out that your child has tried drugs, your first reaction may be anger or panic. Wait until you're calm before discussing it with them, and do so in a way that shows your love and concern rather than anger.

## **Getting help**

If your child is using drugs and you are worried, find out about the help available.

### **Get support for yourself**

If your child has drug problems, get support for yourself. Lots of organisations offer support to parents and carers, including:

#### **AL-ANON Family Groups UK and Eire**

Helps and supports families and friends of alcoholics.

Helpline: 020 7403 0888 (10am - 10pm)

Email: [enquiries@al-anonuk.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@al-anonuk.org.uk)

Website: [www.al-anonuk.org.uk](http://www.al-anonuk.org.uk)

#### **Families Anonymous**

A self-help group based on the 12-step programme for families of drug abusers.

Helpline: 0845 120 0660

Email: [office@famanon.org.uk](mailto:office@famanon.org.uk)

Website: [www.famanon.org.uk](http://www.famanon.org.uk)

#### **HopeUK**

Resources and training events for parents, teachers and youth leaders.

Tel: 020 7928 0848

Email: [a.wilson@hopeuk.org](mailto:a.wilson@hopeuk.org)

Website: [www.hopeuk.org](http://www.hopeuk.org)

#### **Parents Against Drug Abuse (PADA)**

Support for the parents and families of drug users.

Helpline: 08457 023 867

Email: [admin@pada.org.uk](mailto:admin@pada.org.uk)

Website: [www.btinternet.com/~padahelp](http://www.btinternet.com/~padahelp)

#### **ADFAM National**

Support for families affected by drugs and alcohol. Also runs direct support services at London prisons for families of prisoners with drug problems.

Tel: 020 7928 8898

Email: [admin@adfam.org.uk](mailto:admin@adfam.org.uk)

Website: [www.adfam.org.uk](http://www.adfam.org.uk)