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[http://expertbeacon.com/teach-your-teenager-how-avoid-substance-abuse/#.Unvtz\\_lebTo](http://expertbeacon.com/teach-your-teenager-how-avoid-substance-abuse/#.Unvtz_lebTo)

## Teach your teenager how to avoid substance abuse



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We are presently witnessing the highest number of adolescents in American history who are suffering from addiction. No parent wants their child to become an addict or alcoholic, and it is possible to prevent this. There are steps you can take to provide them with the best chance to avoid the trap that is substance use disorder.

### Do



- establish healthy bonds with your children
- make rules and enforce them
- set a good example
- get involved in your children's lives
- confront problems quickly

### Don't



- be a parent in denial
- assume your child is immune to temptation
- turn a blind eye
- ignore risk factors
- blame yourself

## **Do**

### **Do establish healthy bonds with your children**

Getting to know your children will help make it easier to guide them towards positive actions and situations. Talk with your child every day, asking them questions and their opinions to show that you value their thoughts. Listen to their issues, concerns and problems without judgement and let them know that you understand. Speak with your children as early as fourth grade about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse, as this is the time when they may first feel the peer pressure to experiment.

### **Do make rules and enforce them**

When you set harsh rules or no rules, children are more likely to try drugs or alcohol. Speak with your child about the rules, your expectations and the consequences. If and when a rule is broken make sure you enforce the consequences, it will teach the child they need to be responsible for their actions. When they follow the rules and meet expectations be sure to give praise.

### **Do set a good example**

Children often imitate adults and if the parent is a drug abuser or alcoholic, this can lead to experimenting and irresponsible behavior on the child's part. If you the parent are having your own struggles with drugs and/or alcohol these must be addressed immediately. A child raised in a dysfunctional family system has a much greater chance of developing a substance use problem later in life. Remember that you are setting the example and you need to avoid contradictions and be a positive role model.

### **Do get involved in your children's lives**

If you are involved in your child's life they are less likely to make poor and uneducated choices about drugs and alcohol. Spend time with your children every day, help them manage their problems by asking them what is wrong, letting them know you are there for them and providing full support.

### **Do confront problems quickly**

If you catch your child using drugs or alcohol do not wait to act. The younger a child tries drugs or alcohol the more likely they are to become addicts and alcoholics later in life. Research from a 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that 12.8 percent of people who tried marijuana at age 14 or earlier developed a drug or substance dependence, as opposed to 2.6 percent who tried marijuana at 18 or older. Initial drug use may be a personal choice, but becomes less of one as it is etched into the brain.

## Don't

### Do not be a parent in denial

No child is immune to substance abuse, no matter how smart, cool, athletic or popular they are. They are at risk if they start using. Never turn a blind eye or dismiss the warning signs that your child may be using. These signs may be behavior problems, poor grades, change in friendships, isolation, emotional distancing, depression or fatigue. More physical signs may be bloodshot eyes, runny nose, frequent sore throat and rapid weight loss.

### Do not assume your child is immune to temptation

Substance abuse happens in all types of families and all walks of life. Although a child raised in a dysfunctional family system has a much higher risk of developing an addiction, it can happen to anyone. Try to be knowledgeable and proactive about the risks. Educate your child to the best of your abilities and if necessary seek outside advice from a knowledgeable experienced professional.

### Do not turn a blind eye

If your child experiments and you find out, do not just chalk it up to kids being kids. This is probably the most dangerous thing you can do. Since this may be the beginning of a life-long issue you will need to address it immediately. Make sure they are aware of what the wrong-doing was and the consequences of it for the future. Do not be harsh or overbearing as this can alienate the child and oftentimes push them to experiment further.

### Do not ignore risk factors

Things such as family history, mental and behavioral issues, trauma and impulse control problems are all precursors to an addiction problem. Your children need wellness exams to be sure that no problems have arisen. Do not discount substance use by your child as a stage of development.

### Do not blame yourself

To a parent, if your child is failing you have failed. In the event that there is an issue do not view it as a failure on your part. Everyone makes mistakes. It is easy to forget that addiction is an illness and even easier to blame yourself for your child's illness. Internalizing your anger only fuels self-loathing and destroys self-esteem. Acknowledge your anger and deal with it appropriately.

## Summary



Hopefully this article has made it a little easier for you as a parent to understand how to better prevent your child from developing a substance addiction as they grow older. Raising a child can be one of the most difficult undertakings of your life, but being aware of a few key issues as they relate to addiction and abuse can help your child live a full, substance free life. Don't forget that if you feel you do not know the answer to an issue, seek experienced professional help.

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