

# INTERVENTION STRATEGIES: SAMPLE DIALOGUES

## **If your child asks: "You went through my stuff? Why were you snooping around?"**

- Defend your choice to look through your teen's things by expressing your concern for their health and safety.
- Say, "I'm sorry you feel that I broke your trust. But as a parent, my job is to keep you safe and healthy. That means I have to step in when I believe you're doing something unsafe."

## **If your child says, "You smoke/drink! You're such a hypocrite!"**

- Focus on the issue at hand you don't want YOUR TEEN using substances.
- Say you wish you had never started smoking because it's so hard to stop.
- Explain that it is legal for adults to drink, and it is illegal for people under 21 to drink because their brains aren't equipped to handle alcohol yet.
- If you are in recovery, say, "I love you too much to let you have the same problems I had and to experience that pain."

## **If your child says, "I've never used drugs! You're wrong"**

- Remain calm.
- Stay focused on your goal for the conversation.
- Say, "I see a lot of warning signs and I love you way too much to let anything happen to you. I need you to tell me what's going on so I can figure out how to help you. I have no intention of getting mad or punishing you."

## **If your child asks, "What's the big deal? You smoked pot/cigarettes/drank alcohol as a teenager?"**

- Don't let your past stop you from talking with your child about substance use.
- If you tried a substance as a teenager, be honest. Acknowledge that it was risky. Do your research on the substance(s) your teen is using and provide them with this information.
- Make sure to emphasize that we now know even more about the risks of marijuana/tobacco/alcohol and the developing brain

**Directly quoted from:** Partnership to End Addiction. (2023). *Having Tough Conversations*. <https://drugfree.org/article/having-tough-conversations/>

**For more information, visit:** [FrenchtownCommunityCoalition.com](https://FrenchtownCommunityCoalition.com)  
or [samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you](https://samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you)



## #1: DON'T REACT IMMEDIATELY!

Even if you find something, keep calm. Before confronting your teen, take some time to observe changes in their behavior and search for additional signs.

## #2: CREATE A SUPPORT SYSTEM

This is a stressful situation for both you and your partner, and you will need each other's support. Be sure to get on the same page to create a united front. Remind each other that nobody is to blame.

## #3: SET GOALS

Set a goal for each conversation. Chances are, your first discussion will not resolve all problems – and that's OKAY! By setting a goal, you will have a better idea on how to guide your discussion. Goals may include: setting and enforcing a curfew, meeting with an LAC or therapist, or stop attending parties.

### WHAT DO I DO IF I SUSPECT MY CHILD IS USING SUBSTANCES?

## #4: PREPARE FOR YOUR TEEN'S REACTION

Many teens aren't happy when approached about their substance use, and you probably won't be either. That's to be expected. What you might not expect is to be called a liar, a fake, or a snoop. Think about how you will handle these accusations if they arise. We provided some intervention strategies on the back of this sheet.

## #5: REMEMBER...

This is about your child's health and well-being, NOT about bad behavior and punishments. Remember to come from a place of love and concern, not anger. Keep a cool head and speak calmly instead of yelling. Be direct! Withhold judgment so your teen feels they can talk to you and tell you the truth.

## #6: TALK & LISTEN

When you meet with your teen, express how much you love and care about them. Explain that the reason you're talking with them is because you want them to be healthy, safe, and happy. Show empathy, ask open-ended questions, and let them know you're listening. Clearly state your evidence.

Most importantly, LISTEN! Listen to their words and their body language. Thank your child for taking the time to talk with you, even if the conversation didn't go as planned.