

# Protecting Our Children

IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS



## Underage drinking warning signs

The following is provided by [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

### WARNING SIGNS

Although the following signs may indicate a problem with alcohol or other drugs, some also reflect normal growing pains. Experts believe that a drinking problem is more likely if you notice several of these signs at the same time, if they occur suddenly, or if some of them are extreme in nature.

- Mood changes: flare-ups of temper, irritability, and defensiveness
- School problems: poor attendance, low grades, and/or recent disciplinary action
- Rebellion against family rules
- Friend changes: switching friends and a reluctance to let you get to know the new friends
- A "nothing matters" attitude: sloppy appearance, a lack of involvement in former interests, and general low energy
- Alcohol presence: finding it in your child's room or backpack or smelling alcohol on his or her breath
- Physical or mental problems: memory lapses, poor concentration, bloodshot eyes, lack of coordination, or slurred speech

### FINDING HELP

#### Do Not Play the Blame Game

It is hard for most parents to believe that their child might be caught up in underage alcohol use and in need of professional help. Do not feel bad if you did not see the warning signs until your child was in trouble or until someone told you about the problem. When most parents find out about their child's underage drinking, they feel shocked and stunned and wonder where they went wrong.

In getting help for a child who drinks, the first thing to do is try not to blame yourself or your child. The important thing is to act now to find the best available services to help your child stop using alcohol and begin building an alcohol-free future.

### Talk With People You Know

If you are seeking treatment for a child's mental health or substance abuse problem, you can start by talking with people you know such as family members, friends, school teachers, counselors, clergy, and your doctor. Your health insurance company can give you a list of mental health and substance abuse providers. If your employer has an employee assistance program, you can get a referral there. Your child's school may suggest a good substance abuse treatment program. If not, the school district is likely to have a substance abuse prevention and counseling program. Contact them for help.

### Contact a Professional

Your county's health department probably has substance abuse services and is another good source for information. The county agency may be called "alcohol and drug programs" or "behavioral health" or it may be in a mental health services division. A call to the county health agency's general information number should point you in the right direction.

### Find a Local Resource

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator (<http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/faq.htm>) includes a Quick Search feature (<http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/TreatmentLocator/faces/quickSearch.jspx>) to help you find details about drug and alcohol abuse treatment programs in your area.

## Alcohol and teenagers

Health experts warn that underage drinking is a major health concern. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism says alcohol is the most widely used substance among America's youth and can lead to enormous safety and health risks. Teens who drink with frequency can set themselves up for a host of negative outcomes.

•Alcohol is a depressant, which means it slows the functions of the central nervous system and can actually block some messages from reaching the brain. That can alter a person's perceptions, emotions and movement, says Nemours TeensHealth.

•Youth who drink may have higher rates of absences or lower grades in school.

•Alcohol usage over time can lead to social problems, such as fighting or lack of participation in youth activities.

•Consuming too much alcohol may lead teens to experience physical issues like hangovers.

•The CDC says alcohol can disrupt normal growth or sexual development.

•The CDC indicates frequent alcohol use among teens can contribute to increased risk of suicide and homicide.

•Underage binge drinking is associated with a higher risk of being the victim or perpetrator of interpersonal violence, which includes physical or sexual assault, according to a study published in 2019 in the Journal of Youth and Adolescence.

•The brain keeps developing into one's 20s. Alcohol can alter development, potentially affecting the brain's structure and function.

•Research shows that those who start drinking before the age of 15 are at a higher risk for developing alcohol use disorder later in life.

•Alcohol use can lower inhibitions, which can cause teens to make poor and risky decisions, like engaging in illegal activity or unprotected sexual relations.

Drinking at an early age and doing so frequently during the teenage years can set individuals on a course for health, developmental and even legal repercussions.

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# Parents can help kids struggling with social media

Social media is a big part of young people's lives. Psychology Today reports that social media use is now the most common activity children and teenagers engage in, with the majority of users accessing social media platforms several times each day through their personal cell phones.

Social media has its benefits, and being able to keep in touch with friends and family remotely was one of the saving graces in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic when people were isolating in their homes. But there's a dark side to social media as well. Recently leaked documents from Meta, the company that oversees social media giants Facebook and Instagram, suggest the company

has known for several years that its Instagram app is contributing to body image issues and other mental health problems for teens, particularly females. Social media platforms use algorithms to enhance users' engagement. Feeds may be driven toward polarizing topics or those that have the most shock value, further leading teens down a negative path.

The current tween and teen generation is faced with constant information being delivered right to their handheld devices. Children may not be developmentally ready for the immediate gratification that social media provides nor the constant onslaught of content. As a result, teens increasingly are becoming more irritable, hav-

ing trouble sleeping and are spending more time alone as a result of phone usage. The Harvard Graduate School of Education says recent studies have noted a significant uptick in depression and suicidal thoughts over the past several years for teens, especially those who spend multiple hours a day using screens.

There are steps parents can take to help tweens and teens who may be struggling and need assistance managing social media.

- **Set real limits.** The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health suggests that until meaningful government oversight is in place to police social media platforms, parents will have to set their own parameters for use. Putting phones down at meal times,

turning off alerts close to bedtime, and making certain days "a rest from technology" can help.

- **Block upsetting content.** It's a parent's job to be a parent, not a best friend. Giving in to requests to engage with certain social platforms, even when they do not align with one's beliefs or values, can be harmful. Set limits on which platforms children are allowed to use.

- **Regularly monitor kids' usage.** Parents should look through their kids' phones and accounts on a regular basis to see which sites are being visited and how kids are engaging with others. If social media is affecting a child's mental health, have him or her take a break or delete the account.



**MONITOR SOCIAL MEDIA.** There are steps parents can take to help tweens and teens who may be struggling and need assistance managing social media.

Social media is ever-present in kids' lives. Parents and other caregivers have to find a way to assist struggling

tweens and teens with social media so it does not become a detriment to their overall health.

# Signs your child might be experiencing bullying

Bullying continues to be a major problem across the country. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that one out of every five students reports being bullied, although many people do not admit to it occurring, so bullying might be even more prevalent than statistics indicate. The primary reasons for being bullied include physical appearance, race/ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, and sexual orientation.

In the past, bullying may have ceased when students left school. But since the internet and digital devices provide round-the-clock exposure and access, bullying now takes place even after school hours through social media posts and texts. Students who experience bullying may be susceptible to anxiety, depression, sleep difficulties, lower academic achievement, and dropping out of

school, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Discovering the signs of bullying early on may help students get the help they need. Parents and other adults may not be sure how to identify signs a child is being bullied. Here are seven signs that could indicate a child is being bullied.

1. **Reluctance to go to school:** Students being bullied may make excuses to stay home, such as saying they are sick. Frequent calls from the school nurse

for early pickups also may occur.

2. **Mood changes:** Children may appear sad, moody, teary, or depressed more often than usual.

3. **Changes in friendships:** Loss or changes of friends could be signs of bullying. A reluctance to hang out in a once familiar social circle could signal bullying is taking place within that group.

4. **Bad dreams or trouble sleeping:** Bullying could cause worry at night or subconsciously while a child is dreaming, inter-

rupting sleeping patterns.

5. **Intense emotional reactions:** Intense emotional reactions to school or social activities could be indicators that bullying is occurring. Although children may not always be able to articulate their feelings, excessive emotions concerning certain topics may be red flags.

6. **Signs of physical abuse:** By and large a majority of bullying tends to lean toward the verbal and emotional. However, *RaisingChildren.net*, an Australia-based parenting web-

site, reports bruises, cuts, scratches, torn clothing, or missing property might be indicators of physical bullying.

7. **Withdrawal from devices:** Students being bullied online or over social media may decide not to use mobile phones or gaming systems as frequently as they once did.

Maintaining an open dialogue with a child may help him or her feel more comfortable, which can lead to the child sharing details of bullying at school or elsewhere.

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# What parents can do to prevent bullying

Bullying affects children from all walks of life. Whether the student is on the receiving end of bullying or is the aggressor, parents and other adults will sometimes need to step in to provide assis-

tance. Although there is no magic formula to preventing bullying, parents can do their part to put a stop to such behaviors.

- **Parent authoritatively:** According to developmental psychologist Diana Divecha, contributor to *Greater Good* magazine, an authoritative style of parenting offers high levels of warmth, love and closeness, while at the same time providing clear limits and high expectations. Children who are raised with this type of parenting often fare the best with better mental health and stronger relationship skills. Children who are parented harshly may be more likely to be-

come bullies or be bullied themselves.

- **Be knowledgeable and observant:** Parents, teachers and administrators should keep their eyes peeled for bullying behaviors and reactions. Various signs indicate bullying is taking place, and these include being introverted, commonly reporting illness, withdrawing from daily activities, or having trouble sleeping.

- **Nurture a positive household climate:** Parents and other family members can work together at home to create an organized and predictable environment. Parents should model the type of behavior they want their

children to express.

- **Teach children coping skills:** Practice scenarios at home where a child learns how to ignore a bully or develop assertive strategies for coping with bullying. Share who children can go to for help, apart from you, such as teachers or administrators, if they're worried about being bullied.

- **Set technology boundaries:** Bullying can take place on social media, and by monitoring online activity, parents may be able to head off potential bullying problems. Document online bullying so it can be addressed with administrators or law enforcement.



Lawrence Tickle used to volunteer with teen court before he and his wife, Kaitlyn, had kids. We focus on children's best interests when representing clients in custody cases. Tickle Law Office still takes DSS cases to counsel parents and help them get reunification with their children. Lawrence and Kaitlyn Tickle did foster care and adopted a sibling group of three sisters. The photo above is the family on a trip to Disney in April.

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# Youth suicide

## Know the warning signs

The Jason Foundation  
www.jasonfoundation.com

The Jason Foundation, Inc. is a non-profit whose mission statement is dedicated to the prevention of the "Silent Epidemic" of youth suicide through educational and awareness programs that equip young people, educators/youth workers and parents with the tools and resources to help identify and assist at-risk youth.

Suicide is one of the leading causes of preventable death in our nation today. We lose an average of more than 130 young people each week to this tragedy that can be prevented.

How can it be prevented you may ask? The Jason Foundation, Inc. believes that education is the key to prevention. The Jason Foundation's programs and services are in response to this belief. Our nation should be familiar with the warning signs associated with suicide, suicide facts and statistics, and how to find help for at-risk youth. Together, we can save lives!

Remember: Never be reluctant to get involved and always take any child/adolescent's desire or intent to harm themselves seriously. If you suspect a young person of suicidal ideation, get them to professional help immediately. Suicide is Preventable.

### WARNING SIGNS

Almost everyone who attempts or completes suicide has given warning signs through their words or behaviors. Do not ignore any suicide threats. The following state-

ments may indicate serious suicidal feelings.

"I'd be better off dead."  
"I won't be bothering you much longer."  
"You'll be better off without me around."

"I hate my life."  
"I am going to kill myself."  
Suicide threats are not always verbal.

Depression is one of the leading causes of suicide attempts. Mental or addictive disorders are associated with 90 percent of suicide. One in ten youth suffer from mental illness serious enough to be impaired, yet fewer than 20 percent receive treatment. Depression can be exhibited in many ways including the following which are detailed in more depth:

- Sudden, abrupt changes in personality
- Expressions of hopelessness and despair
- Declining grades and school performance
- Lack of interest in activities once enjoyed
- Increased irritability and aggressiveness
- Withdrawal from family, friends and relationships
- Lack of hygiene
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits

**Other warning signs include:**

- Anger, increased irritability
- Lack of interest
- Sudden increase/decrease in appetite
- Sudden changes in appearance
- Dwindling academic performance
- Preoccupation with death

and suicide such as essays or poems about death, artwork or drawings depicting death, social media posts or comments or talking a lot about death or dying.

• Previous suicide attempts  
• Final arrangements - once the decision has been made to end their life, some young people begin making final arrangements. Giving away prized or favorite possessions. Putting their affairs in order. Saying good-bye to family and friends, making funeral arrangements.

### RISK FACTORS

Suicide does not typically have a sudden onset. There are a number of stressors that can contribute to a youth's anxiety and unhappiness, increasing the possibility of a suicide attempt. A number of them are described below.

- Depression, mental illness and substance abuse
- Aggression and fighting
- Home environment - Within the home, a lack of cohesion, high levels of violence and conflict, a lack of parental support and alienation from and within the family.
- Community environment - youth with high levels of exposure to community violence are at serious risk for self-destructive behavior.
- School environment - youth who are struggling with classes, perceive their teachers as not understanding them or caring about them, or have poor relationships with their peers have increased vulnerability.
- Previous attempts - youth who have attempted suicide are at risk to do it again.

# Protecting children from fentanyl

## Five things parents need to know

Courtesy of  
www.drugfree.org

Deaths from overdoses reached a staggering 100,300 in the 12-month period ending in April 2021. This represents nearly a 30% increase over the previous time period and was largely driven by fentanyl. While some people seek out fentanyl, others unknowingly consume it as heroin, methamphetamines, cocaine, MDMA, and counterfeit pills including pain medications, Adderall, and Xanax have been laced with it.

As a concerned parent, whose top priority is keeping your child safe – and alive – the following are the most important things to understand about protecting children from fentanyl.

1. Fentanyl is 50 to 100 times more potent than heroin or morphine

It is a schedule II prescription drug typically used to treat patients with severe pain or to manage pain after surgery. It is also sometimes used to treat patients with chronic pain who are physically tolerant to other opioids. In its prescription form, fentanyl is known by such names as Actiq®, Duragesic® and Sublimaze®.

2. It is relatively cheap to produce, increasing its presence in illicit street drugs

Dealers use it to improve their bottom line. According to a report from the Office of National Drug Control Policy, evidence suggests that fentanyl is being pressed into pills that resemble OxyContin, Xanax, hydrocodone and other sought-

- Cultural factors - changes in gender roles and expectations, issues of conformity and assimilation, and feelings of isolation and victimization can all increase the stress levels and vulnerability of individuals.
- Family history/stresses - a history of mental illness and suicide among immediate family members place youth at greater risk for suicide.

after drugs, as well as being cut into heroin and other street drugs. A loved one buying illicit drugs may think they know what they're getting, but there's a real risk of it containing fentanyl, which can prove deadly.

3. Naloxone (Narcan) will work in case of overdose, but extra doses may be needed

Because fentanyl is far more powerful than other opioids, the standard 1-2 doses of naloxone may not be enough. Calling 911 is the first step in responding to any overdose, but in the case of a fentanyl-related overdose the help of emergency responders, who will have more naloxone, is critical.

4. Even if someone could tell a product had been laced with fentanyl, it may not prevent their use

Some individuals claim they can tell the difference between product that has been laced with fentanyl and that which hasn't, but overdose statistics would say otherwise. Some harm reduction programs are offering test strips to determine whether heroin has been cut with fentanyl, but that knowledge may not be much of a deterrent to a loved one who just spent their last dollar to get high.

5. Getting a loved one into treatment is more critical than ever

If you need help in determining a course of action, please reach out to one of the parent specialists at <https://drugfree.org/article/get-one-on-one-help/>.

is a free 24/7 text line where trained crisis counselors support individuals in crisis.

Text "Jason" to 741741 to speak with a compassionate, trained Crisis Counselor. Visit Crisis Text Line's website for additional information. [www.crisistextline.org](http://www.crisistextline.org).

If you or someone you know is experiencing a crisis, call 911.

# IS YOUR TEEN USING? Symptoms you need to know

The following is provided by  
www.drugfree.org

### Personal Appearance

- Messy, shows lack of caring for appearance
- Poor hygiene
- Red, flushed cheeks or face
- Track marks on arms or legs (or long sleeves in warm weather to hide marks)
- Burns or soot on fingers or lips (from "joints" or "roaches" burning down)

### Personal Habits or Actions

- Clenching teeth
- Smell of smoke or other unusual smells on breath or on clothes
- Chewing gum or mints to cover up breath
- Heavy use of over-the-counter preparations to reduce eye reddening, nasal irritation, or bad breath
- Frequently breaks curfew
- Cash flow problems
- Reckless driving, car accidents, or unexplained dents in the car
- Avoiding eye contact
- Locked doors
- Going out every night
- Secretive phone calls
- "Munchies" or sudden appetite

### Behavioral Issues Associated with Teen Substance Abuse

- Change in relationships with family members or friends
- Loss of inhibitions
- Mood changes or emotional instability
- Loud, obnoxious behavior
- Laughing at nothing
- Unusually clumsy, stumbling, lack of coordination, poor balance
- Sullen, withdrawn, depressed
- Unusually tired
- Silent, uncommunicative
- Hostility, anger, uncooperative behavior
- Deceitful or secretive
- Makes endless excuses
- Decreased Motivation
- Lethargic movement
- Unable to speak intelligibly, slurred speech, or rapid-fire speech
- Inability to focus
- Hyperactivity
- Unusually elated
- Periods of sleeplessness or high energy, followed by long periods of "catch up" sleep
- Disappearances for long periods of time

### School- or Work-Related Issues

- Truancy or loss of interest in schoolwork
- Loss of interest in extracurricular activities, hobbies, or sports
- Failure to fulfill responsibilities at school or work
- Complaints from teachers or co-workers
- Reports of intoxication at school or work

### Health Issues Related to Teen Substance Abuse

- Nosebleeds
- Runny nose, not caused by allergies or a cold
- Frequent sickness
- Sores, spots around mouth
- Queasy, nauseous
- Seizures
- Vomiting
- Wetting lips or excessive thirst (known as "cotton mouth")
- Sudden or dramatic weight loss or gain
- Skin abrasions/bruises
- Accidents or injuries

- Depression
- Headaches
- Sweatiness

### Home- or Car-Related

- Disappearance of prescription of over-the-counter pills
- Missing alcohol or cigarettes
- Disappearance of money or valuables
- Smell in the car or bottles, pipes, or bongs on floor or in glove box

- Appearance of unusual containers or wrappers, or seeds left on surfaces used to clean marijuana, like Frisbees

- Appearance of unusual drug apparatuses, including pipes, rolling papers, small medicine bottles, eye drops, butane lighters, or makeshift smoking devices, like bongs made out of toilet paper rolls and aluminum foil
- Hidden stashes of alcohol

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# START CONVERSATIONS EARLY

## Tips when talking with your preschooler

[www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)  
Partnership for  
Drug-Free Kids

### What to Say to Your Preschooler About Drugs (2-4 years old)

Since the foundation for all healthy habits — from nutrition to toothbrushing—is laid down during the preschool years, this is a great time to set the stage for a drug-free life. The following scripts will help you get conversations going with your 2- to 4-year-old child:

#### SCENARIO

Giving your child a daily vitamin

#### WHAT TO SAY

Vitamins help your body grow. You need to take them every day so that you'll grow up big and strong like Mommy and Daddy—but you should only take what I give you. Too many vitamins can hurt you and make you sick.

#### SCENARIO

Your kids are curious about medicine bottles around the house

#### WHAT TO SAY

You should only take medicines that have your name on them or that your doctor has chosen just for you. If you take medicine that belongs to somebody

else, it could be dangerous and make you sick.

#### SCENARIO

Your child sees an adult smoking and, since you've talked about the dangers of smoking, is confused.

#### WHAT TO SAY

Grownups can make their own decisions and sometimes those decisions aren't the best for their bodies. Sometimes, when someone starts smoking, his or her body feels like it has to have cigarettes—even though it's not healthy.

And that makes it harder for him or her to quit.

### Tips for Conversations with Your Preschooler

Explain the importance of taking good care of our bodies — eating right, exercising and getting a good night's sleep. Discuss how good you feel when you take care of yourself — how you can run, jump, play and work for many hours.

Celebrate your child's decision-making skills. Whenever possible, let your child choose what to wear. Even if the clothes don't quite match, you are reinforcing your child's ability to make decisions.

Turn chores like brushing teeth, putting away

toys, wiping up spills, and caring for pets into fun experiences that your child will enjoy. Break the activities down into manageable steps so that your child learns to develop plans.

Help your child steer clear of dangerous substances that exist in her immediate world. Point out poisonous and harmful chemicals commonly found in homes, such as bleach, kitchen cleansers and furniture polish. Explain that she should only eat or smell food or a medicine from a doctor that you, a relative or other known caregivers give to her.

Also, explain that drugs

from the doctor help the person the doctor gives them to but that they can harm someone else.

Help your child understand the difference between make-believe and real life. Ask your child what he thinks about a TV program or story. Let your child know about your likes and dislikes. Discuss how violence or bad decisions can hurt people.

Turn frustration into a learning opportunity.

If a tower of blocks keeps collapsing during a play session, work with your child to find possible solutions to the problem.

## Tips when talking with 5-8 year olds about drugs

[www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)  
Partnership for  
Drug-Free Kids

Five - eight year-olds are still tied to family and eager to please, but they're also beginning to explore their individuality.

The following scripts will help you get conversations going with your 5- to 8-year-old child:

#### SCENARIO

Your child has expressed curiosity about the pills she sees you take every day — and the other bottles in the medicine cabinet

#### WHAT TO SAY

Just because it's in a family's medicine cabinet doesn't mean that it is safe for you to take. Even if your friends say it's okay, say, "No, my parents won't let me take something that doesn't have my name on the bottle."

#### SCENARIO

Your child dresses herself for school in a pink zebra print tank top, a polka dot vest, striped leggings and an orange beret.

#### WHAT TO SAY

"You look great. I love how you express your personality in your outfits."

Celebrate your child's decision-making skills. Whenever possible, let your child choose what to wear. Even if the clothes don't quite match, you are reinforcing your child's ability to make decisions for herself.

### Tips for Conversations with Your Early Elementary School Child

Talk to your kids about the drug-related messages they receive through advertisements, the news media and entertainment sources. Ask your kids how they feel about the things they've heard — you'll learn a great deal about what they're thinking.

Keep your discussions about substances focused on the present — long-term consequences are too distant to have any meaning. Talk about the differences between the medicinal uses and illegal uses of drugs, and how drugs can negatively impact the families

and friends of people who use them.

Set clear rules and explain the reasons for your rules. If you use tobacco or alcohol, be mindful of the message you are sending to your children.

Work on problem solving: Help them find long-lasting solutions to homework trouble, a fight with a friend, or in dealing with a bully. Be sure to point out that quick fixes are not long-term solutions.

Give your kids the power to escape from situations that make them feel bad. Make sure they know that they shouldn't stay in a place that makes them feel uncomfortable or bad about themselves. Also let them know that they don't need to stick with friends who don't support them.

Get to know your child's friends — and their friends' parents. Check in once in awhile to make sure they are giving their children the same kinds of messages you give your children.

## What to say to your preteen about drugs

[www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)  
Partnership for  
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Preteens, (9-12 year-olds) are on their quest to figure out their place in the world, tend to give their friends' opinions a great deal of power, while at the same time starting to question their parents' views and messages. The following scripts will help you get conversations going with your 9-to 12-year-old:

#### SCENARIO

Your child is just starting middle school and you know that eventually, he will be offered drugs and alcohol.

#### WHAT TO SAY

I know we talked about drinking and drugs when you were younger, but now is when they're probably going to be an issue.

I'm guessing you'll at least hear about kids who are experimenting. I just want you to remember that I'm here for you and the best thing you can do is just talk to me about the stuff you hear or see. Don't think there's anything I can't handle or that you can't talk about with me, okay?"

#### SCENARIO

You find out that kids are

selling prescription drugs at your child's school. Your child hasn't mentioned it and you want to get the conversation about it started.

#### WHAT TO SAY

Hey, you probably know that parents talk to each other and find things out about what's going on at school. I heard there are kids selling pills — prescriptions that either they are taking or someone in their family takes. Have you heard about kids doing this?" Let him know that in the future, he can always blame you to get out of a bad situation. Say, "If you're ever offered drugs at school, tell that person, "My mother would kill me if I took that and then she wouldn't let me play baseball."

#### SCENARIO

Your child's favorite celebrity—the one he or she really looks up to—has been named in a drug scandal

#### WHAT TO SAY

Being in the public eye puts a ton of pressure on people, and many turn to drugs because they think drugs will relieve that stress. The thing is, when a person uses drugs and alcohol—especially a young person because he's still growing—it

changes how his brain works and makes him do really stupid things. Most people who use drugs and alcohol need a lot of help to get better. I hope the celebrity has a good doctor and friends and family members to help him/her.

### Tips for Conversations with Your Preteen

Make sure your child knows your rules — and that you'll enforce the consequences if rules are broken. Research shows that kids are less likely to use tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs if their parents have established a pattern of setting clear rules and consequences for breaking those rules.

Kids who don't know what to say when someone offers them drugs are more likely to give in to peer pressure. Let her know that she can always use you as an excuse and say: "No, my mom [or dad, aunt, etc.] will kill me if I smoke a cigarette."

Feelings of insecurity, doubt and pressure may creep in during puberty. Offset those feelings with a lot of positive comments about who he is as an individual — and not just when he brings home an A.

Preteens aren't concerned with future problems that might result from experimentation with tobacco, alcohol or other drugs, but they are concerned about their appearance — sometimes to the point of obsession. Tell them about the smelly hair and ashtray breath caused by cigarettes.

Get to know your child's friends — and their friends' parents. Check in by phone or a visit once in awhile to make sure they are on the same page with prohibiting drug or alcohol use, particularly when their home is to be used for a party or sleepover.

Help children separate reality from fantasy. Watch TV and movies with them and ask lots of questions to reinforce the distinction between the two. Remember to include advertising in your discussions, as those messages are especially powerful.



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## Education Should Start Sooner Than You Think

### INTERNET SAFETY TIPS

- NEVER give out personal information such as your name, home address, school name or telephone number in a chat room or on bulletin boards. Also, never send a picture of yourself to someone you chat with on the computer without your parent's permission.
- NEVER write to someone who has made you feel uncomfortable or scared.
- DO NOT meet someone or have them visit you without the permission of your parents.
- TELL your parents right away if you read anything on the internet that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- REMEMBER that people online may not be who they say they are. Someone who says that "she" is a "12-year-old girl" could really be an older man.
- PARENTS: Make sure to monitor your child's social media activity.

### PLAYGROUND SAFETY TIPS

- Check playgrounds where your children play. Look for age-appropriate equipment and hazards, such as rusted or broken equipment and dangerous surfaces. Report any hazards to the school or appropriate local office.
- Avoid playgrounds with non-impact absorbing surfaces, such as asphalt, concrete, grass, dirt or gravel.
- Dress appropriately for the playground. Remove necklaces, purses, scarves or clothing with drawstrings that can get caught on equipment and pose a strangulation hazard. Even helmets can be dangerous on a playground, so save those for bikes.
- Teach children that pushing, shoving or crowding while on the playground can be dangerous.
- Ensure that children use age-appropriate playground equipment.

Courtesy: safekids.org



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