



TIPS FOR TALKING TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS (6-10 YEARS OLD)

- Children this age are eager to learn. You can talk to them about the consequences of using substances, such as how it can lead to misuse and a substance use disorder. You can continue to teach and encourage good choices around healthy living.
- Establish rituals that afford uninterrupted conversations with your child. Having dinner or other meals together provides a rich opportunity to listen and talk.
- Explain good drugs versus bad drugs. Let them know that children should only take medication when the adult in charge tells them to.
- Repeat your message regularly. Remind children that some drugs can harm the brain or cause life-threatening overdoses.
- Children crave praise, so give it out freely when deserved. Tell them that you trust their ability to avoid peer pressure and make good decisions.
- If your child does not start conversations about alcohol or other drugs with you, take the lead. Begin discussions using real-life events in the news or in your own lives. This is true no matter your child's age.

For more information, go to Chapter 4 of [*Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent's Guide to Substance Use Prevention*](#).





HOW DO I TALK TO MY CHILD ABOUT DRUGS? – CONVERSATION STARTERS

Some parents find it difficult to talk with their children about alcohol and other drugs. But it is important to teach them about these substances and about your expectations if they are offered drugs.

These conversations are not a one-time event. Start talking with your children when they are young; continue as they grow older and their level of interest and understanding changes. Your willingness to talk (and listen) tells them you care about what they are interested in, and it provides you with insight into their world.

DO	DON'T
Explain the dangers using language they understand.	React in anger—even if your child makes statements that shock you.
Explain why you do not want them to use the substance(s). For example, explain that substances can mess up their concentration, memory, and motor skills and can lead to poor grades.	Expect all conversations with your children to be perfect. They won't be.
Be there when your child wants to talk, no matter the time of day or night or other demands on your time.	Assume your children know how to handle temptation. Instead, educate them about risks and alternatives so they can make healthy decisions. Encourage them to practice saying no ahead of time so they're prepared.
Believe in your own power to help your child grow up without using drugs, including alcohol.	Talk without listening.
Praise your children when they deserve it. This builds their self-esteem and makes them feel good without using drugs, including alcohol.	Make stuff up. If your child asks a question you can't answer, promise to find the answer so you can learn together. Then follow up.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Talking to your children about alcohol and other drugs does not have to be hard. The following opportunities can serve as teaching moments:



If you see a young person smoking, talk about the negative effects of tobacco.



If you see an interesting news story, discuss it with your child. Ask how your child feels about situations and the potential consequences.



While watching a movie or TV show with your children, ask if they think it makes using drugs, including alcohol, look fun. Talk about what happens to those characters, or what happens in reality.



If you read, hear about, or know someone affected by substance use, remind your child almost anyone can develop a substance use disorder. Discuss the importance of treatment and supporting people in recovery from their substance use disorder.