

Below are some introductions to helpful guides for talking with your son or daughter.

Please visit ow.ly/GEuGY to find
the complete guide for each age group:

What to Say to Your 2 to 4 Year 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.

What to Say to Your 5 to 8 Year Old

5-to-8-year olds are still tied to family and eager to please but they're also beginning to explore their individuality. In addition, your grade-schooler begins to spend more time at school and with peers and to collect information (including messages about drugs and alcohol) from lots of new places like the media and popular culture. It's very important that you continue talking to your child about a healthy drug-free lifestyle and stress that of all the voices your child hears, yours should be the guiding force.

What to Say to Your 9 to 12 Year Old

Preteens: They're on a quest to figure out their place in the world. When it comes to the way they view that world, they tend to give their friends' opinions a great deal of power while, at the same time, they're starting to question their parents' views and messages. Your advice may be challenged — but it will be heard and will stay with your child much more than he or she will ever admit.

Transitions: The First Year of Middle School

You've been anticipating this for the past few years — your child's transition from elementary school to middle school. Be warned, this is a critical time and calls for extra vigilance on your part. Your son or daughter may still seem young, but their new surroundings can put them in some mature and tempting situations.

Your 13 to 15 Year Old

For parents, this is a pivotal time in helping kids make positive choices when faced with drugs and alcohol. The average age kids try drugs for the first time is 13. If your child is 13, says Amelia Arria, senior scientist with Treatment Research Institute, you should assume that he or she has been offered drugs or alcohol. But you can help your teen stay healthy and drug-free — and beat the negative statistics about drug use among teens. Kids who learn about the risks of drugs from their parents are up to 50 percent less likely to use (2007 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study). So, most importantly, stay involved. Young teens may say they don't need your guidance, but they're much more open to it than they'll ever let on. Make sure you talk to them about their choices of friends — drug use in teens starts as a social behavior.

Your 16 to 18 Year Old

When it comes to drugs, teens are a savvy bunch. Drugs and messages about living drug-free have been part of their lives for years. They can make distinctions not only among different drugs and their effects, but also among trial, occasional use and addiction. They've witnessed many of their peers using drugs — some without obvious or immediate consequences, others whose drug use gets out of control. By the teen years, kids have also had to make plenty of choices of their own about drug use: whether they should give in to peer pressure and experiment with drugs, or go against some of their peers and stay clean.

If You Think They're Using: Drug Abuse in Teens 13-18

If you're at all concerned that your teenager is using drugs or alcohol, take action right now to help your child get back on track to a healthy life.

What to Say to Your 19 to 25 Year Old

As you prepare your child for life after high school you can help guide him to a healthy experience. And you don't have to tread on his independence to do it. You let him know you have his back," says Amelia Arria, Senior Scientist at Treatment Research Institute. This doesn't mean he doesn't have responsibilities of his own, or that he isn't responsible for making his own bed or contributing to the household.

If You Think They're Using: Young Adults 19-25

The most important step you can take in addiction intervention for an adult is to speak up and urge him or her to get help. This is especially crucial if you notice any of the early signs of alcohol or drug dependence, like excessive use and/or drinking at inappropriate times or places (e.g., during work or while playing sports), or if they have suffered negative consequences as a result of use, such as absenteeism from classes or work, or arrests.