



# Substance Use Prevention Tip Sheet

**Protective factors to strengthen: Parental bond, Family management, and Perception of harm**

When a teen thinks using substances will harm them, then the likelihood of them using it will decrease. On the flip side, if a teen thinks using substances is no big deal, then the likelihood of them using will increase. As a parent, caregiver, or important adult role in a young person's life, you may not have the ability to control their behaviors and the choices they make, but you DO have the ability to *influence* their behaviors. See these tips below to help prevent your teen from using substances.

**Teach and practice refusal skills:** Peer pressure increases in middle and high school. Take frequent opportunities to talk to your teen about peer pressure and ways to say no. Practice scenarios at home so saying no in the moment comes more naturally when faced with negative peer pressure. Give you teen reasons to say no: what are the consequences of substance use (losing a privilege, using goes against their values, chance of addiction or harmful effects of the substance)? How will this affect their future (getting kicked off a team, losing a scholarship, etc)?

[Ten Ways to Assertively Say "No" to Negative Peer Pressure](#)

**Family togetherness:** Make time for family activities, such as a family dinner/breakfast, game night, adventures, etc. Let you children take turns helping cook meals, pick out the game, suggest an activity. Also, spend one-on-one time with your teen, this could be a car ride together running errands, or spending time doing an activity together you both enjoy. This is a great time to talk with your teen about what's going on in their lives. When teens feel connected to a parent, caregiver, or adult – someone they can talk to about their concerns, this can protect them against turning to substances.

[Ideas of fun activities for parents and teens](#)

**Educate yourself and your teen:** Drug trends are constantly evolving, so it's important to educate yourself on current drug trends and drug paraphernalia so you can have frank, informative conversations with your teenager. Make sure they are learning factual information from reputable sources, rather than from their friends or social media.

[Get Smart About Drugs – DEA resource for parents](#)

[Growing Up Drug Free PDF](#)

**Model behaviors you want to see:** In middle and high school, it's natural for teens to begin putting more emphasis on friendships over parents/family; however, it's important to remember that parents still have the most influence on their teens lives than any other source. One way to continue to influence our teens is to model behaviors that you want to see. If you choose to use alcohol, do so in moderation. Model handling stress and bad days by turning to healthy coping skills instead of reaching for alcohol or other substances. Examples are exercise, take deep breaths, listen to music, chat with a friend. Practice self-care and encourage your teen to do so as well.

### [Self Care Wheel with Suggestions](#)

**Talk with your teen:** You might think your teen knows where you stand on substance use, but unless you have frequent conversations explaining your values, expectations, and consequences for breaking your rules, you shouldn't assume you both are on the same page. Talk with your teen, and also listen to what they think as well. Make sure you have a plan in place if they ever find themselves in an uncomfortable situation where substances are being used.

### [Talk. They Hear You](#)

**Reduce access to substances:** Most teens get substances from people they know. A lot of times they get these substances from home! Make sure you reduce their access to substances by locking up medications and alcohol. Get rid of unused and expired medications by participating in drug take back events or using medication disposal pouches.

### [Medication Disposal Pouches available for FREE](#)

**Know who your teen is spending time with:** Get to know your teen's friends. When they are going out, make sure you know who they are going to be with, where they are going, and what time they will be back. Get to know your teen's friends' parents as well. Share with them your goal of raising a substance-free teen. Make sure they are on the same page. This will ensure you have multiple pairs of eyes looking out for your teen!

**Praise your teen:** Praise them often and be sincere! Find opportunities to focus on what they are doing right. Do they respect your rules? Let them know you appreciate that! Do they work hard to achieve their goals? Let them know you noticed, and you are proud of them. Did they handle a social problem appropriately? Praise them for it. Sometimes teens only hear when they do something wrong, but when teens hear praise from their parents, caregivers, and important adults in their life, it helps boost self-esteem and increases the likelihood they will continue that positive behavior.