

**DRUGFREEAZKIDS.org**



## Az Parents Connect<sup>SM</sup> Your Child Needs You!

Your guide to help your child lead  
a healthy, drug-free life.





As a parent or caregiver, you have a tremendous influence on your child's life. Your constant and caring involvement can help inspire your child to make healthy, drug-free choices.

**Inside, you'll find more information to help you:**

- Become familiar with the drugs in your child's world.
- Talk with your child about drugs and alcohol.
- Identify the signs of drug or alcohol use.
- Intervene now if your child is in trouble.

→ *You can prevent drug or alcohol problems. Fear of upsetting parents or caregivers is one of the major reasons why kids do not use drugs, and kids who learn a lot about drug risks from parents are up to half as likely to start using.*



## YOU ARE NOT ALONE

A problem with drugs or alcohol doesn't discriminate; it can happen to anyone anywhere — even a child in the most loving home. It cuts across race, gender and economic lines, and occurs in every region of this country.

**It's a health issue for you, your child, and your family.**

Tobacco, drug and alcohol abuse is one of the most important and preventable adolescent health problems today.<sup>1</sup> There are many ways you can protect your kids and talking with them is one of the most effective. Communicating with your son or daughter on a daily basis helps them feel connected to you — and research indicates that is what matters most when a child chooses to turn down drugs.

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<sup>1</sup>Source: The American Academy of Pediatrics

→ *Intervention works. If your child has a drug or alcohol problem, the sooner you act, the better. Visit DrugFreeAZKids.org for specific information on how you can take action to help your child today.*

## KNOW WHAT DRUGS KIDS FACE TODAY

While you may be aware of the types of drugs that were around when you were a teenager, there is a new array of substances that kids today may misuse to get high. They include household products, over-the-counter and prescription medication that can be found in your own home.

Kids who use drugs tend to use alcohol, tobacco and marijuana first. Other drugs they may move on to are displayed below:

### DRUGS AT A GLANCE

prescription and over-the-counter medications	illicit drugs in addition to alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana	household products
		

**prescription and over-the-counter medications**

- pain relievers
- sedatives
- tranquilizers
- cough medicines
- antihistamines
- stimulants

**illicit drugs in addition to alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana**

- cocaine
- ecstasy
- heroin
- methamphetamine

**household products**

- spray paint
- paint thinner
- glue
- cleaners

### Why do kids experiment with drugs and alcohol?

Many experiences of young adulthood are universal such as seeking greater independence and acceptance by friends, rebellion and risk-taking, as well as physical and hormonal changes. But it's important to remember that teens today are exposed to a unique set of societal and cultural pressures.

→ To learn more about what a particular drug is or does, including more information on short- and long-term effects and slang names, use our online Drug Guide at [DrugFreeAZKids.org](http://DrugFreeAZKids.org)



## TOP TWO REASONS WHY KIDS USE DRUGS OR ALCOHOL

**Recreation:** Teens may experiment with or regularly use drugs or alcohol just to get high. Restless, bored or risk-taking teens may smoke a joint or have a few drinks simply to fill their time. These actions also provide a way to instantly bond with a group of like-minded kids. Soon drugs define their existence and they spend increasing amounts of time seeking ways to get high.

**Self-medication:** Teenagers may turn to drugs or alcohol to cope with problems and pressures, or as an antidote to unhappy feelings or uncomfortable situations. If a teen is using drugs or alcohol for self-medication, it could also point to other, broader emotional or psychological problems.

### THE FIRST YEAR OF MIDDLE SCHOOL / JUNIOR HIGH

(AGE 10-14)

Be especially alert during your child's transition from elementary to middle school. This is the most critical time to engage your kid in conversations about drugs and alcohol and set a clear no-use rule. Children entering middle or junior high school seem young, but their new surroundings can put them in some very adult situations. They're going to meet new kids, seek acceptance, and start to make more — and bigger — choices. Many kids this age are exposed to older kids who use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

### THE HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

(AGE 14-18)

Many teenagers have interests that can be harmless: fashion, reality television and video games, for instance. It's important to allow yours to express his individuality and be independent, but it's also necessary to set clear and consistent expectations and rules. Know what he's doing after school, who he's hanging out with, and when he's expected to be home. It's not always easy. He may complain about it, but your interest shows him you care. By staying involved with your child's daily schedule, you're taking an important step toward keeping him healthy and drug-free.

## START A CONVERSATION



It's never too early to start talking with your child about drugs and alcohol, and there are many ways to get the conversation going. Teachable moments can help start a dialogue.

### TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Talking with your child about drugs isn't a formal, one-time-only conversation. You can steer conversational topics to why drugs are harmful or use everyday events to start a conversation about them. Take advantage of blocks of time, such as before school, on the way to practice or after dinner to discuss drugs and to voice your "no-use" expectation.

→ AZ average age of first drug use is 13 years old.

## To get the conversation going:

- Talk about a recent drug- or alcohol-related incident in your community or family.
- If you and your child see a group of kids drinking or smoking, use the moment to talk about the negative effects of alcohol and tobacco.

## ACT OUT SCENARIOS

A great way to help kids prepare for situations where they might be offered drugs or alcohol is to act out scenarios. Kids are more likely to be offered drugs from a friend than a stranger. It may be difficult for your child to say no to friends — the people they look to for validation, recognition, and fun. Teach him that it's OK to say no to his friends, and act out scenarios together so he has the tools to do this.

Use the example scenario on the next page as a starting point, read other sample scenarios online at [DrugFreeAZKids.org](http://DrugFreeAZKids.org), or create ones based on your child's life.

### 5 WAYS TO SHOW CHILDREN YOU CARE

### TIPS

1. Reinforce your love — say the words "I love you" often.
2. Be careful not to criticize; describe a better way.
3. Remember that children often reflect what they have or have not been taught.
4. Teach the principles of "why," not just "what" to do or not to do.
5. Listen to them, a lot. Avoid interrupting. Give them your undivided attention.

## TALK TO YOUR KIDS EXAMPLE SCENARIO



• Your child goes to a party where someone has brought a bottle of vodka or beer. Some older high school kids are there. Several kids are drinking or smoking joints, and they ask your child if she'd like some too. Take the role of the older teen who casually offers a can of beer or a joint to your child.

### **HELP YOUR CHILD DEVELOP FIRM BUT FRIENDLY RESPONSES.**

Reassure your child that friends will respect his decision not to get involved. Remind him that most people are focused on themselves, which makes it less likely that they will be concerned with what others do.



## POSSIBLE RESPONSES FOR YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER TO SAY WHEN OFFERED DRUGS:



**"No, thanks."**



**"Nah, I'm not into that."**



**"Nah, I'm ok. Thanks."**

**"No, thanks. I'm on the \_\_\_\_\_ team and I don't want to risk it."**



**"Nah, I'm training for \_\_\_\_\_."**



**"No. I gotta go soon."**



**"No, my parents drug test me every week."**

### ANSWERING THE QUESTION: "DID YOU EVER DO DRUGS?"

#### TIPS

For many parents, the answer is simply "no." However, this may be a tough question to answer for other parents. The conversation doesn't have to be awkward. You can use it to your advantage by turning it into a teachable moment.

Experts believe it's best to tell the truth. However, it's not necessary to share details. Use the discussion as an opportunity to speak openly about what attracted you to drugs, alcohol or tobacco, why they are dangerous, and why you want your child to avoid making the same mistake. Remember, **the issue isn't about your past. It's about your child's future.** What's important now is that your kid understands that you don't want him to use drugs, alcohol, or tobacco.

## HOW TO SPOT DRUG OR ALCOHOL USE



Mood swings and unpredictable behavior are sometimes evidence of teenage “growing pains,” but can also point to use of drugs or alcohol. Be aware of any unexplained changes and know the potential warning signs:

- She’s withdrawn, depressed, tired, or careless about her personal grooming.
- He’s hostile, uncooperative, and frequently breaks curfew.
- Her relationships with family members have deteriorated.
- He’s hanging around with a new group of friends.
- Her grades have slipped and she’s missing school.
- He’s lost interest in hobbies, sports, and other favorite activities.
- Her eating and sleeping patterns have changed; she’s up at night and sleeps during the day.
- He has a hard time concentrating.
- Her eyes are red-rimmed and her nose is runny, but she doesn’t have allergies or a cold.
- Household money has been disappearing.
- You have found any of the following in your home: pipes, rolling papers, small medicine bottles, eye drops, butane lighters, homemade pipes or bongs (pipes that use water as a filter) made from soda cans or plastic beverage containers.



*Found something, but don't know what it is? Our Drug Guide may help you identify it. [DrugFreeAZKids.org](http://DrugFreeAZKids.org)*



#### OTHER HEALTH PROBLEMS MAY EXIST

#### TIPS

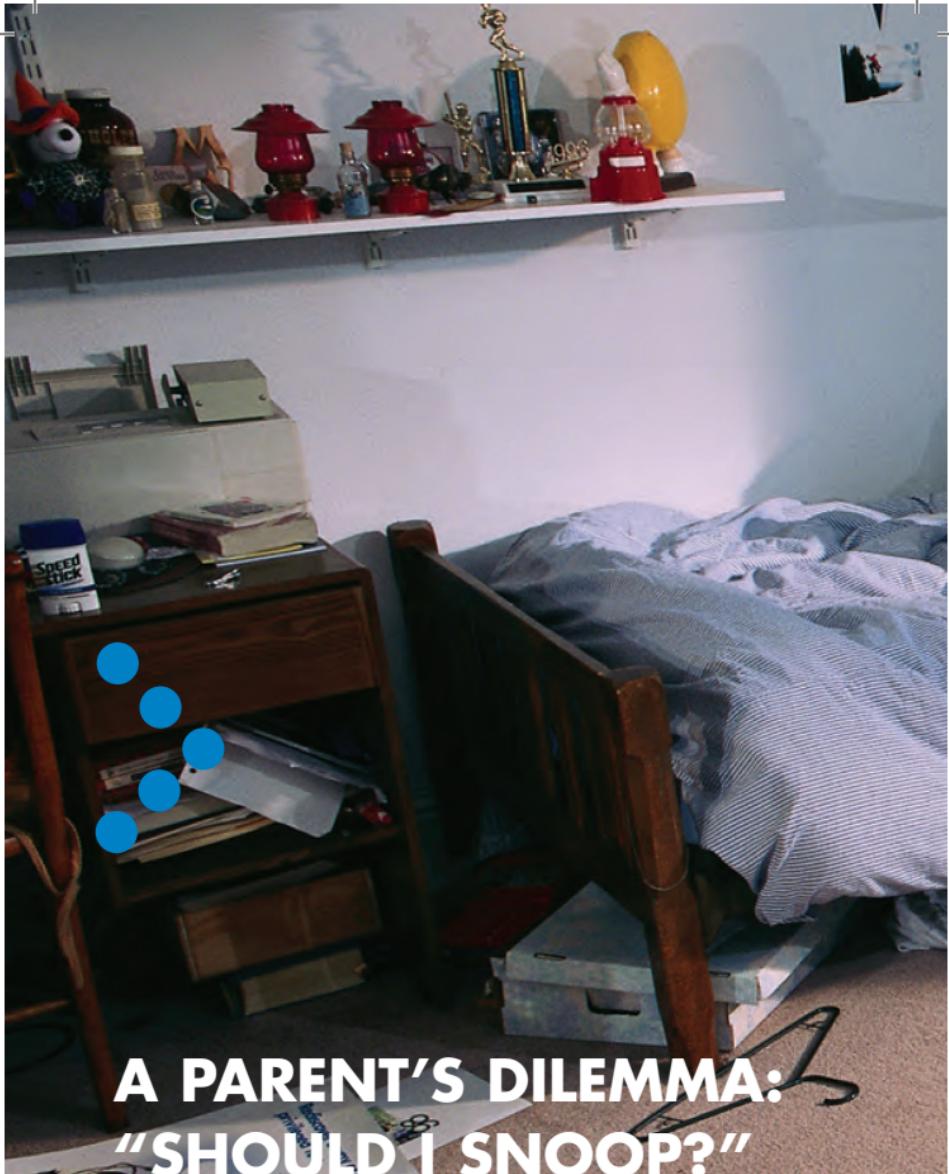
Some of the warning signs listed on the left could also point to broader health problems, such as an emotional issue, physical or mental illness. Research suggests that as many as half of all kids involved with drugs or alcohol are affected by mental health problems. Before you choose a course of action, discuss your observations with your child's doctor.

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*Take responsibility for learning about drug addiction and prevention so you can give your children the information and support they need. You are not the only person whose child is at risk. If other children have the right information and parents who support their ability to resist drugs, your child will be safer.*

— Ginger Katz, mother of Ian who died from a heroin overdose

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## A PARENT'S DILEMMA: "SHOULD I SNOOP?"

Many parents struggle whether to search their kid's room for evidence of drug or alcohol use. "Should I snoop?" is a difficult question because there are so many factors to weigh:

- Should you warn your kid first?
- Exactly what should you search?
- Should you ask her directly if she's using drugs instead of snooping?

Deciding whether to "snoop" is your choice – but it should be a decision that you can defend. If you notice any change in your child's behavior or identify odors such as pot, cigarette smoke or scents to mask other smells (incense or Lysol spray, for



example) coming from his room, you may have a good reason to find out what's going on.

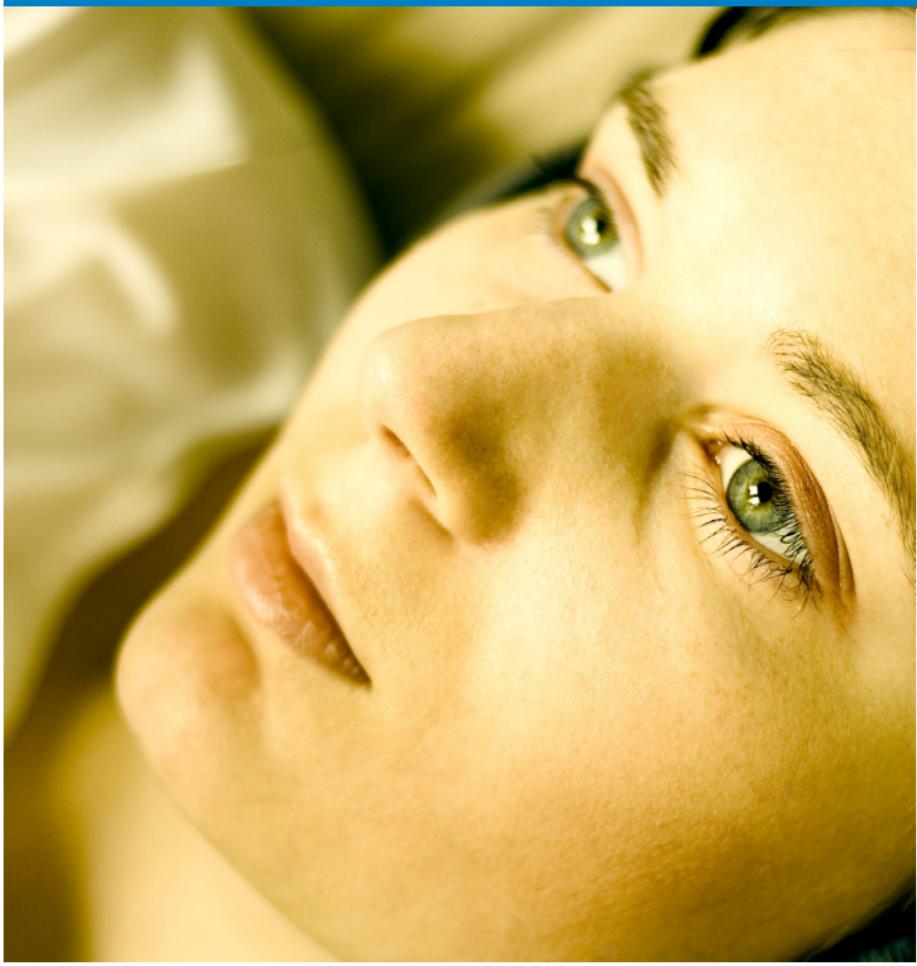
If you snoop and your kid finds out, he might hold it against you as a violation of his privacy. Counter this argument by telling him that his behavior is raising questions, and you are concerned there may be a problem.

Consider regularly checking your medicine cabinet. Research shows that teen abuse of prescription and over-the-counter medications to get high is increasing. Many kids view the medicine cabinet — in their own home and at friends' homes — as a convenient source of those medications. Be sure not to leave "leftover" prescription drugs in your medicine cabinet, and keep an eye on the medications you are using.



For possible hiding places, visit [DrugFreeAZKids.org](http://DrugFreeAZKids.org)

## INTERVENE NOW



• If you know your son or daughter is using drugs or alcohol, act now. The faster you act, the faster your child can become healthy again.

### HAVE AN INFORMAL INTERVENTION

An intervention doesn't have to be an angry or dramatic confrontation. A powerful way to intervene is to have a conversation with your kid. Letting her know that you don't want her to use drugs or alcohol and sharing your reasons is a perfectly acceptable and responsible place to start.

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**Get Help.** *If necessary, get help for your child — but get it for yourself, too. You may need it for your own strength. Go to your church's priest; seek out a rabbi or other clergyman. And, if need be, get professional help for the rest of your family. Don't allow scrutiny from neighbors to stop you from doing everything necessary to get your family back on a healthy course.*

— Barbara Hansen, mother of former ecstasy user Nicole

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## TIPS TO HELP PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS INTERVENE

- Hold a conversation when your child is not high or drunk, and when you can be calm and rational.
- Explain that your love and desire for your child's safety and well-being is the basis for your concern.
- Try to remain neutral and non judgmental.
- Tell your child the warning signs you've observed in her behavior that have made you concerned. Openly voice your suspicions, but avoid direct accusations.
- Listen to everything your child has to say. If she brings up related problems, promise you'll address them later. Reiterate that what you are addressing at the moment is her drug use, which is a serious health issue and may be at the core of other problems.
- If you need help during this conversation, involve another family member, your child's guidance counselor, or a physician.

### FOR KIDS IN CRISIS

### GET HELP

As with any health issue, an important first step is to get a professional evaluation of your child's condition. Call your doctor, local hospital, or state or local substance abuse agency for a referral.

Drug addiction is a treatable disease. And with proper treatment, you, your child and your family can live healthy, drug-free lives.

If it's determined that your child has developed a pattern of drug use or an addiction, the next step could be a drug treatment program.

Your school district may have a counselor who can refer you to treatment programs. Parents whose children have been through treatment programs may also be a good source of information.



*For more information on what to do if your child has a drug or alcohol problem, go to DrugFreeAZKids.org*

## YOUR CHILD NEEDS YOU



► Your child needs you! Help him lead a healthy, drug-free life. Drug and alcohol problems can be prevented, and preventing them starts with you.

As a parent or caregiver, you have a tremendous influence on the decisions your child makes. Your constant communication and caring may inspire your child to walk away from drugs and alcohol.

► Connect with other parents in similar circumstances at [DrugFreeAZKids.org](http://DrugFreeAZKids.org)

**Know what your kid may be exposed to.** Your son or daughter may be exposed to or begin to use drugs or alcohol as early as 12 years old and is more likely to be offered drugs from a friend than a stranger.

**Connect with your kid.** The transition from elementary to middle school or junior high is a critical time to stay involved in your kid's life and talk with him about drugs and alcohol.

Staying involved is easier than you think!

- Use teachable moments to start a conversation.
- Act out scenarios to help him turn down drugs or alcohol.
- Be aware of warning signs of drug or alcohol use.
- Communicate a "no use" expectation.

**Act now if you think your kid is using drugs or alcohol.**

Your suspicion or hunch may be correct. Know that you and your family are not alone, and you can get help. But you must act now. The earlier you intervene, the better chance your child has to regain his health and return to a drug-free life.

**WHAT TO SAY?**

**TIPS**

**What you can say to get the conversation going:**

- "I think you've got a problem and I need to talk with you about it."
- "You've scared me and broken our rules. Here's how we're going to help you."
- "Do you want to tell me what's going on?"

→ Find help for your child by visiting our treatment locator at [DrugFreeAZKids.org](http://DrugFreeAZKids.org)



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**Drugs lose their glamour quickly and in the end, they only bring sadness.**

When kids find something they love to do and that they're good at, then they can create a real sense of identity.

**Then they're truly independent people.**

**For me, that ‘something’ has been writing.**

- Abigail Vona, 19,  
author, student, and former drug user

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## **NEED HELP? GET HELP!**

### **DrugFreeAZKids.org**

**The Partnership for a Drug-Free America, Arizona Affiliate**

www.DrugFreeAZKids.org

3030 North Central Avenue, Suite 509

Phoenix, AZ 85012 • 602-264-5700

Fax 602-264-5704

### **Partnership for Drug-Free Kids**

www.drugfree.org • Comprehensive information, resources and tips from experts and other parents; opportunities to connect and share experiences with other families.

### **www.abovetheinfluence.com**

Website for teens dedicated to preventing underage drinking and drug use.

### **24 hour Access to Care Line**

877-931-9142

### **Parent Toll-Free Help Line\***

1-855-DRUGFREE (855-378-4373)

# **Stay Connected**

DrugFreeAZKids.org hosts workshops for parents of kids from the ages of 5 to 18. If you're interested in attending one of these great programs, please call our office at (602) 264-5700 or e-mail us at [partner@DrugFreeAZKids.org](mailto:partner@DrugFreeAZKids.org).

**DrugFreeAZKids.org:**  
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**Az Parents Connect<sup>SM</sup>** is designed to connect parents with the information they need to inspire their child to lead a healthy, drug-free life.

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