

Help Your Kids Turn Down Drugs

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There's almost no way you can shield your kids from finding out that illegal drugs, alcohol and tobacco exist – but you can help your child say (or even yell) “No!” when offered these substances.

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Before you work with your child on this issue, there's one thing you need to know: Kids don't usually get drugs from strangers. They get drugs from their friends. And that's the toughest issue of all – as you have to teach your kids that it's OK to say no to their friends, to the people they look to for validation, recognition, and fun. Strongly encourage them to avoid friendships with kids who use drugs.



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A great way to help kids prepare for drug-related situations is by acting out – also known as role playing – scenarios with them.

It's important to practice these scenarios with your kids before these situations really happen. Use the following scenarios as a starting point but create new ones based on your child's life:



• **Your daughter's soccer team**

won the big game and the kids have gathered under the bleachers for an unofficial after-game celebration.



Take the role of one of the most popular kids on the team and try to persuade your daughter to share a six-pack of beer. Help her develop firm (but friendly) phrases she can use to help her get out of the situation without alienating herself from her team. A few to try:

“My parents would kill me if they found out, and they always find out!”

“I tried it once and ended up vomiting on everything!”

• **Your son's after-school band** practice is cancelled at the last minute. You give him permission to bring one friend back to your house for the afternoon while you're at work. Take the role of the friend and try to convince your son that it's ok to smoke some marijuana since nobody else will be home for several hours. Help him develop phrases he can use in the situation:

“My dad would never trust me alone again if he found out I did that stuff. I would have to go to my aunt's house every day. Let's go play some video games instead.”

“No, I'm not into that stuff. Did you see Howie get kicked in the shin during kickball today?”

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Your kids will need to be prepared for protests.

Suggest that they meet them with a “broken record” technique – just keep repeating the reason they don't want to drink, smoke, or do drugs. Then they can try to change the subject or, if all else fails, they should say they have to go home or ask their friend to leave.