



TALKING ABOUT DRUGS

REASONS TO SAY **NO TO DRUGS**

People have many reasons for using drugs, and your teenager may be considering some of them. They also may have misconceptions about how many people are using drugs. Talking to them about why they can choose to say no is one of the best ways you can help them.

THE TRUTH ABOUT DRUG USE

Your teenager might think that everybody but them is experimenting with drugs. This may seem true because they see drug use:

- > on television, in movies and on social media,
- > when hanging out with friends, or
- > at parties and concerts.

REASONS PEOPLE MAY USE DRUGS

There are plenty of reasons why some people use drugs. Here are some of the common ones and some of the reasons why your teenager might choose a drug-free life.

EVERYBODY ELSE IS DOING IT. I WANT TO FIT IN.

- > They may consider doing drugs because they think it will help them fit in.
- > Instead of helping you fit in, drugs could actually destroy your friendships.
- > Drugs can waste your time and money, leaving little of either to spend with your friends.
- > You do not have to do all the same things your friends do, just to keep your friendships.

MY LIFE IS STRESSFUL. DRUGS HELP ME COPE.

- > Drugs are not the way to deal with stress. They change the way your brain works. This can lead to depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses.
- > If you already have a mental health issue, drugs can worsen your condition.
- > The best way to deal with stress is to confront it without using drugs. Try to identify what is causing your stress, and find a healthier way to handle it. Some good options are:
 - » hanging out with your friends who do not use drugs
 - » doing something you enjoy doing like exercise or sports, art, music, meditation or yoga
 - » watching television, surfing the web, or reading a book.

- > Sometimes seeking support and the help of others can help with the stress. Talk to someone you can trust, such as:

- » a therapist (mental health professional),
- » a school guidance counsellor, a teacher or coach,
- » your best friend,
- » your parents, or
- » a telephone helpline.

I WAS CURIOUS.

- > It is natural to be curious. But drugs are not worth the risk.
- > Drugs can affect your judgment and your decision-making skills, which could lead you to join in dangerous activities. For example, you might drive while under the influence or get in a car with someone driving under the influence.
- > You do not know how you or somebody else will react to a drug. You might suffer from an overdose of the drug and even possibly die.

I SAW IT ON TELEVISION OR IN A MOVIE.

- > What people think is popular can be strongly influenced by television shows and movies. Their images of drug use are unrealistic.
- > These media images rarely show the true consequences of drug use. In real life, using drugs often leads to:
 - » poor performance at school and at work,
 - » changes in your personality,
 - » conflicts with family and friends,
 - » problems with your health, and
 - » possible injury and/or death.
- > You may think that avoiding drugs will make you unpopular. But it is healthier for you to show people who you are by your activities and your friends.

I AM NOT ADDICTED. I CAN STOP AT ANY TIME.

- > Even the people who are now addicted to drugs once believed they could stop using any time.
- > People become addicted slowly over time. Once addicted, it can be very difficult to stop. Stopping can trigger withdrawal symptoms, which may be very unpleasant. People often begin to use drugs again in order to avoid these unpleasant symptoms.
- > If you become addicted, realizing this fact is the first step to recovery. Ask your health care provider for help. You may need the support of friends or family to cope during this difficult time.