

What's a Parent to Do?

Are you concerned? Don't discount your influence. Every child will face a conscious choice whether to smoke before they graduate from high school. According to a CASA study, a child who gets through to age 21 without smoking is almost certain to never use tobacco products in the future. The more available tobacco is, the more likely a child is to use it. Children are more likely to smoke when they believe that the harm associated with use is low.

You, the parents, hold the key to your children's decision about whether or not to smoke. 37.7% of teens tell researchers that their parents would neither approve nor disapprove of them smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day, compared to teens who say parents strongly disapprove (10.6%). One of the lessons our children have taught us is that we must speak clearly and powerfully about our position on this and many other topics.

How close are you to your children? Parents who maintain a relationship with their children are less likely to have children who choose risky behaviors. You need to find ways to engage your children. Here is a wonderful website [<http://theantidrug.com>] with suggestions on how to engage your children, especially in the area of speaking about the issues of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use and abuse. It will help you explore five different areas of needed connection with your children to increase their resistance to risky situations.

First, it talks about together time with your children. As we get busier and more things demand our time, this is an area that can suffer. Parents have time to take their children here and there, but it is the quality of the time that makes the difference. Do you actually have time to get to know your kids or are you always on the run and they're along for the ride? If you recognize changes in them that should be of concern, you need to know your children in order to recognize those differences.

Second, and this is a tough one, can you communicate with them? Certainly you need to have the discussion about friends and places where they hang out, but you also need to know and understand the new ways of communicating in the technological age. How up are you on text messaging language? Here's where your computer can help. Download translations.

Third, do you have credibility in the area of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use? We know that actions speak louder than words. Our children get plenty of double messages from society. You are their living and most important example. Are your actions consistent with your words?

Fourth, as a parent, you must speak clearly about your stance on tobacco, alcohol and other drug use. Your actions in this area validate your words. Parents say in the aftermath of a child involved with alcohol, tobacco and other drugs that they should have paid attention to the whispers in their hearts. Follow your suspicions.

And lastly, it isn't enough simply to prohibit a behavior. You catch more flies with honey. Does the quality time include an abundance of praise for your children's efforts to become the adults you hope them to be? Following these simple basics helps children resist the temptations that abound in the culture.

For more information, contact:

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