

Teaching your children the truth about drugs and gambling

If you're thinking about talking to your children about drugs and gambling, good for you. Children can have no better help than a concerned parent who thinks ahead and wants to keep them informed to keep them safe from harm.

Kids are smart, and they are learning all the time. You are the best person to provide them with the positive guidance they need to make good decisions. Many parents are afraid their children will some day become involved with drugs, but it is important to avoid emotional discussions or exaggeration. Instead, take the time to learn the facts about different drugs and gambling. This way, your child may be more likely to believe what you say and trust the information.

Here are some things to remember.

- *You start teaching kids about drugs earlier than you think you do.*

By telling them not to touch anything in the medicine cabinet, by not allowing them access to “adult” drinks like coffee and beer, by telling them to stay away from cigarettes, you have been teaching them from early childhood. Open up discussions with your child by talking about what they understand about drugs and alcohol, if they are concerned about anyone’s use, or if they have been asked to use.

- *A drug is a substance that is taken to change the way the body and mind function.*

It can do a lot of good, or it can do harm. If you take the right amount of medicine, you can get better. By taking too much, you can become very sick. Discuss this with your child. You can also talk about different kinds of drugs such as medicines, legal drugs and illegal drugs.

- *Discuss gambling in terms your child would understand.*

For example, ask them if they’ve ever “bet” anyone they couldn’t do something like walking along a fence, or if they’ve ever made a bet with a friend about winning a game. Maybe a chocolate bar was wagered. In these cases, a gamble is being taken; the person walking along the fence is risking getting hurt, and the person betting the chocolate is risking their treat. In both cases, they are risking something they value, whether they are conscious of it or not. Kids gamble for fun and don’t usually think of it as gambling. Usually they call it betting, daring or wagering. They will understand better what gambling is if you use those terms.

- *Try to think of examples they could relate to.*

Have you seen a movie or read a book where a character had a drug or gambling problem? Does your child have any examples to share? Use these discussions as opportunities to talk about the characters’ situations and their choices and decisions.

Keeping your kids informed is the best way to help them make good decisions.

For more information, contact your local AADAC office or call the AADAC Help Line at 1-866-33AADAC. We are available to give you information and support.

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