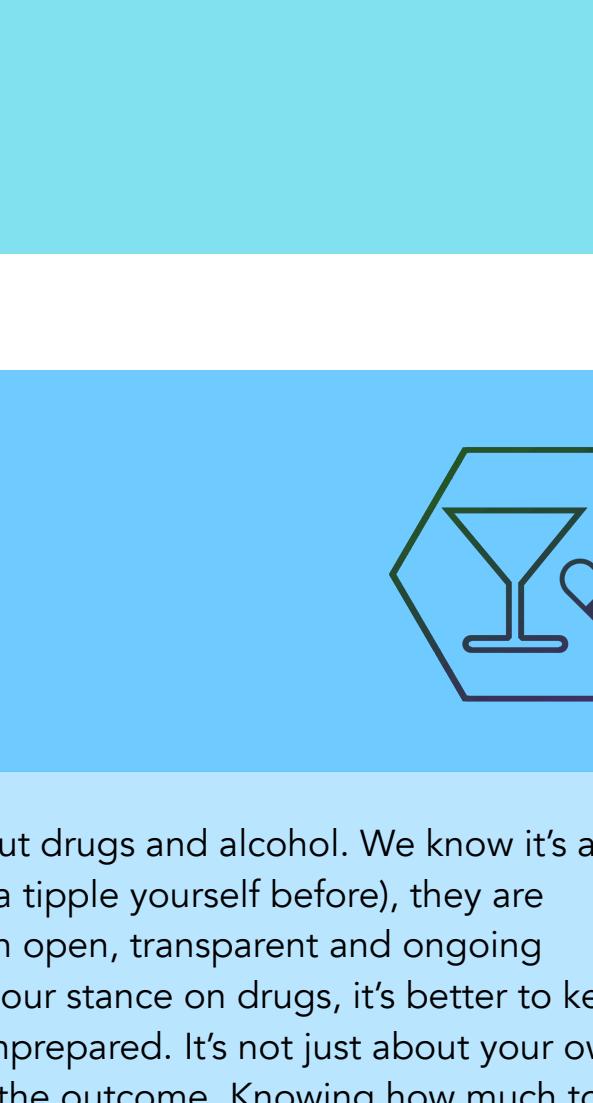


# A Parent's Guide on Talking to their Kids about Drugs and Alcohol

Start early, progress slowly, make a difference.



## Foreword

*Let's begin...*



Parents! This one is for you. A guide for helping you to talk to your kids about drugs and alcohol. We know it's a tricky issue, but the truth is people of all ages use them (you may have had a tipple yourself before), they are everywhere, and they are not all that inaccessible. We believe that having an open, transparent and ongoing conversation about them is the best way to keep everyone safe. Whatever your stance on drugs, it's better to keep your children informed than have them stumble into dangerous scenarios unprepared. It's not just about your own child either, if someone else is in difficulty, the right knowledge can change the outcome. Knowing how much to take, what not to mix, and what to do in emergencies are just some of the things that can save lives and reduce harm. These, alongside many other bits of useful advice, are detailed here on [drugsand.me](#). We hope that you enjoy this guide and that it proves useful in helping talk to your child about drugs and alcohol.

## How To Use This Guide

*Adapt it to your relationship*



First a word on how to use this guide: every parent-child relationship is unique and thus this guide is intended to provide you with ideas for you to reflect on and use to create a safe, ongoing conversational space. Don't give up too easily! It takes time to reap the rewards. If your child is not being receptive, take a step back and think about why that may be and how you might reach them differently. Remember that if it works with one child, it may not necessarily work with their siblings.

This guide applies more to teenagers. However, the principles discussed below apply just as well to other topics such as sex, knives and paracetamol. We encourage you to have these conversations with your children early as it will help them form healthy relationships towards risk-taking in all aspects of their lives.

## Your Toolkit

*Use these to help you get started*



### 1. Preparation: get clued up!

- Knowledge is power. If you know all there is to know about drugs, we salute you! However, for the uninitiated, [drugsand.me](#) is a great place to start; we also recommend [DrugScience](#). The more you know about drugs, the more you can communicate with your child in a meaningful way. Use your child's interests to engage your child in a discussion rather than just repeating what you know or have found online (eg. Policy, science, recreation, addiction etc). Drug information changes all the time, so it's important to stay up to date.



### 2. Setting: relaxed and casual

- Initially bringing up the topic may be rather tricky. Make it as relaxed and as casual as possible. Choosing the right time and environment is key. Good examples are in the car, at the dinner table or on a walk. On the way to an exam is not what we have in mind...
- In the same vein, choosing the right moment is just as important as the environment. Make sure that there isn't a big load on your child's mind, nor yours. Reaching out to them at the optimal moment can make all the difference. A relaxing Sunday afternoon perhaps.
- To keep it casual, don't bomb in with a statement like "Let's talk about drugs!". Use one of our conversation starters below to subtly bring in the topic...



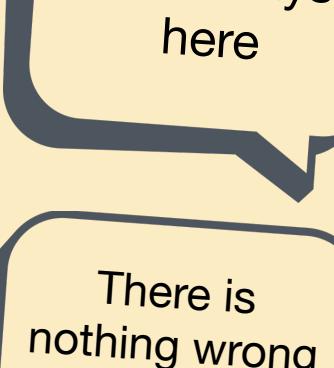
### 3. Style: non-confrontational and objective

- Avoid accusatory questions such as "Are you taking drugs?" These invariably trigger a defensive response and can burn bridges.
- Try to avoid personal pronouns such as "you" and replace them with phrases such as "they" or "someone" or "I heard that this person did..." This style ensures that you're simply presenting information to your child which they can pick into without feeling personally interrogated.
- Keep it objective by presenting facts neutrally; try not to taint them with your vision and if possible try and tease your emotions apart from the facts!



### 4. Maintain that safe conversational space

- A safe conversational space is one where your child feels comfortable in expressing themselves and can talk freely without fear of judgement or reprisal. Show kindness. A kind mentality is the ultimate creator of safe spaces and you'll get the most out of your conversations this way.



- To maintain the space, it is essential you engage in the conversation when you are calm and do not have external pressures yourself. It is important to hold back your judgements and praise moments where your child opens up and maybe even shows some vulnerability. Be a sponge, absorb what they have to say.

- The idea of your child taking drugs may trigger a knee-jerk emotional response. It's important not to go on the offensive as this will only make your child retract.

### 5. "The safest way to take drugs... is not to take them."

- Make it clear to your child that the safest way to take drugs is to not take them at all. However, children will be exposed to them at some point, so it is essential they feel prepared when confronted with them.



- Think carefully about the narrative you adopt with your child. Disparity between scare-tactics and reality tends to decrease credibility. If a young person's initial experimentation proves to be much more innocuous than they were led to believe, they may continue to experiment further and more recklessly without appreciating the risks.

- We warrant an open conversation, helping you broach the subject of drugs and alcohol with your child in an informal way. But remember that sometimes you need to sit down and have a serious conversation, especially in the event of a serious incident. Drugs can be harmful, and it is important to not approach the subject with too much levity.

### 6. Learn together

- A lovely way to approach the whole conversation is to engineer it so you can learn about drugs together instead of lecturing your child. They will pay more attention if the dynamic is one in which you are both learning rather than you telling them how it is.



- Sometimes your child will let on that they know more about the subject than you do. Take this as a positive sign; the more knowledgeable your child is, the safer they are. If this is the case, allow the roles to switch and let them take the stage to inform you about what they know.

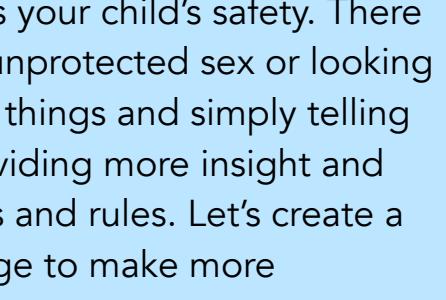
### 7. Patience and perseverance

- Regardless of how hard you have tried to be non-confrontational, sometimes the conversation just does not pan out the way you expected. In which case, retreat, leave some space and try again at a later date, maintaining all the principles mentioned thus far.



- Always remain calm and say things that are gentle and non-reactive. A list of phrases of supportive things to say when things get tricky can be found below, however, like most things, it is often not what is said that is effective, but how it is said.

## Conversation Starters



In this section we've curated a list of interesting articles, talks and videos for you to use as conversation starters. Peruse freely, and definitely look at the related media on the hosting websites for more ideas.

A fantastic video to learn about addiction!

**ADDICTION**

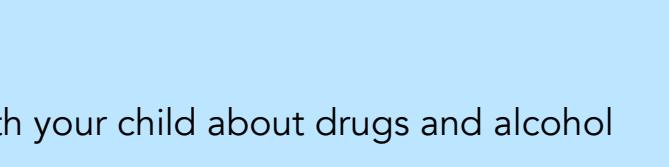
<https://youtu.be/ao8L-0nSYzg>

An insightful perspective on dangerous drugs:



<https://youtu.be/qS6LoRYUdhw>

Latest harm reduction techniques at festivals:



<https://youtu.be/kxkO1qrkzU>

BBC Three segment on Drug Testing:

**NOW SOME LOCAL POLICE FORCES HAVE ASKED THE LOOP TO HELP KEEP PUNTERS SAFE**

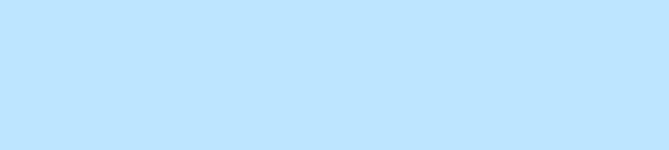
[https://youtu.be/b\\_uo0HD6P64](https://youtu.be/b_uo0HD6P64)

TED Talk on the latest medical research on magic mushrooms at Imperial College:

**Can Magic Mushrooms Unlock Depression? | Rosemarie Walla | TEDxOxford**

[https://youtu.be/b\\_uo0HD6P64](https://youtu.be/b_uo0HD6P64)

ITV article about the latest research on using MDMA to treat PTSD:



<http://www.itv.com/news/2018-05-02/mdma-ecstasy-ptsd/>

Sometimes it's overwhelming

I hear you

We all have the same thoughts

We support you

We are always here

We are all curious

We all take risks

You're not alone

You are safe

We all go through the same thing

I completely understand

You're a good person

I'm having the same thoughts as you

Our door is always open

If it's difficult, I want to face it with you

I'm with you

We all get it

I see exactly what you're saying

We are always here

We all have the same thoughts

We are all here

We are all here