

How to Talk to Your Kids About Drugs If You Did Drugs

The fact that you've had experience may actually be an advantage. Read on:

1. This isn't about you.

We all want to warn our kids about the dangers of drug abuse. But the single biggest reason so many of us are reluctant to start the conversation is because we're afraid we'll be asked that uncomfortable question: "Mom, Dad... did you do drugs?" So let's start by stating the obvious: This isn't about what you did or didn't do. It's about what your child is going to do or not do. So let's talk about how your personal experiences might help steer your child in a good direction.



2. Experts disagree.

For every psychologist who recommends openness and honesty about your past, another advises caution. The fact is, you can say too much. A good place to start is by considering your child. Some kids demand honesty. Others are happy just to talk. Use your judgment. You know your kids better than anyone.

3. When to Lie.

In our opinion? Never. Some parents, who used drugs in the past choose not to tell the truth, but risk losing their credibility if their kids discover the real story from a talkative uncle at a family party. Many experts suggest you give an honest answer—or no answer at all.

4. The whole truth?

Try to avoid giving your child more information than he or she asked for. (No need to reveal you smoked marijuana 132 times!) This is not a courtroom; it's a conversation.

5. Say what you mean to say.

Like other important conversations you'll have with your kids, the point you're trying to make is what really matters. In this case, it's crucial your kids understand that you don't want them to use drugs. Don't beat about the bush; say so. ("I don't want you to use drugs.") Then give your reasons why. ("Drugs are dangerous, expensive, unpredictable, distracting...") And yes, it's okay to have a lot of reasons.

6. What have you learned?

Before you talk, take stock. You've lived your entire life in a culture where drugs are a part of life. From the headlines on TV to your own experiences, you've seen too many examples of how drugs can change young lives for the worse. Your own experiences with drugs are just part of the bigger picture. The real opportunity here is to share what you've learned.

7. You could say it like this:

"I tried drugs because some kids I knew were experimenting, and I thought I needed to try drugs to fit in. It took me a while to discover that's never a very good reason to do anything. Do you ever feel pressured like that?"



Or like this:

"Everyone makes mistakes and trying drugs was a mistake I made. It made me do some dumb things. And it's hard to look back and see that I got anything good out of the experience. I love you too much to watch you repeat bad decisions I made."

The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice

Rick Scott, Governor

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"My experience with drugs is no guarantee that yours would be the same. Drugs affect everyone differently. So I wanted to share my experiences with you, because even if drugs didn't ruin my life, I've seen them ruin other people's lives. And God forbid you should be one of those people."



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