

Discussing Drugs With Your Children

What to Communicate

- Discuss how drugs harm people — young people especially. Point out the harm of drugs physically (slowed growth, impaired coordination, etc.), socially (being disconnected from society, loss of friendships, loss of interest) and educationally (impaired memory and attention levels and reduced motivation).
- State that you don't find drug use acceptable. Many children say their parents never stated this simple principle. Don't forget to point out that these drugs are against the law.
- Point out that there are many positive, drug-free alternatives that you'll help your children explore.
- Emphasize that you place a high value on your children's good, special qualities — qualities that drugs can and will destroy or diminish.
- Encourage your children's power to say no. Provide a clear message about the behavior you expect, that you trust in your children to live up to your hopes and that you believe your children, knowing right from wrong, are smart enough to say no to drugs.

How to Communicate

- Be calm and open. Discuss drug facts frankly and without anger. Don't exaggerate. The facts are chilling in and of themselves.
- Communicate in terms of subject matter, not personalities. Challenging the choice of current friends might lead to defensive or defiant behavior.
- Be an active listener. Let your children tell you what they know about drugs, what their own experiences have been and what fears or concerns already exist.
- Use "teachable moments." In contrast to a formal sit-down lecture, use a variety of situations — television news, TV dramas, books, newspapers and local situations. Capitalize on one point, as you'll have opportunities to make other points. Ask your children how they would have reacted and what else might have been done or might have happened.
- Keep the dialogue ongoing. Communication won't be as effective if the subject is brought up in one massive lecture. Anti-drug use messages should be an ongoing theme with your children. The content and intent should be repeated as an accepted family value, but be sure you encourage and allow for two-way communication.
- Remember that you set the example. Your children will compare your actions with your words and be guided accordingly. If you choose to drink, never mix drinking with driving or any other activity requiring skill and coordination. If you smoke, it would help you and your children if you could quit. And, don't use illegal drugs, period!

Why Children Use Drugs

Children may turn to drugs for one or more of these reasons:

- For fun
- To fit in

- To take risks
- Out of boredom
- Because of curiosity
- To get through the day
- To escape pain in their lives
- To do what friends are doing
- Because a role model did it

Signs of Drug Use

- Mood changes (more irritable, secretive, withdrawn, overly sensitive, inappropriately angry)
- Irresponsibility (late coming home, late for school or class, involved in more accidents than usual, dishonest)
- Different friends or lifestyle changes (new interests, unexplained increases in cash)
- Difficulty in/lack of communication (refuses to discuss changes in behavior, becomes defensive if asked about drug use)
- Physical deterioration (memory loss, concentration difficulties, weight loss, unhealthy appearance)

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About Dating Abuse

Relationships may last anywhere from a few days or weeks to a few months or years, with some ups and downs as well as intense emotional, romantic and sexual feelings.

Abusive dating relationships often begin just like healthy, loving ones.

- An abusive partner may be caring, attentive and romantic in the relationship's beginning but may become more controlling, possessive or jealous over time.
- Abusive behaviors might only occur in private so that friends and family members remain unaware of the abuse.
- Once others become concerned, the dating abuse victim may make excuses for the abusive partner's behaviors or feel at fault and take the blame for provoking the abuse.

To get helpful advice and learn about the warning signs of abuse so that you can spot them in your dating relationship or be prepared to help a loved one in an abusive dating relationship, you can:

- Watch [Don't Let Yourself](#), a two-part, 20-minute video created by teens in Texas
- Go to loveisrespect.org, a site designed for young people in dating relationships
- Talk, chat online or text a helpline counselor

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ) Relationships

LGBTQ teens and young adults may also become involved with an abusive partner. In its 2008 first-in-Virginia community assessment, the Virginia Anti-Violence Project (VAVP) found LGBTQ experiences of violence widespread throughout Virginia. Of the respondents who participated in the assessment:

- 41 percent had been in an abusive relationship
- 30 percent had been stalked
- 36 percent had experienced sexual violence as a youth (17 and younger)
- 26 percent had experienced sexual violence as an adult

In July 2013, the first Virginia telephone helpline was launched for LGBTQ Virginians to report and seek assistance with partner abuse and sexual violence. Call 866-356-998 or go to the [Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance](#) for more details.

Don't Wait for a Tragedy

Too often, our headlines feature news stories about tragic endings to abusive dating relationships, like that of Yeardeley Love, a University of Virginia student who was murdered in 2010 by her former boyfriend. Yeardeley's mother and sister, Sharon and Lexie, encourage everyone to learn about dating

Dating Abuse Hotlines

loveisrespect.org

24-Hour Hotline: 866-331-9474

Text "loveis" to 22522

Go to loveisrespect.org for a live chat

Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance

LGBTQ Partner Abuse and Sexual Assault Helpline


866-356-6998

Hours: Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.

abuse so that they can help someone they love. Watch [their interview](#) with Katie Couric.
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Preventing Abuse & Promoting Healthy Relationships

A current prevention effort of Project PEACE — involving a partnership with Arlington Public Schools and community faith leaders — focuses on helping Arlington teens to avoid dating violence and build healthy dating relationships.

With helpful resources from the [Zonta Club of Arlington Area](#), Project Peace developed [Arlington's Project PEACE Resources List](#) . Developed for school administrators, community faith leaders, counselors, parents and others to use in a variety of school, faith and community settings, this guide includes practical activities and information on locating online resources — and other materials — that promote healthy teen dating relationships and prevent teen dating abuse. The guide organizes information into nine different sections:

- Curriculums
- Male-Specific Resources
- Faith Community Resources
- Campaigns & Social Action Resources
- Online Resources
- Special Population Resources
- Parent Resources
- Video Resources
- Other Prevention Resource Guides

For more information on Project PEACE and its initiatives, go to the [Project PEACE](#) main page or call at 703-228-1678.

Go to [Preventing Abuse & Promoting Healthy Relationships](#) to find valuable resources for teachers, faith leaders, youth workers, counselors, coaches and parents on how to prevent dating abuse and promote healthy dating relationships.

Project PEACE Quick Links

- [Project PEACE Home](#)
- [About Domestic Violence](#)
- [About Dating Abuse](#)
- [Preventing Abuse & Promoting Healthy Relationships](#)
- [Teen Dating Resource Guide](#) 