



# PREVENTION TALK

## COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR TEEN

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JULIE HOGAN, PH.D., DIRECTOR

By Diane Glass, Prevention Application Management Coordinator  
Edited by Kris Gabrielsen, Associate Director

**D**o you know the number one reason teens give for not using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs?

If you answered “**parents**,” you are correct. Research shows teens report they choose not to use because they do not want to disappoint their parent(s).<sup>1</sup>

Parents **cannot** always be there to help their teen make the right choices. Parents **can** help their child develop skills to manage their need for peer acceptance in positive and productive ways.<sup>3</sup>

Communicate with your teen regarding the myth “*everyone is doing it.*” This myth fuels perception that drug use is normal. Research shows when young people believe “*everyone is doing it,*” the rate of use increases.<sup>4</sup>

Parents who develop an open and trusting communication link between themselves and their teen help their teen to refuse offers to use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. If a child feels comfortable talking openly with their parent, the parent has a better chance of guiding him or her toward healthy decision making.

### REMEMBER

*“Every child in America is at risk of using drugs regardless of race, ethnicity or economic status.”<sup>2</sup>*

For more information call:

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### TO THINK ABOUT...

- Everyone is **NOT** doing it (i.e. drinking, smoking and using illicit drugs).
- Respect builds and develops respect.
- Try this open-ended question... “What was the greatest part of your day today?”

### ACTION STEPS:

- Be a good listener. Listen to what your teen has to say without interruption.
- Ask open-ended questions by avoiding questions that have simple “yes” or “no” answers.
- Give honest answers to your teens’ questions. Set a good example by honestly answering your teens’ questions. This process will help build trust.
- Make conversations a “win-win” experience. If you show respect for your teen’s point of view, he or she will be more likely to listen and respect yours.

### SOURCES CITED:

- <sup>1</sup>Catalano, R. F., Kosterman, R., Haggerty, K. P., Hawkins, J. D., & Spoth, R. (1998). *A universal intervention for the prevention of substance abuse: Preparing for the drug free years.* In R. S. Ashery & E. B. Robertson & K. L. Kumpfer (Eds.), *NIDA Research Monograph No. 177: Drug abuse prevention through family interventions* (NIH Publication No. 99-4135, 130-159). Rockville, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse.
- <sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1999). *National survey of American attitudes on substance abuse II.* Rockville, MD: Author.
- <sup>3</sup>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2002). *Keeping youth drug free* (DHHS Publication No. SMA-3772). Rockville, MD: Author.
- <sup>4</sup>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1999). *National household survey of drug abuse.* Rockville, MD: Author.