

September 2016

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Parents Matter

Havana Area Prevention Team

Family Day—September 26th

Special points of interest:

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CASAColumbia *Family Day* is Monday, September 26th. Families, communities, and organizations all over the country are getting ready to celebrate with a variety of fun-filled activities and events. We hope you'll join the celebration! All of the activity surrounding CASAColumbia *Family Day* helps to remind parents that it is vital to keep the lines of communication open, especially during adolescence when kids are at risk of engaging in risky behavior including smoking, drinking or using other drugs. Make every day *Family Day* in your home!

How to Help Your Child Say No

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse-

It's important for parents to be hands-on in helping children navigate difficult situations that involve drugs and alcohol. We know that even schools that claim to be drug-free are rarely drug-free environments. We also know that peer pressure is a significant influence on whether children choose to experiment with substances. So when they are exposed, there are several factors that distinguish the children who say yes from the children who say no. Your children need to be prepared for that moment when the offer comes and they need your help to do it.

Role-playing exercises are a good way to help children practice turning down an offer to drink, smoke or take drugs. You can take turns and have them try to pressure you into doing something dangerous too, which is a good way to model different ways to respond without sounding too preachy.

You should use different approaches when coaching boys and girls to turn down drug offers. Boys are likelier to be offered drugs at an earlier age than girls and in a public place such as a park, playground, or on the street. This means that it may be easier for a boy to walk away from the situation when it happens—but it may be harder for your son to avoid places where drug offers occur.



A friend may say: "C'mon, everyone will think we're cool." Coach your son to explain why doing drugs isn't cool: "It's addictive; it messes with your memory and intelligence; most kids aren't doing it." Another response that might feel comfortable to your son is suggesting an alternative activity—"No, thanks, I'd rather stay healthy, and pot makes you dumb and lazy. Let's go shoot some hoops instead."

When girls are offered cigarettes, alcohol or drugs, it's more likely to be in a private setting, like at a friend's house or when alone with an older boyfriend. Because it happens in an enclosed and intimate setting, it may be harder for your daughter to simply walk away or get out of the situation. Ask her to pretend her older boyfriend offers her a joint and says, "Want to try it? All the girls my age smoke marijuana, it's no big deal." You should acknowledge that saying no may be hard for your daughter because she wants her boyfriend to like her, but coming up with a response that makes her feel confident and comfortable ahead of time will take the pressure off. Your daughter may also feel more comfortable simply saying no than debating whether drugs are a big deal. For example, she could practice saying, "No, thanks," or "I can't do that, my parents would kill me."

Remember: it's okay to encourage your child to use you as an excuse! Sometimes, when your child is uncomfortable with a situation, blaming Mom and Dad is the easiest way out for both your son and daughter.

Havana Area PREVENTION TEAM

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Promotes comprehensive community-wide prevention efforts.

Empowers youth & families to develop and lead healthy lifestyles.

Havana Area Prevention Team is a non-profit organization that seeks to promote:

- Healthy, happy, and responsible lifestyles for area youth and families.
- Awareness of positive alternatives and support of positive actions and activities for youth and families in and around the Havana area.

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How to Get Kids Talking at the Dinner Table.

- *The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, June 2016*

Many parents, especially parents of older teens, oftentimes feel their kids don't want to sit around the dinner table and talk to them. You can rest assured that this is actually not the case. At The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, we surveyed thousands of teens. Kids do, in fact, want to have family dinners. More than eight out of ten teens of all ages preferred to have dinner with their families. And what they want at dinner is to talk to you!

Try making talking about anything and everything part of your normal family routine, and establish that free exchange as early in life as possible. One great way to get kids talking at dinner is to use conversation starters. At your next family dinner try some of our conversation starters below.

For preteens:

- What are the best and worst things that happened today?
- What's your favorite place in the house to hang out?
- If you were in charge of the music for our family vacation, which songs would you pick?
- Which TV show is the most fun to watch?
- What do you like about your friends?
- What's your favorite amusement park ride?
- What's favorite toy or game?

For teens:

- What values are most important to you?
- Who's the greatest athlete of all time?
- What can each of us do to make the world a better place?
- What can we do as a family?
- Did you see anything fun on YouTube today?
- Who's your favorite teacher and why?
- What's your favorite subject in school?
- What's your favorite pizza topping?



All of these activities can help the dialogue between you and your child grow more each day, so that when it comes time to talk about nicotine, alcohol, and other drugs, it will feel more open, honest, and natural for everyone.