“How to Talk to Your Child About Drugs”

Jericcho Middle School
Principal’s Coffee Hour
March 1, 2012
Challenges of Parent-Child Communication

The BASIC PROBLEM

I CAN SEE YOU, I CAN HEAR YOU,

YET I CANNOT COMPREHEND ANYTHING YOU SAY OR DO.
Challenges of Parent-Child Communication
Today Show:
Interview with Joseph A. Califano

How to Raise a Drug-Free Kid:

http://video.today.msnbc.msn.com/today/32672342#32672342
Talking To Your Children About Substance Abuse: The Challenges

- With a teenager especially, how do you connect on a level that is comfortable and natural?

- How do you become engaged in your son’s life without making him feel as if you are invading his space? How do you ask questions without making your daughter feel like she’s being interrogated?

- How do you talk about substance use (or other risky behaviors) without it turning into a confrontation or a fight?
Talking To Your Children About Substance Abuse: Tips for Parents

- The first step in building good communication is to start early spending quality time just talking to your child ..... using the moments you have together to get to know your kids and to let your kids get to know you.

- Talk about anything and everything, it doesn’t matter so much what the subject is as long as you and your children are communicating openly.
Talking To Your Children About Substance Abuse: Tips for Parents

- Conversations are also a give-and-take operation: Make sure that you are receiving (listening) as much as you are giving (talking).
- Being a good listener takes some practice. Give your children your undivided attention. Make eye contact. Paraphrase what they’ve said to confirm that you’ve heard them correctly.
- Ask open-ended follow-up questions to encourage conversation. Don’t interrupt or jump too quickly to fill in silences; allow your children to express themselves fully.
Talking To Your Children About Substance Abuse: Tips for Parents

- Know the facts and stick to the facts. Present accurate information to help you make the case that your teen should stay away from drugs. You don’t need to exaggerate or embellish the dangers of tobacco, alcohol, and drug use.

- When you talk to your kids, focus on facts that are relevant to them.
Talking To Your Children About Substance Abuse: Tips for Parents

- Take advantage of opportunities in the news to talk to your teen. When there’s a story on television or in the papers about a drug overdose, celebrity antics under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or a drunk-driving incident, use it to open up a conversation and probe your teen’s reaction.
Talking To Your Children About Substance Abuse: Tips for Parents

- Balancing understanding and firm guidance is no easy task, but if you master it, you will find your child more willing to talk to you about the problems he faces.

- Once you and your child are comfortable talking to one another, you can persuasively convey important messages about what behavior is — and is not — acceptable for your family.
Talking To Your Children About Substance Abuse: Tips for Parents

- Your child will be comfortable discussing difficult issues with you if he knows what your views are, what your parenting style is, and that you’ll react to the difficult truths your child may reveal without yelling and/or rushing to conclusions. Self-discipline on your part is important.
Talking To Your Children About Substance Abuse: Tips for Parents

- What do you do if your child asks you, point blank, “Mom [or Dad], did you smoke marijuana when you were a kid?”

- Whether your answer is yes or no, the ensuing discussion shouldn’t be about you, but about your child and why he’s asking.... Your child has just opened the window for you to start a conversation about substance use, so take advantage of the opportunity!
Talking To Your Children About Substance Abuse: Tips for Parents

- There’s no consensus, no hard-and-fast rule, about how you should answer your child’s question about your own history of alcohol and drug use. Whether and what to tell your child will vary from family to family, depending on the situation of the child (age, risk factors, etc.) and the experience of the parents.

- Telling the truth doesn’t mean disclosing everything. Remember, you are the parent; your job is to keep your kids safe and healthy. As the authority figure, you have the right to tell your child only what you think is appropriate for a parent to disclose. There’s no parental obligation to disclose your childhood foibles.
6 Parenting Practices that Help Reduce the Chances that Your Child will Develop a Drug or Alcohol Problem

1. Build a warm and supportive relationship with your child.
2. Be a good role model when it comes to drinking, taking medicine and handling stress.
3. Know your child’s risk level.
4. Know you’re child’s friends.
5. Monitor, supervise and set boundaries.
6. Have ongoing conversations and provide information about drugs and alcohol.

From: The Partnership at Drug-Free Org