



## **5 Mistakes Parents Make Talking With Their Kids About Drugs**

### **1. Using scare tactics instead of facts**

Many parents resort to exaggerated horror stories or worst-case scenarios, which can damage credibility once teens encounter different information or see peers using substances without immediate catastrophic consequences.

### **2. Having "the talk" once rather than ongoing conversations**

Treating drug education as a one-time lecture rather than an evolving dialogue misses opportunities to adapt information as children grow and face different social pressures and situations.

### **3. Avoiding personal experience questions**

Getting flustered or refusing to answer when kids ask about parents' own experiences creates an authenticity gap. Thoughtful, age-appropriate honesty (without glorifying past use) builds trust.

### **4. Focusing only on abstinence without teaching harm reduction**

While discouraging drug use is appropriate, also teach them danger signs to be aware of, in case they do decide to experiment – or are unknowingly drugged – to minimize the risk of addiction and death.

### **5. Stigmatizing addiction or mental health issues**

When parents speak about addiction or substance users in derogatory terms, it makes it harder for kids to seek help if they or their friends develop problems, fearing judgment rather than support.