



## Parent Assignment #2: Grade 5

### Talking With Kids About Alcohol and Drugs

The issue of drugs can be very confusing to young children. If drugs are so dangerous, then why is the family medicine cabinet full of them? And why do TV, movies, music and advertising often make drug and alcohol use look so cool? We need to help our kids to distinguish fact from fiction. And it's not too soon to begin. National studies show that the average age when a child first tries alcohol is 11; for marijuana, it's 12. And many kids start becoming curious about these substances even sooner. So let's get started!



#### **Listen carefully**

Student surveys reveal that when parents listen to their children's feelings and concerns, their kids feel comfortable talking with them and are more likely to stay drug-free.

#### **Encourage choice**

Allow your child plenty of opportunities to become a confident decision-maker. An 8-year-old is capable of deciding if he/she wants to invite lots of friends to a birthday party or just a close pal or two. A 12-year-old can choose whether he/she wants to go out for chorus or join the school band. As your child becomes more skilled at making all kinds of good choices, you will both feel more secure in their ability to make the right decision concerning alcohol and drugs if and when the time arrives.

#### **Establish a clear family position on drugs**

Establishing your families' position on the use of drugs, other than prescribed for a specific illness, helps children learn boundaries. Explain why, "because we love you and we know that drugs can hurt your body and make you sick," and answer any questions that may come up.

#### **Be a good example**

Children will do what you do much more readily than what you say. So try not to reach for a beer the minute you come home after a tough day; it sends the message that drinking is the best way to unwind. Offer dinner guests non-alcoholic drinks in addition to wine and spirits. And take care not to pop pills, even over-the-counter remedies, indiscriminately. Your behavior needs to reflect your beliefs.

#### **Discuss what makes a good friend**

Since peer pressure is so important when it comes to kids' involvement with drugs and alcohol, it makes good sense to talk with your children about what makes a good friend, "that a friend is someone who shares their values and experiences, respects their decisions and listens to their feelings." Ask about your child's friends. Get to know the parents of other children that your child is friendly with.

#### **Build self-esteem**

Kids who feel good about themselves are much less likely than other kids to turn to illegal substances to get high. Praise what is done well, and if you need to criticize your child, talk about the action, not the person.

## **Repeat the message**

Information and lessons about drugs are important enough to repeat frequently. So be sure to answer your children's questions as often as they ask them to initiate conversation whenever the opportunity arises. If you suspect a problem, seek help. If your child becomes withdrawn, loses weight, starts doing poorly in school, turns extremely moody, has glassy eyes -- or if the drugs in your medicine cabinet seem to be disappearing too quickly -- talk with your child and reach out to community organizations that can help you.

Source: <http://www.talkingwithkids.org>

## **Assignment**

Ask your child to review the day's lesson, and handouts with you. Discuss their feelings about the lesson, and any issues that may have come up for them that day in school.

Choose one or more of the following:

1. Ask your child to 'teach' you what they learned about drugs at Leaders. Ask them to share the booklet "Let's Talk Drugs" with you.

2. Role play how to say "NO."

Role play ways in which your child can refuse to go along with his friends without becoming a social outcast. Try something like this, "Let's play a game. Suppose you and your friends are at Andy's house after school and they find some beer in the refrigerator and ask you to join them in drinking it. The rule in our family is that children are not allowed to drink alcohol. So what could you say?"

If your child comes up with a good response, praise him. If he doesn't, offer a few suggestions like, "No, thanks. Let's play with Sony PlayStation instead," or "No thanks. I don't drink beer. I need to keep in shape for basketball."

3. When watching TV or a movie and drugs (alcohol, tobacco, other drugs) are mentioned or glamorized ask your child what they know about that drug. If your child has more questions, answer them. If not, let it go. Short, simple comments said and repeated often enough will get the message across.

4. Setting aside at least 15 uninterrupted minutes per child per day to talk, play a game, or take a walk together, lets him/her know that you care. This will help strengthen communication and bonds with your child.

5. Spend some time going through your medicine cabinet and check what is there. Also check the sell-by dates on any ointment or creams. Make a list and monitor any medicine in the cabinet that could be misused.



Livingston Youth and Community Services

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Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Which assignment did you choose, and why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Was this lesson helpful? Yes/ No

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Raffle Entry

## Parent Assignment #2: Grade 5 Let's Talk Drugs

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade 5

Please complete this sheet and return to LYCS, PO Box 822, Livingston, NJ 07039,  
Fax: 973-992-9318, email: [lycs@livingston.org](mailto:lycs@livingston.org), or leave at reception in school