

Helping Teens Resist Pressure to Try Drugs



The peer pressure to try drugs is no less intense than the sexual pressure that so many adolescents face. As with any situation that could conceivably lead to trouble, we need to prepare our kids to refuse offers of alcohol and other drugs—preferably without alienating their peers, although sometimes that isn't possible. The strategies below mirror those for rebuffing sexual advances.

Give Them The Words To Avoid Temptation

“Just say no”? It's a start, but few teens bent on enticing a peer to try drugs will let the matter rest there. In fact, substance abusers tend to view converting the “straight” kid as an irresistible challenge, if not their civic duty, and they can be exasperatingly persistent.

“C'mon, dude, you'll love the buzz from this stuff! It's kickin'.”

Role-play this scene with your youngster. The repertoire of possible replies includes:

- A firm but friendly “No thanks!” There's no need for self-righteousness, along the lines of “Getting drunk? That's for losers.” Let's encourage teens not to label other people as good or bad, only their behavior. Using drugs is wrong, but that doesn't necessarily make the drug abuser a bad person.
- Change the subject. “No thanks. Hey, what did you think of that test yesterday in social studies?”
- Suggest a change of plan. “I was hoping to get you guys to shoot some hoops down at the school. How about it?”
- Say no repeatedly:
“Wanna party with us? This weed rocks!”
“No thanks.”
“Aw, c'mon, man! It's killer stuff!”
“Sorry, not interested.”
“Not even one toke?”
“Not even one.”
- Teach your child respect for her body. “No thanks, I don't drink. Besides, the girls' swim team has a meet tomorrow, and I need to be in top shape.”
- Then there's always this standby: “My parents would kill me if they found out that I got high, and they *always* manage to find out!”

Warn Your Child About The Dangers of “Date-Rape” Drugs

In particular, the odorless, colorless drug benzodiazepine flunitrazepam (Rohypnol) has been linked to thousands of rapes in which youngsters secretly drop it into their unsuspecting dates' drinks, alcoholic or otherwise. It quickly causes them to be dizzy, disoriented and to black out.

Share the following tips with your daughter. Reading them could spare her from having to experience one of the most traumatic events of her life, and maybe even save her life.

- Never leave your drink unattended at a party, dance club, restaurant or other gathering. If you have to use the rest room, take it with you or ask a trusted friend to keep an eye on it until you return.
- Don't accept open-container drinks from anyone you don't know well (excluding servers and bartenders).
- Although these substances are difficult to detect in a beverage, be aware of the taste, texture and appearance of your drink. For instance, GHB has a salty taste, while Rohypnol has been described as slightly bitter when sprinkled into alcohol. The new green tablets make light-colored liquids assume a bluish hue; darker liquids turn cloudy.
- Friends look out for friends. If you suspect that another girl has ingested any drug—including alcohol, the most abused depressant of all—that could leave her defenseless against a possible rape attempt, get her out of the situation.

A young woman who believes she may have been drugged and sexually abused should go to a rape crisis center or hospital at once and alert the staff. Among other tests, a urine sample will be analyzed for evidence of any of these substances, which usually remain detectable for about three days.

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