

How Parents/Guardians can talk to youth about harms and risks of Vaping?



Vaping has become a large problem for youth across the region. Talking to youth about vaping including the risks, harmful side effects, and addiction can be a difficult conversation to breach, but it is essential. When talking about substance use, it is important to highlight three main parts: side effects, addiction and safe choices.

When addressing vaping side effects, you can start with the impact vaping has on the body, more specifically the brain and the effect it has on daily life. The use of nicotine can significantly impact mood, impulse control and overall brain functioning.

Overtime, vaping nicotine can also lead to addiction. Nicotine alters the levels of dopamine in the brain. Dopamine is the feel good chemical, so as more and more is released the body becomes dependent on nicotine leading to addictive effects. The body is also affected by vaping due to the chemicals and carcinogens in vape juice, which can cause lung and airway damage, heart issues, and potentially cancer.

When discussing safe choices, it is often the most difficult part of the conversation due to the youth culture of peer and social pressure. Discussing the side effects, as well as promoting self-esteem and healthy decision-making can all lead to safe choices and healthy alternatives. In these conversations, it is ultimately important to make sure to have an open, honest conversation free of stigma and judgment. Being able to offer support, resources, and a trusted adult to talk to are all important parts of preventing youth substance use and addiction.

TALKING WITH TEENS ABOUT VAPING

ADAPTED FROM "HOW TO TALK WITH TEENAGERS ABOUT VAPING" | LISA DAMOUR | NEW YORK TIMES

ACCEPT THAT FACTS DON'T GO FAR.



We (adults included) routinely do things we know to be unhealthy. Work with the facts to get the conversation started- but don't assume it gets the job done.

SHARE YOUR CONCERNS.



Acknowledge and understand that not all hazards are equal. We keep our teen's trust when we are up front about what we know and what remains unclear.

ASK WHY BEFORE SUGGESTING WHY NOT.



If adults only address the downsides to risky temptations, it makes it easier for teens to dismiss us. Appreciating the appeal of vaping and other risky things can sometimes open the door for adults to say their piece.

GET THEIR PERSPECTIVE.



Start with genuine curiosity and set judgement aside. "Do you know kids who are vaping" or "What's your take on vaping?" Finding out what they already know not only shapes how the exchange might go, but may also increase the odds that they want to hear what you know too.

CONCEDE THE LIMITS OF YOUR POWER.



Trying to make a stance that doesn't overestimate the adult's control and underestimate the teen's independence. Voicing high expectations while acknowledging the adult's limited power can help teens remember to make good decisions for themselves.

