

Answering the Question: "Did you ever use drugs?"

For many parents, a child's "Did you ever use drugs?" question is a tough one to answer. Unless the answer is no, most parents stutter and stammer through an answer and leave their kids feeling like they haven't learned anything—or even worse, that their parents are hypocrites. Yes, it's difficult to know what to say. You want your kids to follow your rules and you don't want them to hold your history up as an example to follow—or as a tool to use against you. But the conversation doesn't have to be awkward, and you can use it to your advantage by turning it into a teachable moment.

Some parents who used drugs in the past choose to lie about it—but they risk losing their credibility if their kids ever discover the truth. Many experts recommend that you give an honest answer—but you don't have to tell your kids every detail. As with conversations about sex, some details should remain private. Avoid giving your child more information than she asked for. And ask her a lot of questions to make sure you understand exactly why she's asking about your drug history. Limit your response to that information.

The discussion provides a great opportunity to speak openly about what attracted you to drugs, why drugs are dangerous, and why you want your kids to avoid making the same mistake. The following are good examples of the tone you can take and wording you can use:

"I took drugs because some of my friends used them, and I thought I needed to in order to fit in. In those days, people didn't know as much as they do now about all the bad things that can happen when you take drugs."

"Everyone makes mistakes and trying drugs was one of my biggest mistakes ever. I'll do anything to help you avoid making the same stupid decision that I made when I was your age."

"I started drinking when I was young and, as you can see, it's been a battle ever since. Because of my drinking, I missed a big part of growing up, and every day I have to fight with myself so it doesn't make me miss out on even more—my job, my relationships, and most importantly, my time with you. I love you too much to watch you make the same mistakes I've made."

Remember, the issue isn't about your past. It's about your children's future. What's important now is that your kids understand that you don't want them to use drugs.

Source: Drug Free America

Compass Mark Drug & Alcohol Information Center
630 Janet Avenue
Lancaster, PA 17601
(717) 299-2831