

Tips for Grades K-3

Have you noticed something new about your child lately? Now that he or she has left the preschool years behind, a little individual is starting to sprout! The fifth through eighth years of a child's life are so exciting. They begin to figure out what makes them, well, them. But that doesn't mean your child doesn't want to hear from you—your little one is still tied to family and is eager to please you. This makes your child very open to your ideas and messages—a great time to continue talking about a healthy drug-free lifestyle.

This is also a very important time to let your child know how you feel about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. As kids spend more time out in the world—at school and with their peers—they begin to collect messages from lots of new places. They also start to take greater notice of what they hear and read in advertisements, on television, and in the movies. Your child will definitely need your help as he or she tries to make sense of all that new information. During these ongoing talks with your child, it's essential to listen. Being a good listener gives you insights into your child's world and shows you care about her concerns.

The following suggestions will help you help your child live a healthy, drug-free life:

- **Keep your discussions about tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs factual and focused on the present.** Future consequences are too distant to have any meaning. Let them know that it's not as easy to shoot a hoop or finish a puzzle while high on marijuana, or that smoking causes bad breath.
- **Talk to your kids about the drug-related messages they receive through advertisements, the news media, and entertainment sources.** These messages may conflict with the things you've taught them. Some TV shows or movies may even glamorize drug use. Encourage your kids to ask you questions about the messages they learn in other places. And remember to ask them how they feel about the things they've heard—you'll learn a great deal about what they're thinking.
- **Consider the following topics when discussing drugs with your child: what alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs are like; why drugs are illegal; and what harm drugs can do to users.** You should also consider talking about the differences between the medicinal uses and illegal uses of drugs, and how drugs can impact the families and friends of users.
- **Set clear rules and behave the way you want your kids to behave.** Tell them the reasons for your rules. If you use tobacco or alcohol, be mindful of the message you are sending to your children.

- **Help your child explore new ways to express their feelings.** Kids who feel shy having a one-on-one conversation might open up through painting, writing, or emailing a friend or relative.
- **Work on problem solving by focusing on the types of problems kids come across.** Help them find long-lasting solutions to homework trouble, a fight with a friend, or in dealing with a bully. Be sure to point out that quick fixes are not long-term solutions.
- **Give your kids the power to escape from situations that make them feel bad.** Make sure they know that they don't have to—and shouldn't—stay in a place that makes them feel bad about themselves. Also let them know that they don't need to stick with friends who don't support them.
- **Get to know your child's friends—and their friends' parents.** Check in by phone or a visit once in a while to make sure they are giving their children the same kinds of messages you give your children.
- **Sign your kids up with community groups or programs that emphasize the positive impact of a healthy lifestyle.** Your drug-free messages will be reinforced—and your kids will have fun, learn, and make drug-free healthy friends.

What drugs are in the school-age child's world?

- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Ritalin

Source: Drug Free America

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