



Roanoke Area Youth Substance Abuse Coalition
Promoting a Safe & Drug Free Roanoke Valley

www.raysac.org

RAYSAC Radar

Talking to Your Teen About Drugs **An Important Conversation**

A survey released by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America and the MetLife Foundation has found that parental guidance and example has a profound affect on their children's use of alcohol and drugs. The survey indicates that when parents engage their children in discussions about alcohol and drug abuse the teens take their parents' message to heart.

The common thread among teens who do well academically and socially, and stay healthy and drug-free, is that they have close relationships with their parents. These teens report that their parents are interested in them, in what they do and in who they know. They also say their parents are curious about their lives and their ideas. They feel connected, because their parents listen to them and take time to find out what's going on in their world. This only makes sense. Teens who are close to their parents or a trusted adult caregiver have more at stake when it comes to decisions about risk-taking. At that moment of truth when they are confronted with a risky choice, they don't want to disappoint their parents or betray their trust. They are also more open to their parents' advice.

If you are connected, supportive and responsive to your teen, it will be much easier for you to take on the tougher parts of parenting, such as setting rules and discipline, and having a discussion about the dangers and health risks of underage drinking and drug abuse. You can simply be a strict parent, but your teens won't have lasting respect for your rules unless they believe that you also care for them. Here are some ways to foster a close relationship with your teen:

- Spend time together regularly, doing things your teen enjoys.
- Talk openly and honestly.
- Use positive communication skills, especially when there is conflict. For example, think before you speak and acknowledge your teen's point-of-view so he or she knows you are listening.
- Acknowledge the positive qualities and behaviors of your teenager.

Research shows that teens who are educated at home about the risks of drug and alcohol use are 50% less likely to use than teens who are not taught about the dangers at home.

Parents have the greatest influence on a youth's life and whether their youth engages in risky behaviors!

Parents! Use Your Voice...they are listening!

(source: Parents: The Anti Drug)