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Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life.

Helping Your Children Deal With Peer Pressure¹

Kate Fogarty²

The issue of teen use of drugs and alcohol is alarming, but parents can and do make a difference in a teen's decisions to use or not. Family researchers say you have to establish a firm "no use" drug and alcohol family rule. Once the rule has been established, here are some ideas from researchers at Brown University about how to help your child deal with peer pressure and drugs.

Responding to peer pressure in a kind but firm tone of voice is the best way to go. Parents can role-play scenarios with teens and come up with ideas for catchphrases to legitimize their reasons for not using drugs, such as "I've tried that before and I don't like the taste" or, "No, that's not my kind of stuff."

You might consider other reasons referring to consequences, such as "The one time I tried it, I got really sick and threw up all over the place."

Another tactic your teen might use is to change the subject, and, if push comes to shove, leave the scene. But peer pressure is not the biggest enemy. The issue is not outside influences, but those within. It's when teens don't feel their families support them that they're at the greatest risk for problems. Keep lines of communication open, use active listening while conveying support and concern, and calmly reinforce a "no use" views of drug and

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alcohol. These are the most effective ways to help teens resist using and/or depending on drugs and alcohol.

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References

The Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior Letter. (2004). G. K. Fritz (ed.). Providence, RI: B. R. Lang.