

Hello Parents,

We are a collaborative alliance of parents, community members, treatment professionals, prevention staff, and faith-based leaders who live and/or work in Geauga County. Together, we are building a network of adults who have the knowledge, confidence, and support to speak openly and honestly with their kids regarding mental health, drug trends, and other issues your kids may encounter.

Our goal is to equip you with practical resources and strategies to help you navigate these difficult but important discussions. This first newsletter focuses on ways to get the most out of conversations with your kids and build stronger, more trusting communication along the way.

Some topics are difficult to discuss, whether we are talking with adults or kids. We often find ourselves wondering: When is the right time to bring this up? I don't want to start an argument. These thoughts naturally come up during challenging conversations.

Below are some practical tips to help you approach these discussions in a healthy, respectful, and productive way.

1. **Talk openly and often**:
    - Look for natural moments to bring up topics when you see a story on the news, when something comes across your social media feed. Many times, if we see it on our feed, our kids see it on theirs.
    - Keep an open mind and do your best to remain nonjudgmental. Young people are more likely to shut down if they feel judged or criticized, making them defensive and feel as if they are being attacked.
2. **Location, Location, Location!**
    - Where you choose to have a conversation can make all the difference.
    - Recognizing the space, the time, and other factors about having a conversation plays a vital role in the success of the conversation.
    - Knowing where your teens consider to be their space versus community space can make a conversation more successful.
3. **Embrace the awkwardness**
    - Don't feel like you have to fix everything. You are their parents, not an expert. Your role is to love and help your kid. Reach out to professionals in the field for advice and information about topics you need more information.
    - Prepare to walk away if the time is not right. Recognizing your child may not be ready to have the conversation. You may have an agenda for the conversation, but let your child know you are ready to listen without judgement. You are not there to "fix" things.

Parental monitoring and support, along with clear disapproval of substance use, help reduce underage substance consumption.

If you would like to receive these newsletters directly, please reach out to the contacts below. For more information on our efforts and to schedule a presentation for your group at no cost, please contact:

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This information is provided by the Geauga County Opiate HUB Coalition

geauga county board of mental health & recovery services