
Substance Abuse

How to Relate to Different Age Groups

Elementary School (ages 5-9 years)

- Children learn mostly by experience
- What people do is more important than what they say
- Proving the facts with consistent role modeling is important
- Excellent age to learn about saying “no”
- Talking to the child means you care about them
- Keeping silence about a subject tends to mean acceptance

Middle School (ages 10-13)

- Some rebellion and unsolved behavior can be part of finding their identity
- Keeping communication open is vital
- Provide information to strengthen awareness
- Messages of fear and threats can close the door to communication
- Keep advice in the “here and now”
- Adults should educate themselves about drugs and what they can do
- Get to know who their friends are and the adults around them
- Reduce situations that could be potential problems
- Keep youth involved and busy with healthy activities
- Direct involvement by significant adults, especially parents, increases trust and acceptance

High School (ages 14-18)

- Peer pressure is important
- Keeping communication open is vital
- Provide information to strengthen awareness
- Messages of fear and threats can close the door to communication
- Keep advice in the “here and now”
- Adults should educate themselves about drugs and what they can do
- Get to know who their friends are and the adults around them
- Make the youth know what the rules are and what the consequences will be if rules are broken
- Be consistent in your decisions
- Be reasonable, don't add new consequences after a rule is broken
- Make sure the punishment is appropriate for the situation