



Reasons teens use

Here are some of the reasons young people give for using drugs, and some ideas about how you can respond to them in a constructive way.

“Someone had some and I just thought I’d try it”

- Express your concern and ask them about their decision.
- Ask if they knew what they were taking, you can then talk about some of the side effects of that particular drug.
- Ask whether it was what they expected, and talk about the risks of further use.
- Try and find out if they felt pressured. If so, you can discuss better ways for them to handle a similar situation in the future.
- Consider using examples of times when you have had to deal with a similar situation.

“I always wanted to try that stuff”

- Ask what made that particular drug appealing, and what they expected to get from it.
- Questions such as, “what did you think it would be like?” and “why that drug?” can be good conversation starters.
- If they are happy to talk you may be able to discuss whether they have tried other drugs, and if so, why.
- Let them know that you are concerned about what happened, what the issues are and try to establish some ground rules that you can both agree on.

“All my friends were doing it so I thought, why not?”

- Make your feelings about using drugs clear – giving reasons – and explain why you don’t want them to use drugs.
- Ask if they felt it was safe because their friends were using it.
- Ask why they thought their friends used the drug, and whether they were aware of the risks.
- Discuss, don’t lecture, about the dangers of experimenting with drugs. It can be helpful to ask questions and allow the young person to remain engaged in the discussion and it’s useful to discuss the importance of being able to make their own decisions, even if these are different from their friends.

“It made me feel really good”

- Try to explore the main reason they took the drug.
- Find out how they have been feeling in general, as this may be a good time to offer help and to find out if there is anything you else going on, or if they want to talk about another issue.
- Talk about less risky and healthier ways of feeling good.

“All my problems from school, at home and in life just went away”

- This statement is a good chance to start talking about other issues – express your concern about them using drugs as a means of coping.
- Let them know that if there are problems, you’d like to talk about them, and ask what can be done to make things better.
- Discuss whether the problems returned after the effects of the drug wore off and highlight that using only makes the problems disappear for a while.
- Express your feelings about the dangers of using drugs to deal with problem and make it clear that you want to work together to find a better way of solving their problems.

“It gave me more confidence”

- Let them know that this is of concern to you, and explain that they don’t need drugs to feel good about themselves.
- Share your own experiences where you also found it difficult in social situations and explain things you did to gain more confidence. By acknowledging and discussing your own behaviour, you can increase your credibility with them.
- Consider ways in which you can help to improve their confidence and self-esteem.

“Well, you used drugs”

You should be prepared for this type of response if this statement applies to you, as part of being a role model is being honest and open. Acknowledge that illicit drugs are dangerous and that you would think differently now about the choices you made.

“I don’t want to talk about it”

If you find that the young person does not want to discuss their use with you, offer to help them find someone else to talk to. Reassure them that you want what is best for them and understand if they would prefer to speak to a counsellor or someone else outside of the situation. You can use the service finder to locate some assistance for the young person.