

“How do I approach my child about my suspicion?”

In an article found on psychcentral.com M.S. Margarita Tartakovsky outlines 6 guidelines when approaching your child when you believe they are abusing drugs.

1. **Be calm and direct** - When engaging your child about suspicion of drug abuse, Ph.D. John Duffy says subtlety has to be pushed aside and immediate and direct interaction is necessary. This doesn't mean you should let your frustration and anger come out in the conversation. Psy. D. Lisa Kaplin says to come to your child with delicacy. Confronting them with panic, anger, aggression of accusations will typically guarantee you that your child will close down communication with you. Duffy states that a parent's attitude should be that of genuine concern for well-being. Calm and focused is a difficult state for a parent in that situation to accomplish but in his experience, is the most effective approach.

2. **Talk when your child is NOT high or drunk.**

3. **Ask questions that require more than just yes or no answers** - Open ended questions lend themselves to honesty and transparency. Some examples from Kaplin are: *Can you tell me more about that? How did you feel in that situation? What will you do if that happens again? How can I help you with this? Non-judgmental questions like what drugs, how often or if they plan on using again, are good follow up questions for a child who admits to using drugs* Kaplin says.

4. **Don't punish your child** - Duffy says that punishments such as “taking away cell phones” rarely work.

5. **Let your child know you support them** - Letting your child know you love them and that you appreciate their honesty will help your child know they can trust you and you're there to help them, according to Kaplin.

6. **Get treatment for your child** - Qualified therapists specializing in working with teens and young adults are necessary for your child to talk with. When talking about professional help don't accept no for an answer, because it's not a negotiation Duffy says. Duffy gives a brief, clear, and firm example of something you might say to your child. “It is clear to us that you have been using something, and we are really concerned for your safety. As your safety is our domain as Mom and Dad, we are going to pull rank here and schedule an appointment for someone for you, and all of us, to talk to about this issue.” Kaplin says that depending on the situation you may offer your child options regarding therapists or treatment centers.

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