

A Guide to Building Family Connections

Healthy connections can help prevent alcohol or drug use and even support sustained recovery for people who have struggled with substance use in the past. Addressing substance use in your family or your community may seem daunting, but there's an opportunity to build invaluable connections and make a difference, even when you are strapped for time.



Actions you can take to begin addressing substance use, right now

If you have only one minute:



Catch your child doing something positive

It helps to notice when your child is doing something healthy or positive, even if it's what they "should be doing." For instance, giving a compliment when your child completes a chore, like doing the dishes, may seem over the top, but it is a way to **help your child recognize that they are a valued member of the family** and improve your overall **relationship and connection**.



Say "I love you"

The simple actions you take with your children make a big difference. Saying "I love you" or showing your child you care helps create **strong, healthy relationships** that can prevent future substance use and/or promote healing when an issue does come up. Having trouble connecting with your child? Send a text. Place a sticky note with a kind message on a spot that can't be missed. These actions let your child know that your love isn't conditional.

If you have five minutes:



Get support and information

Text **JOIN to 55753** if you have concerns about your child's substance use. After answering a few questions, you'll receive personalized messages offering resources and support, delivered straight to your phone. For additional guidance, our website drugfree.org offers thoughtful and educational articles on a variety of related topics.



Connect with your representative

When families are involved and empowered, the outcomes for those struggling with substances are better. **Send a letter to your Members of Congress** urging them to cosponsor a grant program to provide support services for families who are struggling to help loved ones with substance use disorders.

If you have 15 minutes:



Make time for self-care

Taking care of your own emotional and physical health is important, and modeling proper coping skills is beneficial to your child. For some, **self-care** may be as simple as taking a few deep breaths, reading a chapter in a book, or making a cup of tea. If you continue to struggle with managing stress, therapy can help. Now is the perfect time to explore **telehealth**: a combination of video-chat, text messaging, mobile apps, websites and more that help you connect with trained support from your own home.



Clean out your medicine cabinets

Keep medications from ending up in the wrong hands. Aim to **monitor, secure and properly dispose of unused, unwanted or expired prescription or over-the-counter medication**. By keeping track of bottles or pills, securing or locking medications, and disposing of expired or unused medication via a safe disposal program or drug deactivation product, you will create a healthier and safer environment for yourself and your loved ones.

If you have 30 minutes:



Talk with your kids

Conversations with your child can happen whenever or wherever you're spending quality time together – at meals, while taking a walk or during a car ride. **Employ what you've learned about substances** on drugfree.org and be a credible source of information.



Learn to reverse an opioid overdose

During a year when there has been a surge in overdose deaths around the country, know how you can help. In the event of an opioid overdose, **carrying naloxone and being trained in how to respond to an overdose can save a life**.

If you have an hour:



Learn new skills to address teen substance use

If you feel like you've tried everything and nothing is working to get your child back on track, focusing on effective communication and proven ways to change challenging behaviors may be key to healthier outcomes. Start learning these simple techniques by **enrolling in our free online learning course** or connecting with a **helpline specialist**.



Connect with other parents and families

While addiction thrives in isolation, connection nurtures recovery. Join our **online support community**, which brings together parents, caregivers and specially-trained volunteer parent coaches to support each other and discuss new ways to solve problems.



To end addiction, start with connection.
drugfree.org

