

Parenting Article #5

Parenting through COVID-19- “The Talk”

This week’s article will look at the protective factor of parent’s perceptions of substance use. Since we are spending so much time with our kids these days, there will likely be more opportunity to bring up the topic of substance use and other related issues. This does not have to be an awkward, out-of-nowhere conversation, it can in fact be organic. The next time you are watching the local news, having a family movie night, or just hanging out and come across an article about youth substance use (for example the effects of vaping and increased risk of complications from COVID-19 due to lung damage), or are discussing upcoming graduation parties (yes, they will likely happen eventually), that is the perfect time.

TalkSooner.org is a FREE, online, tool for parents. It is intended to help guide your discussions with youth and provide you with current drug trends information, so you know what to talk about and what to look for when preventing substance use with your kids. TalkSooner can help parents set “clear standards”- to give youth a guide or road map of what to avoid and where to turn for help.

Here is a breakdown by age of how they suggest talking to your child starting from birth:

Ages 0-6 It’s never too early to start your kids on the track to making healthy choices. Teach them how to say no. “Talk about health and spend time together”.

Ages 7-9 “Introduce the topic of drugs now so it’s not awkward to talk about later”, know your kid’s friends, role model healthy choices, get the facts on substance use, use media to talk about the topic.

Ages 10-12 “Consider your own actions and look for teachable moments”. According to the most recent local data, many youths first start using alcohol and drugs by age 12 (MiPHY 2018/19 Manistee County Report). You can also role play saying no to peer pressure.

Ages 13-17 “Be a good listener, keep it casual. Watch your own language”. Use open ended questions and REALLY LISTEN to your child. Let them know you are a safe resource and set clear expectations and rewards.

Ages 18+ Early adulthood can be a high-risk time for experimenting with substance use. You can incorporate information on how to get help and recover, along with ongoing discussions on using drugs and alcohol. Talk about safety and high risk versus low risk choices. Talk about how their choices can impact them reaching their goals. Keep up with family time!

(All information in this article was pulled directly from [TalkSooner.org/talkingtips](https://talksooner.org/talkingtips)).

Manistee Substance, Education, & Awareness (SEA) Coalition was started in 2016, formed as a work group of the Human Services Collaborative Body (HSCB). The SEA uses the Communities That Care framework that looks at local data to determine priorities for programs in our community. For more information you can visit www.communitiesthatcare.net. The SEA is funded with Public Act 2 (Liquor Tax Funds) through the Northern Michigan Regional Entity. Sarah Garthe is the program facilitator of the SEA and is a Certified Prevention Specialist. Anyone in the community can join the SEA Coalition, please send an email to Sarah Garthe @ sgarthe@centrawellness.org for more information.