



**Good communication is the first step in substance use prevention.**

Use the tips in this fact sheet to create a safe space for young people to talk honestly, express opinions, and ask for help.



### **What Is Positive Family Communication?**

It happens when kids, teens, and trusted adults talk and listen to each other in a good way. This creates trust, openness, and respect. It lets every family member feel seen and heard.



### **Why Is It Important?**

When kids make good decisions around substance use, they say that their parents are the reason they make those choices.



### **When Should You Talk?**

Talk to kids as early as elementary school and keep going into their young adult years. This helps them make healthy choices. It even serves as a protective factor against stress, substance use, and mental health issues.

## *Did You Know?*

# 70%

of students in Southington strongly agree or agree with the statement "I have lots of good conversations with my parents."



<http://southingtonsteps.org/steps-to-know-more/>

## How to Build Positive Family Communications

What's a proven way to keep young people safe? Make sure your family has open, honest conversations with no judgement. Here are some clear action steps you can take.



### Talk Often

Have open, honest talks about tough topics on an ongoing basis. It helps to talk about things early, before they happen.

#### What you can say:

*"This might sound cheesy, but I saw something today that made me think of you. What do you think about..."*

*"You're going to have more freedom next year. Let's talk about what that means."*

### Ask Open-Ended Questions

This avoids dead-end "yes or no" answers. It also shows that you have interest in what the other person thinks.

#### What you can say:

*"Do kids at your school vape? Or is that just what adults think?"*

*"What do you think our rules should be around substance use?"*

### Be an Active Listener

Go beyond simply hearing the words that another person speaks. Listen to understand. Repeat back what they're saying or feeling, to make sure you understand.

#### What you can say:

*"In other words, what you are saying is that..."*

*"Just to clarify, are you saying that...?"*

### Don't Judge

Keep the tone calm, open, and rational. Keep positive body language, like making eye contact for at least half of the time. Have empathy for their feelings.

#### What you can say:

*"I hear you. And I understand what you are saying."*

*"Thank you for sharing that. I empathize with how you feel."*