



## Progressive Conversations

Parents, you have a challenging job these days. Changes in society are launching you into frank conversations with your children well before you may feel prepared to have them. You may also be uncomfortable talking about mature topics, or not know where to start. Don't worry. You can rise to your challenge by developing a mindset for progressive conversations.

Think ahead to what your child will need to know when he or she is older, then back those conversations out into manageable chunks beginning when your child is young. This will allow you time to ease into more serious topics and get comfortable with clear, informative conversation. Unsure what to say? Remember: information is powerful. Kids can do a lot with information. They can embrace it, debate it, or even ignore it--but they can't unlearn it. Tell it to them straight. You will be giving them what they need when faced with their own decisions. Let's look together at what a progressive conversation about drugs might sound like.



Peter Perrotta, MS LADC  
(Licensed Alcohol & Drug Counselor)



### YOUNG CHILDREN: DECISION MAKING

People may try to get you to do things you don't want to do. Never take medication from anyone but a parent or doctor. Some drugs help your body, but some hurt it. Reinforce that drugs can be harmful.

### ELEMENTARY CHILDREN: CONTEXT

Why do people take drugs? Some drugs make you feel happy or relaxed when you feel sad or stressed. For example, your mind might think, "Get me out of right here, right now." Drugs might help for a bit, but then they make you feel worse. Talk about how some drugs smell funny and look like cigarettes, and some are in medicine cabinets. Role play how to say no and how to talk to adults about things they have seen.

### TWEENS: GET SPECIFIC

You may see weed, Ritalin, Vicodin, Oxycontin, Molly, cocaine, heroin, inhalants, alcohol, etc. These drugs will harm a developing brain. Give facts: A boy's brain isn't mature until age 25. A girl's at age 23. No pills. Pills can lead to heroin.

Talk about dependency and how the human body doesn't get a warning sign for when things tip from recreational use to dependency; it just tips into new, dark territory. And once things tip, it's hard to go back. For example, you can illustrate that a pickle can't go back to being a cucumber.

### TEENS: GET REAL

Talk about withdrawal and look at pictures. Read about local examples of teens who got addicted and died from overdoses. Discuss what people are doing to get drugs: prostitution, theft. Share drug-related events happening in Connecticut. Bring up homelessness and pregnancy, discuss socioeconomics. Don't be afraid to share real examples; your kids are living this.

*If you start slowly and keep steady, conversations will progress, and you will be ready.*



## WHAT DO WE DO?

*We work every day to strengthen lives.*

### *Family Resource Center*



Our nationally-recognized **Family Resource Center (FRC)** has a new space within the Charter Oak International Academy. Our FRC team runs weekly playgroups, ESL classes, in-home parent education, and popular parent leadership programs.

### *Our Goal: All Kids Great By 8*



We want all children to be **Great by 8**. Our Great by 8 steering committee is hard at work creating resources for the early-childhood needs of our community. Think one-stop shopping for information on daycare options, pre-schools, learning resources, and advocacy.

### *Meet Jon Merritt*



Jon Merritt is a kid magnet. He runs our **West Hartford Teen Center** and is one of two mentors who meet with students in the West Hartford schools and in the Hillcrest neighborhood in West Hartford as part of our Positive Youth Development program.

### *Our Teen Center*



Our **West Hartford Teen Center** participation is soaring. Visit Mondays and Fridays from 2:30-5:00 p.m. and Wednesdays from 1:00-3:30 p.m. for pick-up basketball games, tournaments, and community service opportunities. Located @ Elmwood Community Center.

### *Our Counseling Offices*



We run **three counseling offices** in the centers of West Hartford, Avon, and Rockville. Private insurance and HUSKY accepted. We specialize in youth and family support and also see adults. Dedicated substance abuse support offered.

### *Domestic Violence Awareness*



October is **Domestic Violence Awareness Month**. Children who witness violence against a parent will have more trouble learning and making friends, and are at greater risk of being abused themselves. Speak up about abuse.

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