



# Monthly Parenting Tip from the ACFC

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## Three Steps to Getting Through

Parents are never going to seem as cool to their kids as the cool kids do. When it comes to talking about important subjects, there are three steps that will help you talk to them in a way that gets through. These three steps can make the difference between a one-sided “blah blah blah” conversation in which the kids roll their eyes and tune out and a dynamic talk that helps you instill useful information and values. What are these three steps?

### Step 1. Ask and listen.

Ask good questions-

For example:

*Why do you think kids start to use drugs?*

*What do you think when you see kids smoke?*

*How do you feel when you see someone being bullied or teased?*

Listen actively-

Give your children your full attention to motivate them to want to share. Listen with your eyes, as well as your ears, paying attention to facial expressions, tone of voice and body language.

Listen with empathy-

If you want your words to get through to your child, it's essential that you learn to *empathize* with them in the present moment. This means understanding what they are feeling, and caring about their feelings. This will encourage them to continue sharing and want to open up to you.

### Step 2. Give your opinions persuasively.

Being careful not to lecture, let your kids know how bad you would feel if they began harmful habits and give concrete reasons for wanting them to abstain. Be sure that you talk from the place in your heart that loves them and cares about their health and happiness. Present information to them such as the health risks of drugs or smoking, using graphics to illustrate the long-term damage they can do to their bodies. Whatever information you can give your kids to turn *cool* to *yuck* will help build their resistance to experimenting with harmful substances.

### Step 3. Talk about consequences.

Unfortunately, many of the long-term “natural” consequences of smoking or drug use don't occur for a long time. You can reduce the tendency for kids to ignore these consequences by adding a layer of “logical” consequences. These are consequences that you, as a parent, enforce to show kids what logically follows when they break a family rule. Some good logical consequences might include: loss of freedom, loss of access to the car, loss of privacy.

It takes awareness, courage and skill to resist peer pressure. This is where parents can help. Talk to your kids about peer pressure and how subtle a force it can be. Predict that they will be tempted to “go along with the crowd” many times in their lives. Using these three steps to prepare your children to handle peer pressure with confidence and conviction can make the difference in the choices they make today that will have an impact for many years to come.

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