

Creating a Family Mutual Trust Agreement About Drugs & Alcohol

You all have the SAME GOAL: for the teen to have increasing freedom and independence to explore and thrive in the world. Accomplishing this requires developing and maintaining TWO-WAY TRUST. For parents to let go of worry and protectiveness, they need to trust the decisions you will make in any situation, and what's going on in your internal and external world. And YOU need to trust them to be open and honest and supportive.

Some *Questions* to Get Clarity on Expectations:

For Parents -

- What are your ideal wishes for your child (big big picture)?
- What are your *hopes* for them re: their substance use that align with these bigger wishes?
- What's the "battle" that feels most important to you to focus on given those bigger picture wishes? (i.e. Delaying all use at this age, Using "responsibly" and non-problematically, Safety, Avoiding certain substances etc
- What are your *specific expectations* of their use given last question: when and where, household, car, specific substances, specific behaviors?

- What are you willing to do to hold your teen to these expectations and what will you do if they are violated? What consequences/interventions would you respond with?
- What will you need to observe for them to have certain freedoms (unsupervised time with friends, going to parties, driving with people staying overnight somewhere etc)?
- What would cause you to worry about their use?
- How do you plan to respond if you are concerned about problem use?
- How can you help your child fulfill their needs for 1) Confidence/mastery, 2) Belonging, 3) Fun & Excitement, and 4) Coping skills so that substances aren't as appealing?
- What do you think you need to work on to be a trusted source of information, support and guidance re: substances?
- What "deals" are you willing to make with your child to help them stay safe if they are in an unsafe situation involving substances?

For Teens—

- What are your commitments to yourself around your substance use (your limits, and lines you refuse to cross)?
- How could your parents support you in staying in check with these commitments to/desires for yourself?
- How can they help you have satisfying and accessible ways of healthily meeting your needs for 1) Confidence/mastery, 2) Belonging, 3) Fun & Excitement, and 4) Coping skills so that substances (and other risky/ self-destructive activities) aren't as appealing?
- What would you need from your parents in order for you to trust them with open honesty about your thought, feelings, exposures, and choices re: drugs and alcohol?
- What do you think you need to keep doing or doing better to earn your parents trust so you can have the trust and freedom you want?
- What situations would you involve your parents in re: substances (i.e. worry for a friend, getting a safe ride home, rescued from sketchy situation)

Our Mutual Commitment to Each Other

Parents: What I commit to doing to earn my teen's trust as a valid source of information and support, so I can help you steer healthily through the pressures & temptations to use:

Teens: What I commit to doing to earn my parents' trust that I'll healthily and responsibly handle substance use situations so I can have increasing freedom and independence:

This is a "living" Agreement that we commit to revisiting regularly as we, our world and our conditions change.

Parent

Teen