

# 8 Ways to Connect with Children, Teens & Young Adults.

You can be the difference.



Connecting is key! Make it a habit of chatting with your child every day. It will make it easier to have serious conversations about alcohol, drugs and/or gambling, and will make them more comfortable coming to you for advice.

**1** Discuss shared interests like sports, music, art, technology, or movies on a regular basis. Take time to learn about his or her hobbies, and participate, even if it is you on the sideline.

**5** Eat meals together. It can be breakfast, lunch or dinner. A full meal, a slice of pizza or a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. This is a good time for conversation. It's even better when you make mealtime a "no cellphone zone."

**2** Be sure to attend at least some of their activities so they know what they are doing is important to you. If you miss an activity, be sure to tell them why and ask them about what happened.

**6** Read to and with your child – even with tweens and teens. Reading allows for bonding. With teens, read the same book they are interested in and then talk about it.

**3** Spend time doing an activity together. Train for a race, play basketball, volunteer in your community, enjoy music you both like – anything.

**7** Don't ever stop playing with the kids in your life. Do something they like, such as playing video games or shooting hoops. Don't discount a family/group game night with your tweens – they love it, too.

**4** Growing up is hard. Help them work through a tough situation. Today, arguments with friends or classmates continue onto social media, and then they feel their world is falling apart. Talk about how they feel and help them work out ways to handle difficult situations.

**8** Create together! Involve kids in decorating or fixing something around the house. Cook dinner together. Art projects are a big hit. Be creative and flexible.

You can be the difference. In connecting with a child, be sure to allow the right amount of independence. Keeping a child sheltered creates problems of its own. Let them go out with friends, but keep tabs on where they are going. Let them negotiate with you about what is expected. A healthy two-way connection between you and your child will help them learn to navigate and make good decisions.

Visit our helpful resources in the prevention toolkit to get support in connecting with the kids in your life.