

# Talking to Youth about Substance Use - Tips for Educators by Youth

*Tool*

**Resource:** Vaping Education Resources

**Grade(s):** 4 5 6 7 8

**Division(s):** Primary Junior

## Correct Misconceptions

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- Students may have more experience than people assume, but what they know can be incorrect. Start with what they think they know, identify their misconceptions, and unpack them together to enhance their knowledge.

## Find Out What They Need to Know

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- Start with the why: Why are we learning this? Why is this necessary?
- Ask students what they need to know about substance use to help them make informed decisions.

## It's Not So Scary

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- Don't throw fear into it. Reduce the message about the danger of substances and maintain a realistic, reasonable approach.

- Students need and deserve all the information rather than having someone choose the type of information to share and leaving the rest out.

## **Peer Pressure Isn't Always Bad**

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- Don't highlight peer pressure! Initiation into substance use isn't always influenced by peer pressure.
- Peer influence can be a source of support and connection too.

## **Recognize and Highlight the Importance of Relationships**

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- Some adults underestimate the importance of peer relationships. Discouraging some friendships doesn't stop substance use.
- Don't just tell students to find a new friend group. Social connection is very important.

## **Consider the Usefulness of the Question Box**

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- Students really want to learn but might not be comfortable with the conversation. Acknowledge the discomfort and awkwardness about the topic.
- Do a "temperature check" and do what works best for the class. An anonymous question box is very useful.