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Sussex County Coalition for Healthy & Safe Communities
“It’s Not Pestering, It’s Parenting” Tips for Parents

1. Communicate often and early AND listen to your kids. 2/3 of kids say that losing their parents’ respect is one of the main reasons they don’t use drugs.
2. Know where your kids are and what they are doing- Keep tabs on your children, ask questions about where they are going and what they will be doing and have them check in with you regularly. Let your teens know that you will be monitoring their activities so they know what to expect.
3. Know their friends- Know their names, where they live and what their interests are. Make your child’s friends feel welcome in your home and be the house where kids want to hang out (*under adult supervision.*)
4. Know their friends’ parents – Getting to know the parents is important, especially if your child spends time at their friend’s home. Instead of just dropping off your child, go in and meet the parents, make sure they will be home for the evening. A counselor at the Center for Prevention and Counseling is quoted as saying, “ I have never known a kid to die from embarrassment, but I have known them to die from drug use.”
5. Discourage sleepovers and campouts once your kids are in high school- Is there any good reason your child should be up all night, unsupervised? Many youth see sleepovers as an opportunity to sneak out, drink alcohol and/or use other drugs.
6. Take time to have fun together as a family – Your children do want to spend time with you! While they are working towards being independent- they are still listening and learning from you. Have regular family nights where you play games, watch a movie, go sledding or just spend time relaxing together.
7. Eat dinner (or breakfast) together as often as you can - Research by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University consistently finds that the more often children eat dinner with their families, the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use other drugs.
8. Don’t disclose what you did as a teen regarding alcohol or other drug use- It’s a no win situation; if you didn’t drink or use other drugs kids think you can’t understand AND if you did then they see you are okay so the message to them is that it is alright for them to use alcohol or other drugs.
9. Present a united front with your spouse (or ex-husband/wife) - Your kids need to receive clear and consistent messages about rules and consequences. Set fair rules together and hold your children to them.
10. If your child is using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs- address it right away. If your child is drinking or smoking- while it might be early use- they are using drugs. Call the Center for Prevention and Counseling at 973-383-4787 for assistance! Early intervention WORKS!

REMEMBER – it’s not pestering, it’s parenting! You do matter to your kids.
They are listening; they still need you, not as a friend but as a parent.