

Helping Your Child Say “No” to Tobacco and Other Harmful Drugs



Your child has learned five ways to say “no” if someone pressures him or her to do anything illegal, unhealthy, or wrong.

1. Say a direct “No.”

Simply say, “No,” or “No, thanks.” This is the best strategy! It is honest and direct.

2. Repeat the same phrase over and over.

Repeat “no” as many times as necessary. Say, “No. No thanks. No, I don’t want to. No thanks.” The person pressuring your child will soon get tired of it.

3. Suggest another activity.

Change the subject by suggesting another activity. Try saying, “Why don’t we go play baseball?” or “Want to play a video game?”

4. Give a reason.

Say “no” and state a fact or personal feelings or opinion. Here are examples:

- State a fact.
“No, smoking makes my breath stink.”
“No, tobacco causes cancer.”
- State personal feelings or opinions.
“No, I don’t like the way they taste.”
“No thanks, I’d rather spend my money on some new CDs.”

When giving an opinion, encourage your child to begin the statement by saying, “No, I...” Be sure to avoid excuses. Excuses can start an argument.

5. Walk away.

If a person has said “no” and the pressure is still on, your child can get up and leave. He shouldn’t worry about keeping a friend. A real friend would have respected him the first time he said “no.”

NO!
NO!
NO!

Increase Your Child’s Confidence to Say “No” When It’s Important!

You can help your child become comfortable saying “no” by giving him or her plenty of practice.

- If your child faces a situation where he will have to refuse something negative, act out how it might happen. You take the part of the person who is pressuring your child. Let your child tell you “no” using one of the five strategies. Be sure to give your child suggestions that will help him say “no” firmly and clearly. Tell your child what he did well.
- As you watch television together, watch for situations where a person is being pressured to do something illegal, unhealthy, or wrong. Talk about ways the person could say “no” to the pressure.
- When your child talks about pressure situations that happen at school or with friends, ask what she would have done to refuse the pressure. Encourage your child to practice saying the words to you.
- If your child is invited to do something she doesn’t want to do, such as sleepover at a friend’s house or join a team, have her make the phone call declining the invitation. Avoid saying “no” for your child whenever there is an opportunity for your child to practice this skill.
- Make sure your child knows your family’s expectations and hopes.
- Tell your child about a time you said “no.” What was the situation? What did you say? How did you feel after you said “no”? Knowing that you have been in a similar situation will help your child talk to you about situations he may encounter.

The more times a child practices saying “no” in a simple situation, the more likely he is to be able to say “no” to real pressure.