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Conversation Starters and Sneaky Ways to Communicate
with Children about Drugs and Alcohol
(Ensure conversations are age-appropriate and keep them brief!)

1. **Tell a personal story:** High school party dilemma, Family addiction, Embarrassing moment. (Doesn't have to be drug related. Could be about having made a mistake or having failed at something. Idea is to connect with your child and be human.)
2. **Bring up a recent drug/technology related incident in your community.** Discuss openly. Ask questions like: How do you think the person ended up in that situation? What would you do if you had a friend who this happened to?
3. **Use a beer/drug/sex/technology commercial to discuss your family values.** Can a person drink responsibly? If so, what does it mean to drink responsibly? Were the people in the commercial drinking responsibly? How can you tell? Can we assume that a drug is safe if it is advertised on TV? Is it okay to take a drug to feel happy? Are there other ways to cope with unhappiness, stress, anxiety, disappointment?
4. **Present a scenario at dinner for everyone to discuss together.** "Let's say mom and dad had a tough day at work. They are feeling stressed so they have a glass of wine." Is this okay? What are mom and dad thinking? What is the child thinking? How would you feel in this situation? Is alcohol a drug? Can it be used safely?

"A freshman boy is at a party when a very popular junior offers him a pill promising it will make him feel happy and relaxed." Is the pill a drug? Might the young man want to take the pill? Why/Why not? Could it be dangerous for the boy to take pill? Why/Why not? How could you get out of this situation without taking the pill? Talking through these scenarios is a great time to slip in your family rules and expectations.

5. **For teens, using quality media resources, come up with an article or research that supports your views.** Share that article with your child. Either read together and discuss or leave a copy on their pillow.
6. **With younger children slip in comments like:** "There are lots of things we do to keep our bodies healthy like brush our teeth. But there are also things we shouldn't do because they hurt our bodies like smoking; taking medicine when we are not sick; spending too much time in front of a screen."
7. **Talk about feelings!!** Kids need to know it is normal to be anxious, overwhelmed, disappointed, unhappy, angry, sad, frustrated. And that there is a difference between healthy and unhealthy ways to cope with those feelings. Teach your children healthy coping mechanisms. Encourage them to share their feelings. Be non-judgmental in these conversations.