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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

Know! encourages you to share this Parent Tip with friends and family.

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Know! Parental Engagement Matters

September 28th is **Family Day**, a national initiative reminding parents of the key position they play in helping to keep children substance free. The name of the game – PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT.

Children whose parents are actively engaged in their lives are far less likely to drink, smoke or use any other types of drugs. Current statistics however show that 46% of all high school students use addictive substances; nearly a third of high school students binge drink at least once a month; and more than 40% of ninth through twelfth graders say they can get a hold of marijuana within a day. Such numbers highlight the desperate need for increased parental engagement.

What exactly is “parental engagement?” It is moms, dads and other caregivers making daily connections with their children, talking with and listening to them, spending quality time together, making sure they know they are loved and building and keeping strong that parent/child relationship.

Decades of research reveals that one of the most effective strategies in connecting with your child, strengthening family bonds and preventing adolescent substance abuse is sitting down for a meal together as family on a regular basis. In fact, studies show that the more often children eat dinner with their families, the better their grades, the healthier their eating habits, the closer their relationship with their parents and siblings, the greater their ability to resist negative peer pressure, and the less likely they are to use alcohol, marijuana or other substances.

In addition to regular family meals, CASAColumbia, the creators of **Family Day**, encourages putting into practice these seven parent/child connectors:

1. Send a text to your child just to say “hi” or to tell them that you’re excited to spend time together.
2. Ask for their opinion and listen to what they have to say.
3. Help your child study for a test and let them know how smart you think they are.
4. Encourage your children to come to you when they’re facing a problem. Give them advice, but also provide them with the space they need to learn and grow on their own.



Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free

Talk early and often about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Even when it gets tough.



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- 5. Use humor to cheer them up when they're feeling down.
- 6. Celebrate daily accomplishments, like when your child gets an 'A' on a science paper or gives his/her best on the playing field. Children want to make their parents proud, so show them you take notice by acknowledging the good that they do.
- 7. Say, "I love you," to your children every single day, not just on special occasions, and remind them regularly that you're always there for them.

Everyday can be **Family Day** when moms, dads and other caregivers are actively involved in their children's lives and show they care. Remember, parental engagement matters!

For more tips on being active in your children's lives, visit: <http://casafamilyday.org/familyday/get-active>.

Source: CASAColumbia - The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University: Family Day – Be Involved. Stay Involved.

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