

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



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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.

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Start Talking!

Building a Drug-Free Future



Know! To Fuel Their Critical Thinking

Have you ever received an unsolicited, direct-to-consumer advertisement via email, text, or social media? Of course you have! They somehow seem to find all of us, even if we're not looking for them. The same holds true for our students. Just like us, they are bombarded with advertising – mainly on their phones and laptops; from YouTube videos to game apps, and the numerous other social media sites. The biggest problem is that many of the ads they receive promote and offer discrete ordering of products that are unhealthy, unsafe, and inappropriate for teens and tweens – including the popular push of marijuana products and vaping devices.

Many young people consciously or unconsciously look to media to help them define who they are and what they want to become. They count on the glamorous and cool characters depicted in these ads to help them determine what behaviors are normal and what lifestyle choices will provide them acceptance and inclusion among their peers, or maybe just fun and excitement.

Ideally, as educators, we would simply steer our students away from such advertising. However, these ads represent a critical, teachable moment. Parental controls on social media and electronic devices can be quite helpful in filtering out some of the junk, but our students need to be taught to understand when and how people try to manipulate their thoughts and feelings. It's up to us to teach youth how to decode the advertising messages they come across - therefore decreasing media's power and influence over them. This is called **media literacy**.

We encourage you to have an open dialogue in your classroom on the topic. You can start by sharing with them how you receive unsolicited, unwanted ads on your phone – for example. Then ask your students about the ads that pop up on their phones or other electronic devices. Ask if they ever receive ads that, for example, promote products that could be harmful to their health – like the popular vaping devices. More than likely they will be able to tell you about similar ads. If they have been fortunate enough to have not received such ads, give them an example of a product advertisement they may come across, then discuss these questions to fuel their critical thinking:



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Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free



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- *Who created the ad?*
- *What techniques did they use to get your attention?*
- *What do they want you to do after seeing their message?*
- *Would this be a healthy choice for you?*
- *Do you think your health and safety are important to the ad sponsor?*
- *How do you feel about it now?*

It doesn't have to be a particular type of ad to be a learning experience. The key is to teach young people that no matter the product being promoted, there is an advertiser with an intended message, and that it is up to them to think critically to interpret that message and apply it to their lives appropriately. These questions only scratch the surface when it comes to media literacy. But they're a great start.

Source: Prevention Action Alliance: Big Bowl Vote.

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