

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 Handle Mean Girls and Move on



*If your child's safety is at-risk at any point, her property gets damaged or stolen, or the situation simply becomes too much for her to handle directly, you (parents) will need to step in and contact the school, law enforcement, or other appropriate party, depending on the circumstances.*

In the previous tip, [Know! To Defend Against Mean Girls](#), we learned that the long-term consequences of mean-girl-type bullying include eating disorders, body image issues, substance abuse, PTSD, self-harming behaviors, depression and even thoughts of suicide. Clearly an issue to be addressed.

In fact, addressing the issue through open and positive communication is what experts say is the best defense in protecting our daughters.

**In talking with her about a mean girl situation, experts encourage parents to:**

**Empathize and Validate:** A surefire way to get your child to never tell you anything again is to blow off or minimize her experience. Instead, allow her to share how she is feeling. Listen attentively before you start asking questions or offering advice. Let her know you understand how she must feel betrayed, embarrassed or hurt, but that the problem lies within this other person, not her. Remind her of her beauty and strengths, and all the positives she radiates.

**Encourage Confidence and Assertiveness:** Mean girls generally target those they feel they can easily manipulate and control. Empower your daughter by teaching her stand tall, use a strong speaking voice and to make eye contact when addressing this person. The goal is for your daughter to confidently defend herself, while remaining respectful and not resorting to "mean girl" tactics in return. Remind your child that this other person is counting on her being passive, and she must see that she has barked up the wrong tree.

**Help her Consider her Response:** Remind your daughter that we cannot control other people's mouths or actions, but we can control how we



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Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free



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respond to them. Encourage her to keep her responses free of emotion, regardless of what this other girl says or does. And if it is too much, she should just ignore the girl and walk away. Encourage her to then come talk to you or another trusted adult on how to go from there.

**Suggest she Seek Out New Friends:** Oftentimes the mean girl is a person your child thought was her friend. And if this newfound “frenemy” has successfully recruited other girls in their circle to join her, your daughter may find herself on the outside. Talk with your child about how to spot fake friends, and what it means to be a real friend. Encourage her to branch out and think about other peers who might be fun to hang out with, and be willing to help her develop those new relationships.

Something additionally to keep in mind is that most children want us (mom and dad) to think they are popular and well-liked, because they believe that is what we want for them. They may hesitate to share these types of incidents with us so as not to “disappoint” us. Naturally we want our children to have friends and be well-liked, but we must be careful to put the emphasis on the quality of those friendships, not the quantity.

Our children must know they are worthy and deserving of kindness and real friends, and they must carefully choose the people they allow in. They must also be comfortable in coming to us if problems arise, and do so long before things spiral out of control.

Sources: [Laurel-Ann Dooley, Woman’s Day: 8 Ways to Help Your Daughter Deal with Mean Girls. Mar 29, 2017.](#) [Sherri Gordon, Very Well Family: 9 Things You Need to Tell Your Daughter About Mean Girls. Jul 28, 2019.](#) [Maria Lally, The Telegraph: Mean Girls - How to talk to your daughter about toxic friendships. Apr 8, 2016.](#) [Peggy Moss, JD, EmpoweringParents.com: Girl Bullying: What to Do When Your Daughter Is the Victim of “Mean Girls.”](#)