



## When Teens Lie About Drugs or Alcohol

One of the biggest barriers to treatment is that when teens lie about drugs or alcohol, parents usually believe them. Tom Hendrick, a founding member of [The Partnership for a Drug-Free America](#), would like to reduce the amount of time it takes from parents' awareness of a problem to getting their child help. The first instinct for parents is to trust their what children say and to support what they do. Parents raise children to be trustworthy. Adolescents are programmed to avoid conflict and embarrassment. Sometimes these values conflict. When teens believe their behavior will upset us, they often lie.

### 6 Strategies to Try if Teens Lie About Drugs or Alcohol

1. **Trust Your Instincts**—If you notice something seems off with your teen, ask about it. It might have a simple explanation (a fight with a friend or a bad grade at school), or it might be a problem s/he is afraid to ask about. By making yourself available to talk and to listen, your teen is more likely to open up.
2. **Educate Yourself**—Know about drug use. You might not see any physical signs, but there are emotional, educational and social signs as well. Keep in mind that popular drugs come and go. You might not know about the drug your child is using, so do your research.
3. **Don't Take It Personally**—Parenting is a personal experience. When our kids have a problem, we often take it on as our own problem. It is completely understandable if you

are experiencing negative emotions, but they will not help your teen. Lying is typical behavior for teens, but you can help them recognize that is it not acceptable behavior.

4. **Get Help**—Don't try to hide your child's use within the family. Teens can and do get healthy after using drugs. Unfortunately, they are usually only able to do so with professional help. Just like diabetes, broken bones, and cancer, parents do not have the expertise to treat drug abuse on their own.
5. **Leave Room to Rebuild Trust**—Even when your child has lied to you, leave room to find a way to trust him/her again. Remember to listen when your teen talks without cutting him/her off to make your point. If you need to, use a timer or talking stick. As silly as these strategies seem, they can help make sure each person is fully heard - and adding a little humor to the situation may help too.
6. **Expand Your Parenting Style**—Remember that parenting comes in many varieties, and that you are this child's parent, not his/her friends' parent. Each child may need a different type of parenting, and it may vary by the situation.

## Next Steps

If your child is dishonest about using, the best thing you can do is to get your child a professional [assessment](#). The earlier a [problem](#) with alcohol and other drugs is addressed, the better your chances of containing and limiting potential damage. If your teens lie about drugs or alcohol, especially after the first time, you need to [take action](#) in order to avoid an ongoing issue.