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Summer is ending and it's time to head back to school – one of our favorite times of year for us at Ask, Listen, Learn! As we continue celebrating our 20th anniversary with #Take20withKids, we encourage you to take 20 minutes to talk to your kids about making the transition from summer fun to being back in the classroom. Conversations play a big part in helping your kids adjust to new schedules and saying “NO” to risky behaviors—including underage drinking and underage cannabis use. We asked the Responsibility.org Educational Advisory Board, made up of educators, counselors, researchers, and parents for some tips to guide families in a successful back to school journey. And we loved what they had to say.

Set the Scene: There are no rules when it comes to location or setting for a conversation. When the opportunity to talk arises, take it! You could be in the car, on the beach, out for a walk, or settling into bed. The most important thing is to be open and ready to talk.

"Don't feel pressured to cover all these topics in one long session. It's better to plan for several shorter conversations." — Susie Bruce, Director, University of Virginia's Gordie Center

Talk Early and Often: Ask your kids what sort of choices they have made in the past that make them feel good about themselves and highlight those achievements in your conversation, building off each one.

"By starting the habit of conversations, we learn about our kids' concerns as well as joys, and can help them problem solve and feel more confident about dealing with their

own emotions.” — Alice Cahn, Educational Media Consultant, Cahnworks

To learn more about decision making, check out [this video](#).

Model Healthy Decision-Making: Be vocal about decisions that you make- or don't make- because your kids are watching and listening. Vocalize the choice of taking a walk (and ask them to join you!) instead of sitting in front of the TV or discuss your choice to be the designated driver for date night!

"Model healthy behaviors to encourage your children to make healthy decisions. Don't be afraid to share the 'why' behind your actions so kids can understand your choices." — Leticia Barr, Founder, Tech Savvy Mama

Set Goals Together: Ask your kids what their top goals are for the new school year and share your goals, too. Track them together and commit to being accountability buddies.

"What are some of your top goals for this school year in your classes? What are you hoping to achieve? Be realistic!" —Erin O'Malley, Principal, St. Theresa Catholic School

Discuss the Developing Brain, Alcohol, and Peer Pressure: Kids are changing so much at this time in their lives, and they are curious! And what's more- they love videos and games! Talk to them about their developing brains and how underage drinking can affect them in the short- and long-term, and use *Ask, Listen, Learn* videos and games to extend their learning. Check out our [parent guide](#) and also our [infographic](#) and [video](#) on saying "NO" to negative peer pressure.

"What do you know about the ways alcohol affects the developing brain?" —Susie Bruce, Director of University of Virginia's Gordie Center

Recognize a Job Well Done: Find the joy and celebrate wins—both big and small. Even as kids get older, these small acknowledgements go a long way and lead to more conversations in the future.

"What was something you did that made you feel good and happy?" —Brian Coleman, School Counselor of the Year 2019

"Accentuating and supporting the good things: What are some of the activities that make you happiest? Who are some of the people who make you feel most like your true self? How can we make decisions that prioritize those activities and people?" —Dr. Leigh Parise, Co-Founder of Classroom Champions

Check out the Educational Advisory Board's complete [20 Tips for Starting Conversations about Health and Wellbeing](#). As the school year progresses, we hope you will join us in celebrating [Ask, Listen, Learn's](#) 20th anniversary and continue to share your experiences with us using the hashtag [#Take20withKids](#).

As always, thank you for all the hard work you do to empower kids to say "YES" to a healthy lifestyle and "NO" to underage drinking and underage cannabis use.

~The [Ask, Listen, Learn Team](#)

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