

Talk early and talk often

Adults can take a lesson from the time-worn phrase: Use your words. This is especially helpful when it comes to talking about risky behavior to our kids. Sometimes we just don't have the words. It can be difficult when they start asking tough questions like, "Why do you drink?" or "What did you do when you were my age and someone offered you a drink?"

Again, use your words. Thankfully, we don't have to go it alone.

Communities That Care of Lorain County, a community-based coalition working to prevent and reduce underage substance abuse, is promoting a fall prevention campaign: Talk early, talk often, get others involved. Check out the national campaign at www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov.

The prevention campaign is developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and support the Surgeon General's "Call to Action" for parents to talk with their kids about reducing their risk of becoming involved with alcohol.

The website has a lot of good information about starting and keeping those tough conversations going. It outlines an action plan for you, based on the age and sex of your child and whether you've started talking. Lots of conversation starters are offered. It's suggested it's best to think of this as an ongoing con-

versation with your kids. Think of having lots of short, small conversations about alcohol versus one big talk. Kids are less likely to turn off if you sprinkle information over short, non-threatening conversations.

Start having the conversations early. It's never too early to start talking about alcohol with your kids; in fact, 70% of kids say parents are their leading influence as to whether or not to

drink. That will get you thinking both about what you're saying and doing.

Talking often helps build trust with your child; it also offers you more opportunities to make your rules and views about alcohol clear. And, remember, conversation goes both ways. You can learn a lot by listening to questions and answering them honestly.

Experts say it's better to be honest and talk about the temptations you faced. An honest example of an embarrassing situation you faced because of drinking might have a great impact on your child.

So take time to listen and talk. Check out the website for complete information. And remember, use your words. If you're looking for ways to help you frame the conversations, check out Communities That Care of Lorain County www.ctcloraincounty.org which has links to the national prevention campaign, Talk Early, Talk Often, Get Others Involved.

