

Refusal Skills for Teens

How to say “No” to alcohol and drugs while maintaining your friendships

1. **Make your Position Clear**

The best solution to social pressure is to say “NO” clearly, distinctly, and with conviction. While this probably is the best strategy, it is one of the hardest things to do. However, the advantage of making your position clear is it usually puts an end to the pressuring.

2. **Add Emphasis**

Sometimes there is a need to reinforce the word “NO” with an extra word like absolutely, never or no way.

3. **State Facts or Consequences**

Say something like “My parents will ground me for a whole month.” or “No way, that stuff can really mess you up.” or “I’ve got to drive home and there’s no way I’m going to risk losing my license.”

4. **Make an Excuse**

“The stomach flu has been going through my family and I think I’ve got it.” “My parents are picking me up early.” or “My mom just texted me and my sister is sick and she needs me to come home.”

5. **Reverse the Pressure**

“Why is it so important to you that I drink?” “Why do you want me to change my decision?” “Why does a person have to drink to have fun?”

6. **Propose an Alternative**

“Let’s play cards instead.” or “Let’s go to the movies.”

7. **Plan Ahead**

Anticipate what some of the issues might be, what could come up and how you’ll safely get out of the situation. Have back-up transportation, go with a friend who shares your values, have a pre-arranged change of plans that can “come up” suddenly (*Example: Tell your parents that if you ever text them a certain phrase or just a letter “X” it means you would like them to call to tell you to come home immediately to get you out of an uncomfortable situation.*)

8. **Leave the Scene**

Have a plan for how you could leave the situation safely. Have a promise from parents to come get you if you need them to or talk to a friend about getting a ride if necessary.

9. **Share the Responsibility**

Borrow the power from a known authority such as coaches or parents.

10. **Buy Time**

Saying something like, “Maybe later.” can give you a little time to figure out how to get out of the situation.

11. **Recruit a Friend**

Use other friends who can reinforce your position. Plan ahead.

12. **Use Humor**

Humor can reduce the tension created by refusal.

13. **Help a Friend**

If you see a friend who is making, or is about to make a bad decision, you can help them make a better decision.

14. **Save the Group**

The values of holding out against the group can be enormous. Provide guidance, supervision and assistance when someone is at risk of being hurt.