

# Pointers For Parents

## Talking To Children About Marijuana

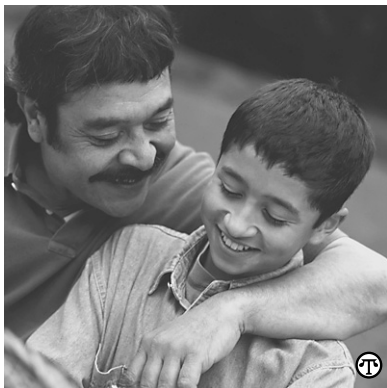
(NAPSA)—Picture this: You're driving your child home one afternoon and she turns to you and asks, "Mom, did you ever use marijuana when you were a kid?"

This is a question many parents hope to avoid. Unless the answer is an unequivocal "no," it may be difficult to know what to say. Consider these tips:

- **How honest should you be?** Phillippe Cunningham, a family therapist at the Medical University of South Carolina, recommends an honest answer when a child asks about your past. Otherwise, you risk losing credibility with your kids. "This doesn't mean you should recount every detail of your high school or college years," says Dr. Cunningham, "but use it as an opportunity to talk with your child."

- **Doesn't admitting to using marijuana mean condoning the practice?** The fact is, we all want what's best for our children. Today's marijuana is not the ditchweed of the 1960s. Marijuana is more potent than it was a generation ago and more kids are using it at a younger age, when their bodies and minds are developing. We also know much more about the real risks of marijuana use. Parents can (and should) draw on real-life examples of friends who had trouble as a result of marijuana use.

- **"I don't want to sound like a hypocrite."** "Do as I say, not as I do" has never been a good method of parenting. Parents can emphasize that this discussion is about



**Parents are the single most powerful influence on their children's decisions about drugs.**

your child's future, and not about your past. Even if you made mistakes in the past, be clear you do not want your child to repeat them.

Most importantly, remember that when your child asks about your past, he or she has opened the door for an ongoing dialogue about drugs. Use this opportunity to talk to them about making good choices. Research affirms that parents who are involved and talk to their kids about drugs are more likely to keep their kids away from drugs.

For more tips on communication and parenting, visit [www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com), a Web site designed to help parents help kids stay safe and drug-free. To receive a copy of "Keeping Your Kids Drug-Free: A How-to Guide for Parents and Caregivers" or "Wake Up to the Risks of Marijuana," call 1-800-788-2800.