The 4-1-1 On Pot

How to talk to your kids about marijuana use

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With many black neighborhoods seeing rampant drug use and rappers shouting out their love for “chronic” and “trees,” marijuana has become more widely accepted. Talking to kids about pot can seem like an uphill battle. Still, parents must.

ESTABLISH BOUNDARIES: Some parents are relieved that their kid uses “only” pot, but today’s marijuana is addictive and dangerous, says David Rotenberg, executive director of adolescent services at Caron, a Pennsylvania-based addiction treatment center. “Marijuana is the primary drug for probably 50%” of the youth Caron treats, Rotenberg says. And the National Institute on Drug Abuse says the marijuana available today can be five times more potent than the pot of the 1970s. So let your child know that “weed” is a drug and that drug use is dangerous.

TEACH “NO”: Provide ways for your child to say no that are acceptable to their peers; your child will be more likely to use them. For instance, he can say he’ll get kicked off the basketball team if he smokes.

GET REAL: When your kid questions your weed history, fess up, and relay any negative impacts it had on your life. Don’t say, “Do as I say, not as I did.” Use the experience to build trust and communication.

KEEP TALKING: Be persistent. You know the street-corner hustlers will be too.

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