

# FAMILY CHECKUP

POSITIVE PARENTING  
PREVENTS DRUG ABUSE

## Communication

**Good communication** between parents and children is the foundation of strong family relationships. Developing good communication skills helps parents catch problems early, support positive behavior, and stay aware of what is happening in their children's lives.

### Before you begin...

- Be sure it's a good time to talk and you can focus 100% on communicating with your child
- Have a plan
- Gather your thoughts before you approach your child
- Be calm and patient
- Limit distractions

### Key communication skills include:

**Questioning**—The kind of information you receive depends a lot on how you ask the question.

- **Show interest/concern.** Don't blame/accuse. For example, instead of "how do you get yourself into these situations!" say "That sounds like a difficult situation. Were you confused?"
- **Encourage problemsolving/thinking.** For example: Instead of "What did you think was going to happen when you don't think?" say "So, what do you think would have been a better way to handle that?"

**Listening and observing**—Youth feel more comfortable bringing issues and situations to their parents when they know they will be listened to and not be accused.

### Reducing Emotion

Sometimes talking with children brings up strong feelings that interfere with clear thinking. Following the CALM steps can help a parent keep the conversation moving in the right direction.

- C** Control your thoughts and your actions.
- A** Assess and decide if you are too upset to continue.
- L** Leave the situation if you are feeling too angry or upset.
- M** Make a plan to deal with the situation within 24 hours.

### Extra Tips

- Be present and tuned in.
- Show understanding.
- Listen with respect.
- Be interested.
- Avoid negative emotions.
- Give encouragement.