

# THE NATIONAL NIGHT *of* CONVERSATION



## *What is the National Night of Conversation?*

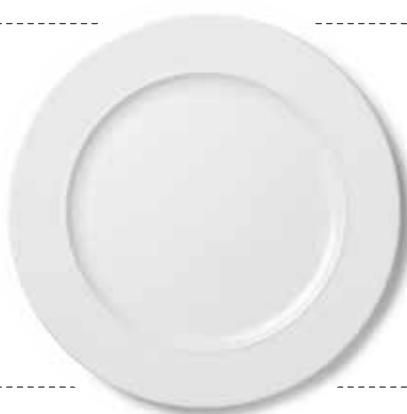
**ON NOVEMBER 19, 2015, WE ARE CALLING ON EVERYONE ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO HAVE DINNER WITH THE PEOPLE THEY CARE ABOUT AND TO BREAK THE SILENCE ON DRUGS AND ADDICTION BY DISCUSSING IT.**

*Dependence on alcohol and drugs is a serious national public health problem. The federal government is taking steps to address the problem on a policy level, but evidence has also shown that emotional support plays a huge role in preventing drug addiction as well as supporting recovery. By having meaningful discussions about substance abuse, we can help those around us avoid the disease of addiction. For many of us, this is not something we are used to talking about or comfortable with, so this guide is designed to help make the conversation easier. This guide provides tips to get a discussion started between adults and kids, but everyone can have this conversation. To facilitate a more in-depth discussion you can download a toolkit from <http://www.drugsoverdinner.org>.*

### PLEASE SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

*Post a picture of an empty dinner plate on the social media platform of your choice and use:*

**#NightofConversation**

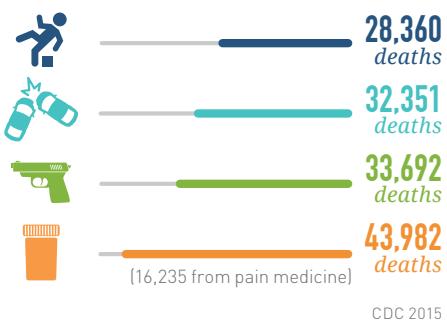


### WHY AN EMPTY DINNER PLATE ?

*Because we all love posting pictures of food on social media, but tonight the conversation is even more important than the actual dinner, and the empty plate is a symbol of this.*

# 10 FACTS *you didn't* KNOW ABOUT DRUGS

## DRUG OVERDOSES *kill more than* cars, guns & falling



**27 million Americans USE ILLICIT DRUGS OR PRESCRIPTION DRUGS FOR non-medical reasons**

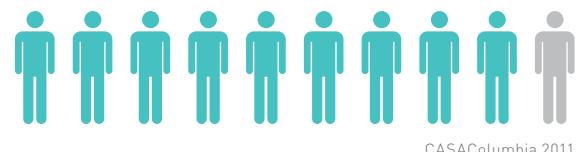
SAMHSA 2014 NSDUH



THERE ARE **1.9 MILLION** PEOPLE IN THE U.S. WITH ADDICTION TO PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS

SAMHSA 2014 NSDUH

**9 OUT OF 10 PEOPLE**  
*with substance problems*  
**STARTED USING**  
**BY AGE 18**



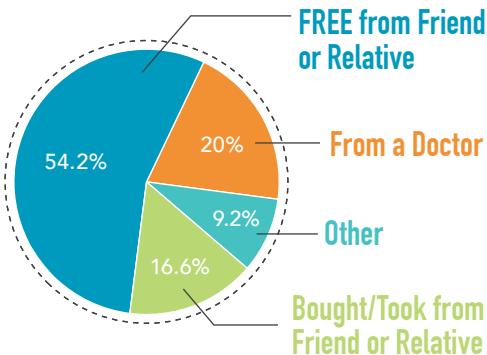
CASAColumbia 2011

The United States has **5%** of the World's Population and *consumes about* **75% of the** World's Prescription Opioids

UNODC 2014

Where are  
PRESCRIPTION  
**PAIN**  
KILLERS  
Obtained?

SAMHSA 2014 NSDUH



40% OF TEENS BELIEVE THAT PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES, EVEN IF THEY ARE NOT PRESCRIBED BY A DOCTOR, ARE "MUCH SAFER" TO USE THAN ILLEGAL DRUGS

Drugfree.org PATS 2005

**ADDICTION** is a chronic disease, just like heart disease, diabetes and cancer, all of which may be **fatal** if left untreated



Research Suggests that **4 Out of 5** Heroin Users Start Out with Prescription Drugs

SAMHSA CBHSQ 2013



If someone in your family has a problem with substance use, it puts you at **greater risk** for a problem with alcohol and other drugs

# Discussion Guide

KIDS WHO LEARN ABOUT THE RISKS OF DRUGS FROM THEIR PARENTS ARE UP TO 50% LESS LIKELY TO USE DRUGS AND DRINK ALCOHOL. THE DINNER TABLE IS A GOOD PLACE TO START THIS CONVERSATION AND IN FACT, RESEARCH SHOWS THAT KIDS WHO HAVE DINNER WITH THEIR FAMILIES ARE LESS LIKELY TO DRINK ALCOHOL OR USE OTHER DRUGS. Getting kids to open up about what's happening in their lives when you're not around can be difficult. Use this guide to make that conversation easier. It starts with an icebreaker that can get your child more comfortable opening up and talking to you, and then delves into some of the key issues to talk about surrounding drugsfeeling safe talking about them within the family; understanding that all drugs, including prescription medications, are potentially dangerous; discussing family history of addiction, which is a major risk factor, and understanding that addiction is a chronic disease that can be treated. In addition to the questions and guidance provided below, you may also want to use some of the facts on the previous page to illustrate the problem of drug use to your child. This is a big topic that is worth discussing with your family on an ongoing basis. This conversation shouldn't all take place in one night, so we've provided you with some online resources to keep the discussion going at [doctoroz.com](http://doctoroz.com).



# Starting the Conversation

## SOMETIMES GETTING KIDS TO TALK CAN BE QUITE A CHALLENGE.

Questions like, "how was your day?" are often answered with one word - fine. Tonight's conversation requires active participation, so step 1 is meant to help break the ice and establish trust for the evening.

### Step 1

It's important to establish a safe environment where everyone feels at ease sharing his or her thoughts and opinions. You want to make it clear that your children should feel comfortable coming to talk to you about drugs (including alcohol) rather than being afraid of punishment. Everyone at the table should share his or her own answers to the questions below.

#### QUESTIONS:

- What's the hardest thing that you had to do this week?
- Did you need help?
- If you needed help with something stressful, who would you turn to?

### Step 3

A history of addiction to alcohol or other drugs of any type in the family can be a risk factor for addiction in other family members. Understanding this risk can help everyone take steps to prevent addiction. The first step is making sure everyone in the family knows about it.

If you are comfortable doing so, you should share information about family members who have struggled with alcohol and other drug problems. Your kids may ask you about your own past alcohol or drug use. This is something you should be prepared for and decide in advance how you want to approach. It may be cliché, but honesty truly is the best policy. That doesn't mean you have to give all the gory details, but if you don't tell the truth you risk losing credibility if the truth ever comes out. Sharing too much of your personal experience experimenting with substances when you were younger has been shown to make your child less sensitive to the risks of drug abuse.

#### QUESTIONS:

- When someone is addicted to alcohol or other drugs, what does that look like?
- How do you know when someone is addicted to alcohol or other drugs?

### Step 5

Congratulations! You have made it to the end of the guide. You don't have to stop, but it's probably getting late. A great way to close the conversation is to talk about how it went and what everyone learned and to emphasize that this is a topic we should feel safe discussing any time in the future.

#### QUESTIONS:

- So, that wasn't so bad, was it?
- What was the most important thing you learned tonight?
- What will you do if you are confronted with a situation where someone offers you alcohol or other drugs?

### Step 2

Many people don't realize that prescription drugs can be just as dangerous as illegal drugs. Nearly one-third of people ages 12 and over who use drugs begin by using a prescription drug for non-medical purposes. It's important to remember that prescription and over-the-counter drugs are only safe when taken exactly as prescribed and for the purpose intended. When abused, these substances can be addictive and put abusers at risk for other adverse health effects.

#### QUESTIONS:

- What are some of the things that people can get addicted to?
- Do you think prescription drugs are safer than illegal drugs?

### Step 4

It's in the infographic on the previous page, but it bears repeating here: ADDICTION IS A CHRONIC DISEASE. As with other chronic diseases addiction can be successfully treated. In fact there are over 23 million Americans in recovery from alcohol or other drug addictions. You probably work or go to school with people who are successfully dealing with their addiction problem and you don't even know it. Different types of addictions have different treatments that work best and insurance should pay for them. Go to our online resources to learn more about this and where to find help for someone who needs it.

#### QUESTIONS:

- Do you think addiction is an illness?
- Do you think addiction can be treated?
- What would you do if you thought someone you knew needed treatment for an addiction?

# Important Additional Conversation Goals

1

Show you disapprove of youth alcohol and other drug use. It's important that you send a clear and strong message.

2

Show you care about your child's happiness and well-being. Young people are more likely to listen when they know you're on their side. Try to reinforce why you don't want your child to drink or use drugs—not just because you say so, but because you want your child to be happy and safe. The conversation will go a lot better if you're working with, and not against, your child.

3

Show you're a good source of information about alcohol and other drugs. You want your child to be making informed decisions about drinking as well as using drugs, with reliable information about the dangers. You don't want your child to be learning about alcohol and other drugs from friends, the internet, or the media—you want to establish yourself as a trustworthy source of information.

4

Show you're paying attention and you'll notice if your child drinks or uses drugs. You want to show you're keeping an eye on your child, because young people are more likely to drink if they think no one will notice. There are many subtle ways to do this without prying.

5

Build your child's skills and strategies for avoiding underage drinking as well as drug use. Even if your child doesn't want to drink or use drugs, peer pressure is a powerful thing. It could be tempting to use substances just to avoid looking uncool. To prepare your child to resist peer pressure, you'll need to build skills and practice them.

Guide Developed in Collaboration with



Supporting Organizations



For additional resources go to [www.doctoroz.com](http://www.doctoroz.com)