

# Start the conversation!

## Talk tips for role models.

As a role model, you don't need to know everything about underage drinking. You just need to know how to get the conversation started! Use your unique connection to talk with kids about the things that are important to them. Things like school, sports, and other extracurricular activities are all great ways to start talking. And remember, take the time to listen—this will make them feel comfortable talking to you about tough issues.



## Understand how to get kids to respond.

Kids typically don't love facts. They listen when we talk about things that are relevant to their lives and interests. Take what you know about the kids in your circle and use the examples below to begin a small talk.

### Fact: Alcohol can damage the brain



The brain isn't fully developed until the mid-20's, and underage drinking can damage certain parts of the brain. **Here's what you could say:**

**Educators:** "I know that school is really important to you. Did you know that underage drinking can damage the part of the brain responsible for learning?"

**Coaches:** "I know that success is very important to you. Did you know that alcohol can damage the part of the brain responsible for coordination?"

**Law Enforcement:** "I know most kids want to have fun and try new things. Did you know that alcohol can damage the part of the brain responsible for self-control?"

**Community and Youth Organization Leaders:** "I know how important it is for you to stay involved in the community and other activities. Did you know that alcohol can decrease brain activity for weeks at a time?"

## Fact: Alcohol damages the body



Drinking before the body is fully developed can have dangerous effects. **Here's what you could say:**

**Educators:** "I know you're growing so fast and going through a ton of healthy changes. Did you know that alcohol can affect normal growth and development?"

**Coaches:** "I know you always do your best to prepare for each game. Did you know that alcohol has a huge impact on your endurance level and reaction time?"

**Law Enforcement:** "I know young kids are always looking to take new risks. Did you know that alcohol can greatly affect your motor skills and increase your risk of injury?"

**Community and Youth Organization Leaders:** "I know all the hard work you do to prepare yourself for a successful future. Did you know that alcohol increases your risk for many types of cancer?"

## Fact: Alcohol can lead to mental struggles



When kids transition from childhood to adolescence, they experience dramatic social and emotional changes. **Here's what you could say:**

**Educators:** "Being a kid is tough, and you're going through a lot of changes. Underage drinking often leads to kids dealing with anxiety issues."

**Coaches:** "I want to help give you the confidence you need to succeed both on and off the field. So, it's important that you know drinking alcohol can cause issues with self-esteem."

**Law Enforcement:** "I know that it's common for kids your age to deal with a lot of tough issues. Underage drinking often leads to kids experiencing depression."

**Community and Youth Organization Leaders:** "I value your dedication to making yourself and this community a better place. When kids start drinking early, they are much more likely to develop a substance use disorder later in life."