FOR FAMILIES · PARENT DISCUSSION GUIDE

Sober Thoughts

Keeping the conversation going at home

What they heard

The five big ideas from the assembly

How to talk

Conversation tips and the code-word exit plan

Where to turn

Signs to watch and free, confidential help lines

Use with the Sober Thoughts Parent Discussion Cards.
Dynamic Influence · dynamicinfluence.com

What your teen heard

Your teen saw a magic-and-illusion assembly about how decisions get made and what gets in the way. It was not a scare talk. The message: know who you want to be, and make choices on purpose.

1. **Build your life, don't just live it.**
   Every decision stacks on the ones before it. Volunteers held up a circle of chairs together, and when one let go, everyone fell.

2. **Pressure is a split second.**
   It rarely looks like someone forcing you. It's a quick choice made while worrying how you look. A refusal line chosen ahead of time makes it easier.

3. **Stress is fuel, not failure.**
   A lobster grows by shedding a shell that's gotten too tight. Using a substance to escape every hard moment trains the brain to keep doing it.

4. **Play the hand you're dealt.**
   You can't control your cards, only how you play them.

5. **Consider the source.**
   Ask who profits before believing “it's safe.” Vaping makes an aerosol, not water vapor. Pills and vape pens from unregulated sources can contain fentanyl or other drugs.

> *“Thoughts become words, words become actions, actions become habits, habits become behavior, behavior becomes character.”*

How to start the conversation

Start with the magic, not the drugs. “What was the coolest trick?” gets a teen talking faster than “What did they say about vaping?”

- **Talk side by side.** Car rides, dishes and chores feel less like an interrogation than sitting face to face.
- **Ask, then listen.** Aim for them to talk more than you do. Hold back corrections the first time.
- **Ask about “kids at school,” not them.** Teens answer more honestly about their peers, and you still learn what they're seeing.
- **Stay calm if they tell you something.** Thank them for being honest. A big reaction teaches them to stop telling you.
- **Say your expectations plainly.** Pair “I don't want you using” with “and I'll always come get you.”
- **Keep it short and repeat it.** Ten five-minute talks beat one long one.

Use the Parent Discussion Cards

The companion card set has 14 questions tied to the assembly, each with a note on why it works, plus the code-word steps, the refusal lines and help lines. Keep a few in the car. A taste:

THE ASSEMBLY

Which trick fooled you the most? How did he connect it to decisions?

BUILD YOUR LIFE

What do you want your life to look like at 25?

PRESSURE

When something gets offered at a party, what would you say?

CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Who benefits when teens believe vaping is harmless?

Your turn to share

Teens open up more when parents do. Talk about a time you faced pressure at their age, what you did, and what you'd do differently.

Set up a code word tonight

A code word gives your teen a way out of an uncomfortable situation without losing face. The speaker uses this with his own kids.

1. **Pick the word together.** The speaker uses “FINE.” Choose any word that looks normal in a text.
2. **Agree on the trigger.** You text “How's it going?” If they answer with the code word, they want to come home.
3. **Play the bad guy.** Call and say something like “You didn't clean your room, I'm coming to get you.” They get to complain about you in front of friends.
4. **No questions that night.** Promise a pickup with no lecture on the drive. Talk the next day, calmly. This is what makes them actually use it.
5. **Practice once.** Send a test text this week so it feels normal.

Lines your teen heard

“Nah, I'm good.” · “I tried it. Didn't like how it made me feel.” · “Addiction runs in my family. I don't mess with it.” · “My parents test me.”

Tell your teen out loud: you can always blame me.

Signs to watch, and where to get help

Any one of these can be normal teen behavior. A cluster of them, or a sudden change, is worth a calm conversation.

- New friend group, secrecy about where they've been, or missing money
- Drop in grades, sleep, appetite, or interest in activities they loved
- Sweet or fruity smells, USB-like devices, pods, or unfamiliar pills
- Red eyes, frequent coughing, or mood swings

If a teen is unresponsive, breathing slowly, or has pinpoint pupils, call 911.

Naloxone (Narcan) can reverse an opioid overdose and is sold without a prescription. Most states have a Good Samaritan law protecting people who call 911 for an overdose.

Resource	How to reach it	For
911	Call	Medical emergency or overdose
988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline	Call or text 988	Anyone in crisis, 24/7
SAMHSA National Helpline	1-800-662-4357	Free, confidential treatment referrals, 24/7
Partnership to End Addiction	Text CONNECT to 55753	Free one-on-one support for parents
This is Quitting (Truth Initiative)	Text DITCHVAPE to 88709	Free help for teens to quit vaping, 13+
1-800-QUIT-NOW	1-800-784-8669	Free quit coaching in every state
Poison Control	1-800-222-1222	Swallowed vape liquid or a bad reaction
School counselor	Call the school office	First step for any concern

Your school's parent resource page lists local and state help.