



**THE POWER OF CHOICE**  
thepowerofchoice.info

- 1 **Monitor**  
Help Teens Make the Healthy Decision to Not Use Alcohol
- 2 **The Five Cs**  
Positive Youth Development
- 3 **Parental Monitoring**  
The Impact of Parental Monitoring & Peer Influence

## About This Issue

*Tips for you to help prepare your teen to make the healthy decision not to use alcohol.*

# THE PARENT POST

June 2020

MIDDLE SCHOOL EDITION

Look for some of our latest parent PSAs on Facebook!

## 01 Monitor — Help Teens Choose Not to Use Alcohol

Welcome to the Summer Issue of the Parent Post, Middle School edition. In this issue we are continuing the conversation about the importance of monitoring and communicating with our teens the consequences of underage alcohol use. Kids are curious, they know alcohol exists and it is up to parents to ensure students understand how alcohol can negatively impact their development and goals in life.

Monitoring looks like many things. While in some instances it means looking for when things are amiss, other times it is looking for opportunities to support our teens growth and development. It is just as important to support our children when things are going right, so that they are aware that you notice and respond, as it is when things are not going as smoothly.

While adolescence can be a time of change, it does not always have to be a time of turmoil. It is important to see the opportunity for growth during these moments and be prepared to stay connected, monitor and help youth succeed.

### Adolescence is a time of opportunity, not always turmoil

Research shows that adolescence—contrary to views that predominate in our media and culture—is actually positive for both teens and adults. Most adolescents succeed in school, are attached to their families and their communities, and emerge from their teen years without experiencing serious problems such as substance abuse or involvement with violence. Although teens experience emotions intensely, a consequence of brain development, for most, the teen years are not filled with angst and confusion.

Rather, they are a time of concentrated social, emotional, and cognitive development. It is also a time of curiosity. It is important that curiosity be nourished in a positive and healthy manner.

Being open about things like alcohol and other drugs with our children is important; it is also important to be clear about family, school, sports and legal consequences related to underage drinking.



KEEP MONITORING - IT IS AN ACT OF LOVE

LET YOUR TEENS KNOW YOU ARE PAYING ATTENTION  
NOTICE + RESPOND TO ANY SIGNS OF UNDERAGE DRINKING  
HELP THEM TO MAKE HEALTHY DECISIONS

FOR RESOURCES + TO LEARN MORE VISIT: THEPOWEROFCHOICE.INFO

**THE POWER OF CHOICE**

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We need to keep talking with our teens, stay connected, monitor what they are doing in their daily lives and find ways to support their development. Things like the positive youth development framework are a great way to reduce risk during teens years to help them make the healthy choice to stay away from alcohol.

In partnership with



The Power of Choice is a project of 360 Youth Services, Naperville School District 203, Indian Prairie School District 204, Naperville Police Department, KidsMatter and District 203 & 204 parents.

## 02 ◀ 5 C's of Positive Youth Development

### Reducing Risk – Preparing Teens to Make the Healthy Decision to Not Use Alcohol

The positive youth development framework expands the traditional focus on reducing risks. Programs informed by the traditional framework—which remains important—tend to focus on avoiding bad things: drugs, underage alcohol use or failing school. Although many risk reduction strategies have been shown to be successful, research in the field of positive youth development has demonstrated that “problem-free is not fully prepared.” Healthy adolescent development requires creating opportunities for adolescents to experience, learn, and practice the 5 Cs.

This can help prepare them so they can make the healthy choice to not use alcohol - even if they are in a situation that is not optimal.

**Adolescents need opportunities to practice and discuss realistic decision-making. Here are some ways adults can facilitate the process:**

- » Get youth actively practicing decision-making through role-playing and group problem-solving exercises.
- » Take a look at how you make decisions and then lead by example.
- » Demonstrate to teens how to choose between competing pressures and demands.
- » Many adolescents live in the now. Show them the benefits of future thinking by anticipating difficult situations and planning in advance how to handle them.
- » Encourage adolescents to spend time with friends who share their values.



The 5 C's of positive youth development		
Asset	Definition	How to Foster It
COMPETENCE	Perception that one has abilities and skills	Provide training and practice in specific skills, either academic or hands-on
CONFIDENCE	Internal sense of self efficacy and positive self-worth	Provide opportunities for young people to experience success when trying something new
CONNECTION	Positive bonds with people and institutions	Build relationships between youth and peers, teachers and parents
CHARACTER	A sense of right and wrong (morality), integrity, and respect for standards of correct behavior	Provide opportunities to practice increasing self-control and development of spirituality
CARING	A sense of sympathy and empathy for others	Care for young people

SOURCE: Tufts University - <https://ase.tufts.edu/iaryd/documents/4hpydstudywave7.pdf>



## 03 ◀ The Impact of Parental Monitoring & Peer Influence



It is important to keep the lines of communication open with our teens to create the close bonds necessary to maintain a positive influence on their life. Let them know we are there and aware of what is going on in their life. We need to be willing to share our own experiences, but more importantly, listen to their concerns and empathize. Seek to understand their feelings first before offering up anecdotes about what we were like as a teen, and when we do, speak about our vulnerabilities and the mistakes that we made at that age. Don't let it all hang out, though. Experts advise that adults talk about their past experiences with things such as alcohol, cautiously and conservatively.

Another potential impact on the decisions of our teens are their peers. Monitor peer activities, get to know their friends and family in order to create a strong connection within their group of friends. The influence of peers is normal and expected. Peers have significant sway on day-to-day values, attitudes, and behaviors in relation to school, as well as tastes in clothing and music.

Friends need not be a threat to parents' ultimate authority. Parents remain central throughout adolescence. Young people depend on their families and adult caregivers for affection, identification, values, and decision-making skills. Teens report, and research confirms, that parents have more influence than peers on whether or not adolescents smoke, use alcohol and other drugs. Teens also frequently seek out adult role models and advisors such as teachers, relatives, club leaders, or neighbors. Studies show that connections to teachers, for example, can be just as protective as connections to parents in delaying the initiation of use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Some teenagers, of course, trade the influence of parents and other adults for the influence of their peers. Youth still need to learn independent-thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills from us: their parents or guardians, and other caring adults, so they can apply these skills within their peer network. Hang in there with them, continue talking with them about not using alcohol and monitor for any signs of use.

### Additional Resources for you ▶

PowerTalk for Families  
<https://www.thepowerofchoice.info/6th-8th-grade-newsletters>

Connect with The Power of Choice online and on social media:

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 6-8th Grade Campaign Coordinator  
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