



THE POWER OF CHOICE
thepowerofchoice.info

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Be consistent in our communications
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Know the risk factors impacting your teen
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The impact on teens' decision to not use alcohol

About This Issue

In this issue we explore the benefits of prevention in the community when talking to teens about not using alcohol.

THE PARENT POST } SEPTEMBER 2019

MIDDLE SCHOOL EDITION

Look for some of our latest parent focused content on Facebook!

01 Keep Talking & Monitor

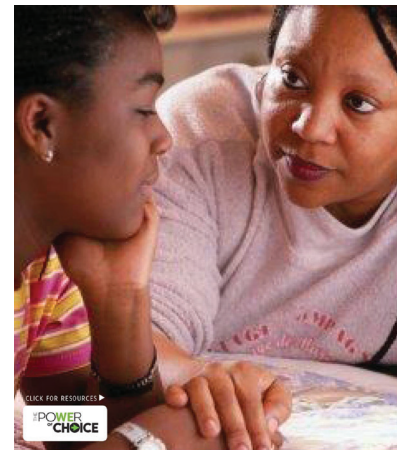
Welcome to the Fall 2019 school year issue of the Parent Post, Middle School edition. In this issue we are having the conversation about the importance of monitoring and talking with your teens about the consequences of underage alcohol use. It is important that as parents, we are not only informing our youth, but also ourselves about the risk factors that could lead teens toward the unhealthy decision to use alcohol.

Keep Talking - Be Consistent and Loving, but Firm. Bottom line: it just isn't possible for parents to be with their teens 24/7 to protect them from harm. But as parents, we can and should do the best we can to prepare our teens to be able to handle pressure and temptations to use alcohol and drugs. It is a big part of parental responsibility. In fact, parents have the best chance of helping shape our teens' attitudes and beliefs about alcohol and other drugs by virtue of our own behavior.

Above all, be loving parents. Keep the lines of communication open and honest. We are in this together with our youth. We also want the best for their future. We have to give them the solid foundation they need to grow up with self-confidence, to be able to face life's challenges and stresses and opportunities - without turning to alcohol and other drugs.

Keep conversations going from early childhood through adolescence and the teen years. We must be consistent, stay on message, be loving, but firm, and always be there for our children. **Be open about things like:**

- An upcoming trip or event, something on sale or something else that will spark your teen's interest and excitement.
- Make time for one-on-one talks with teens about anything that seems to be bothering them or gently try to determine what may be wrong, if there is a difference in attitude, dress, manner of speech, appearance or disappearance of certain friends, and so on.
- Creating a pledge between ourselves and our children that promises they will not drink alcohol or use other types of drugs.



KEEP TALKING
TALK WITH YOUR KIDS ABOUT NOT USING ALCOHOL
FOR RESOURCES + TO LEARN MORE VISIT: THEPOWEROFCHOICE.INFO

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Stay up to date on our parent campaign on facebook.com/powerofchoice360

The Power of Choice provides parents with a wealth of information they can use as they guide their children through the exciting teenage years.

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 ◀ Be Aware of Risk Factors

Keep Monitoring - Be Aware of Risk Factors

Being a responsible and loving parent also means that we have to take the time to familiarize ourselves with risk factors that may propel our teens toward alcohol and drug use, including:

- » Any significant social transition, such as moving from middle school to high school and getting a driver's license
- » Any family history of alcoholism or drug use
- » Anxiety, depression and other serious emotional problems
- » A history of social and emotional difficulties
- » Any contact with peers involved in troubling or suspicious activities

Teen substance use contributes to some of the most glaring barriers to health and productivity facing the current generation of teenagers in the United States. For example:

Teen tobacco, alcohol and marijuana users are at least twice as likely as nonusers to have poor grades.

Alcohol-induced damage has been observed in the brains of binge-drinking teens. Teens with alcohol use disorders have more self-reported health problems (including problems with sleep, eating and vision) and more abnormalities during physical examinations (including in the abdominal region as well as in their respiratory and cardiovascular systems) than those without alcohol use disorders.

Some Teens Face Personal Challenges That Compound Their Risk of Substance Use and Addiction

Some of these risks include:

A genetic predisposition toward developing an addiction or a family history of substance use disorders; adverse childhood events, such as abuse, neglect or other trauma, co-occurring mental health problems, peer victimization or bullying, and engagement in other health- and safety-risk behaviors such as early or unsafe sex, unhealthy weight control behaviors, risky driving or violent or aggressive behavior.

Not only are these teens more likely to use addictive substances and to develop substance use disorders, but many of them also are more likely to start using substances at a young age, to use multiple addictive substances and to progress more quickly to heavy use and addiction.

Certain sub-groups of adolescents, such as those who are in the child welfare system, drop out of high school, are involved with the criminal justice system or have a minority gender or other identity also are at elevated risk for substance use, addiction and their health and social consequences.

03 ◀ Parents & the Community

How Our Community Views Underage Alcohol Use Plays a Big Role



Disapproval from the larger community in which teens live also can help protect teens; however, substance-related images are pervasive in neighborhood-based advertising and retail sales across the country, sending the message that substance use is a normal part of life. Greater numbers of tobacco and alcohol retail outlets in a community relate to increased risk of adolescent substance use.

Depictions of smoking, vaping and drinking in social media, television shows and movies popular with teens also have an impact. For example, according to one source, the odds of becoming a tobacco user are more than doubled by exposure to tobacco marketing and media images of tobacco use. Alcohol advertising is related to young people's attitudes and expectations regarding drinking and to their risk of alcohol use.

What Can Parents Do?

Parents are the single strongest influence—for better or worse—on our teens' choices to smoke, vape, drink or use other drugs. We must recognize that substance use is a real and present threat to our teens' health, safety and future and take steps to prevent it. We set rules and expectations to protect our children from many harms, such as requiring that they wear seat belts, not text while driving, be sexually abstinent or avoid unprotected sex, or limit their junk food intake. Requiring our teens to refrain from tobacco, alcohol and other drug use is just as important and could have significant lifesaving outcomes.

We should get the facts; set a good example; restrict access to addictive substances; communicate clear, consistent no-use messages; consistently enforce rules; monitor our teens; require that their health care providers address this issue in the context of routine professional care; and get help fast at the earliest signs of trouble. We, as parents, should set the norms of behavior for our teens and for other parents as well.

Peer Pressure Refusal Strategies

It's not always enough to say no in a peer-pressure situation. Knowing what to say and what to do in a pressure situation can keep it from escalating or keep our child from giving in. We can help students learn to recognize peer pressure and how to apply a variety of effective strategies to refuse it or avoid it. We can also help students learn to consider the circumstances in a pressure situation so they can apply the best strategy to handle the situation safely without giving in.

Download this origami mini booklet featuring nine peer refusal strategies to complete a fun and creative project that gives our students visual cues to keep these strategies ready to use.

[CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD >](#)

Additional Resources for You ▶

The Power of Choice Resources: <http://www.thepowerofchoice.info>

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

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