

Research shows that students who talk with their parents about alcohol use are less likely to use. The idea of *Keep Talking, They're Listening* will be the theme this year. We will share tools, tips and information to aid you in continuing to talk with your children about the risks of alcohol and substance use.

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We are resilient



THE PARENT POST

MIDDLE SCHOOL EDITION

September 2020

Hello Parents!

01 **The Power of Choice** welcomes you to the new school year! The Power of Choice is a campaign supporting students, schools and parents, focused on building resiliency and providing education to increase the number of students making healthy choices regarding substance use. We are a collaborative project led by 360 Youth Services in District 203 and 204 Middle and High Schools.

This year, our focus is on assisting you in continuing to build strong communication with your children. **Research shows that students who talk with their parents about not using alcohol are less likely to use.** The idea of *Keep Talking, They're Listening* will be the theme this year. We will share tools, tips and information to aid you in continuing to talk with your children about the risks of alcohol and substance use. The Power of Choice team will be connecting with parents digitally through newsletters like this, as well as over social media. Our website **thepowerofchoice.info** has topicspecific educational materials and links, also a

Community Resource Guide for your convenience. Watch for print materials like the Youth Connections Magazine provided by the **Community Alliance for Prevention.**

For your children, we will be connecting with them again this year through posters and newsletters. In the past, The Power of Choice team visits Districts 203 & 204 middle schools throughout the school year during lunch periods, to get feedback from students for our in-school campaign materials. This school year with students learning remotely, materials will be shared with them electronically. Youth materials will focus on increasing students' knowledge around the dangers of vaping electronic cigarettes or e-cigarettes. These materials will not be released until Winter 2021 as they are coming from the Center for Prevention & Development at the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana. The materials are still undergoing development and pilot testing to ensure they are effective for youth.

Did you know? Alcohol affects people differently at different stages of life—for children and adolescents, alcohol can interfere with

normal brain development. Kids who drink are more likely to have serious school-related problems and conflict issues with peers. You have more influence on your child's values and decisions about drinking before they begin to use alcohol. Parents can have a major impact on their children's drinking, especially during the preteen and early teen years.

The best way to influence your child to avoid drinking is to have a strong, trusting relationship with them.

Research shows that teens are much more likely to delay drinking when they feel they have a close, supportive tie with a parent or guardian.



Follow us on Social Media!

Facebook: **PowerofChoice360**
Twitter: **360Prevention**

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 ◀ Building Strong Bonds

Keep in mind -- The opposite can also be true: When the relationship between a parent and teen is full of conflict or is very distant, the teen is more likely to use alcohol and to develop drinking-related problems. This connection between the parent-child relationship and a child's drinking habits makes a lot of sense when you think about it.

First, when children have a strong bond with a parent, they are apt to feel good about themselves and therefore be less likely to give in to peer pressure to use alcohol. Second, a good relationship with you is likely to encourage your children to try to live up to your expectations, because they want to maintain their close tie with you. When kids talk with their parent(s) and communicate positively, they are willing to seek advice from parents.

Here are some ways to build a strong, supportive bond with your child:

- » Establish open communication. Make it easy for your teen to talk honestly with you.
- » Show you care. Even though young teens may not always show it, they still need to know that they are important to their parents.
- » Make it a point to regularly spend one-on-one time with your child—time when you can give them your loving, undivided attention.
- » Some activities to share: a walk, a bike ride, or a cookie-baking session. Brief but important talks happen in those moments.

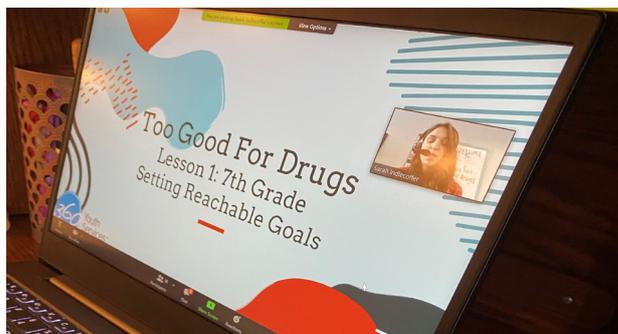
03 ◀ 5 Tips for Talking With Your Teens About Not Using Alcohol

Developing open, trusting communication between you and your child is essential to helping them avoid alcohol use. If your child feels comfortable talking openly with you, you'll have a greater chance of guiding them toward healthy decision making. Some ways to begin:

- » Encourage conversation. Encourage your child to talk about whatever interests them. Listen without interruption and give your child a chance to teach you something new. Your active listening to your child's enthusiasms paves the way for conversations about topics that concern you.
- » Ask open-ended questions. Encourage your teen to tell you how they think and feel about the issue you're discussing. Avoid questions that have a simple "yes" or "no" answer.
- » Control your emotions. If you hear something you don't like, try not to respond with anger. Instead, take a few deep breaths and acknowledge your feelings in a constructive way.
- » Make every conversation a "win-win" experience. Don't lecture or try to "score points" on your teen by showing how they are wrong. If you show respect for your child's viewpoint, they will be more likely to listen to and respect yours.

04 ◀ Prevention Goes Virtual!

The 360 Youth Services Prevention Team adapted quickly to continue to provide substance use prevention education to the community. We thank Districts 203 & 204 for their continued partnership to provide information to the students. Stay tuned for more from Prevention!



**"I will teach you in a room.
I will teach you now on Zoom.
I will teach you in your house.
I will teach you with a mouse.
I will teach you here and there.
I will teach you because I care.
I will teach you to do your very best.
And do not worry about the rest."
-Author Unknown**

Additional Resources for you ▶

Learn more here - Talking with your kids about not using alcohol:

SAMHSA - Why You Should Talk With Your Child About Alcohol & Other Drugs

Connect with The Power of Choice online:

www.thepowerofchoice.info

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