



THE POWER OF CHOICE
thepowerofchoice.info

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About This Issue

It is so important to be clear with our teens about not using alcohol. In this issue we explore how parents can set clear expectations.

THE **PARENT POST** } January 2021
MIDDLE SCHOOL EDITION

Monitor & Set Clear Expectations

01 Welcome to the latest Issue of the Parent Post, Middle School edition.

In this issue we are exploring the importance of monitoring and communicating clear expectations with your teens when it comes to talking about not using alcohol. As we continue to stay safe and social distance during the COVID-19 pandemic, these ongoing conversations are important to have with your teen. Even though we are not gathering like we did before, you can begin or continue to set clear expectations with your teen.

Monitor: Set Clear Expectations, Your Kids Depend on You

While parent-child conversations about not drinking are essential, talking isn't enough – you also need to take concrete action to help your child resist alcohol. Research strongly shows that active, supportive involvement by parents and guardians can help teens avoid underage drinking and prevent later alcohol misuse.

Monitor in your home. Make it clear to your child that you don't allow unchaperoned parties or other teen gatherings in your home. If possible, however, encourage them to invite friends over when you are at home. The more entertaining your child does in your home, the more you will know about your child's friends and activities.

Connect With Other Parents. Getting to know other parents and guardians can help you keep closer tabs on your child. Friendly relations can make it easier for you to call the parent of a teen who is having a party to be sure that a responsible adult will be present and that alcohol will not be available. You're likely to find out that you're not the only adult who wants to prevent teen alcohol-use – many other parents share your concern.

Keep track of your child's activities. Be aware of your teen's plans and whereabouts. Generally, your child will be more open to your supervision if they feel you are keeping tabs because you care, not because you distrust them.

Start early. Setting and enforcing clear expectations about not using alcohol as a teenager are key to delaying first use. That's important, since the younger adolescents are when they first use

alcohol the more likely they are to deal with its negative consequences throughout their lifetime.

Keep communication open. Be interested in your teen's life, and be open to information they may share. Not only will this make it easier to talk about difficult issues regarding alcohol and other topics, but it also will give you information about where your teen may be facing pressure or temptation to use alcohol.

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For mental health resources, check out the 360 Youth Services Community Resource Guide.

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 ◀ Develop Family Rules That Are Clear

Develop family rules about underage drinking. When parents establish clear no alcohol rules and expectations, their children are less likely to begin drinking. Although each family should develop agreements about teen alcohol use that reflect their own beliefs and values, some possible family rules about drinking are:

- » Kids will not drink alcohol until they are 21 years old.
- » Older siblings will not encourage younger siblings to drink and will not give them alcohol.
- » Kids will not stay at parties where alcohol is being served to minors.
- » Kids will not ride in a car with a driver who has been drinking or are under the influence. Let your child know they can always call you for a safe ride home.



03 ◀ Set a Good Example With Your Actions

Set a good example. Parents and guardians are important role models for their children – even children who are fast becoming teenagers. Studies indicate that if a parent uses alcohol, their children are more likely to drink as well. If you use alcohol, there may be ways to lessen the likelihood that your child will participate in underage drinking. Some suggestions include:

- » Use alcohol moderately.
- » Be careful not to unintentionally communicate to your child that alcohol is a good way to handle problems. For example, coming home from work and saying, "I had a bad day, I need a drink."
- » Let your child see that you have other, healthier ways to cope with stress, such as exercise, listening to music, or talking things over with your spouse, partner or friend.
- » Avoid telling your kids stories about your own drinking in a way that conveys the message that alcohol use is funny or glamorous.
- » Never drink and drive or ride in a car with a driver who has been under the influence.
- » When you entertain other adults, make sure to serve alcohol-free options and plenty of food. If anyone drinks too much at your party, make arrangements for them to get home safely.

04 ◀ What You Can Do

Don't support underage drinking. Your attitudes and behavior toward teen drinking also influence your child. Avoid making jokes about underage drinking or drunkenness, or otherwise showing acceptance of teen alcohol use. Never serve alcohol to your child's underage friends. Research shows that kids whose parents or friends' parents provide alcohol for teen get-togethers are more likely to engage in heavier drinking, to drink more often, and to get into traffic crashes.

Help your child build healthy friendships. If your child's friends use alcohol, your child is more likely to drink too. So, it makes sense to try and encourage your young teen to develop friendships with kids who do not drink and who are otherwise healthy influences on your child. A good first step is to simply get to know your child's friends better. You can then invite the kids you feel good about to family get-togethers and outings and find other ways to encourage your child to spend time with those teens.

Also talk directly with your child about the qualities in a friend that really count, such as trustworthiness and kindness, rather than popularity or a "cool" style. When you disapprove of one of your child's friends, the situation can be tougher to handle. While it may be tempting to simply forbid your child to see that friend, such a move may make your child even more determined to hang out with them. Instead, you might try pointing out your reservations about the friend in a caring, supportive way. You can also limit your child's time with that friend through your family rules, such as how after-school time can be spent or how late your child can stay out during the evening.

For more resources and for future newsletters, please visit: www.thepowerofchoice.org

05 ◀ Middle School Vaping Prevention

A new year brings a new campaign to the Power of Choice! Beginning this month, students across District 203 and 204 will receive digital versions of posters and newsletters with prevention messaging and education regarding e-cigarettes/vaping.

Along with providing these materials, students will have the opportunity to hear directly from our prevention team when we provide presentations via Zoom during health classes. The presentations work to remind students that the majority of their peers are not using e-cigarettes and educate them about the associated risks. We work to challenge misperceptions and understand how to find credible information when making decisions for our own health.

Thank you Districts 203 and 204 for partnering with us to provide substance use prevention education to students!

Additional Resources For You ▶

Learn more here - Monitoring and setting clear expectations with your kids about not using alcohol: <http://bit.ly/2WsV6zd>

Connect with The Power of Choice:

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