



THE POWER OF CHOICE
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About This Issue

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

THE PARENT POST May 2021

MIDDLE SCHOOL EDITION

Check out the latest middle school vaping prevention materials

01 Monitor - Help Teens Choose Not to Use Alcohol

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

This issue we are continuing the conversation about the importance of monitoring and communicating with your teens about 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 your teen's growth and development. It is just as important to support your child when things are going right 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 stand out in our media and culture—is actually positive for both teens and parents. 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 you children is important; it is also important to be clear about family, school, sports and legal consequences of things like underage drinking.



Keep talking with your child, 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 the teen 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

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

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 C’s.

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.

03 ◀ The Impact of Parental Monitoring & Peer Influence

It is important to keep the lines of communication open with your teen to create the close bonds necessary to maintain a positive influence in their life. Let them know you are there and aware of what is going on in their life. Be willing to share your own experiences, but more importantly, listen to their concerns and empathize. Seek to understand their feelings first before offering up stories about what you were like as a teen, and when you do, speak about your vulnerabilities and the mistakes that you 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 your 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 a 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 drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.

Some teenagers, of course, trade the influence of parents and other adults for the influence of their peers but this usually happens when family closeness and parental monitoring are missing. Youth need to learn independent-thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills from their parents or guardians and other caring adults, so they can apply these skills within their peer network.

Will Your Child Be Entering High School Next Year?

Your child can join the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) and be a part of Operation Snowball throughout their time in high school. Both programs serve as leadership opportunities and supportive groups for youth.

YAC Contact: Sarah Indlecoffer - Sindlecoffer@360youthservices.org
Snowball Contact: Kate Keir - Kkeir@360youthservices.org

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE FOR PREVENTION YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

operation snowball
POWERED BY 360 Youth Services

Additional Resources for you ▶

Download your own Vaping Prevention Materials for Middle School Youth:
<https://360youthservices.org/6-8th-grade-vaping/>

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

www.thepowerofchoice.info
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 6-8th Grade Campaign Coordinator
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