



## TALKING WITH YOUR TEEN

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

Some ways to begin:

- ❖ Encourage conversation. Encourage your child to talk about whatever interests him or her. 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 he or she thinks and feels 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 he or she is wrong. If you show respect for your child's viewpoint, he or she will be more likely to listen to and respect yours.

There are GOOD REASONS WHY NOT TO DRINK. In talking with your child about reasons to avoid alcohol, stay away from scare tactics. Most young teens are aware that many people drink without problems, so it is important to discuss the consequences of alcohol use without overstating the case.

Some good reasons why **teens should not drink**:

- **You want your child to avoid alcohol.** Clearly state your own expectation about your child's drinking. Your values and attitudes count with your child, even though he or she may not always show it.

- **To maintain self-respect.** Teens say the best way to persuade them to avoid alcohol is to appeal to their self-respect—let them know that they are too smart and have too much going for them to need the crutch of alcohol. Teens also are likely to pay attention to examples of how alcohol might lead to embarrassing situations or events—things that might damage their self-respect or alter important relationships.
- **Drinking is illegal.** Because alcohol use under the age of 21 is illegal, getting caught may mean trouble with the authorities. Even if getting caught doesn't lead to police action, the parents of your child's friends may no longer permit them to associate with your child.
- **Drinking can be dangerous.** One of the leading causes of teen deaths is motor vehicle crashes involving alcohol. Drinking also makes a young person more vulnerable to sexual assault and unprotected sex. And while your teen may believe he or she wouldn't engage in hazardous activities after drinking, point out that because alcohol impairs judgment, a drinker is very likely to think such activities won't be dangerous.
- **You have a family history of alcoholism.** If one or more members of your family have suffered from alcoholism, your child may be somewhat more vulnerable to developing a drinking problem.
- **Alcohol affects young people differently than adults.** Drinking while the brain is still maturing may lead to long-lasting intellectual effects and may even increase the likelihood of developing alcohol dependence later in life.

#### HOW TO HOST A TEEN PARTY:

- Agree on a guest list—and don't admit party crashers.
- Discuss ground rules with your child before the party.
- Encourage your teen to plan the party with a responsible friend so that he or she will have support if problems arise.
- Brainstorm fun activities for the party.
- If a guest brings alcohol into your house, ask him or her to leave.
- Serve plenty of snacks and non-alcoholic drinks.
- Be visible and available—but don't join the party!

#### HELP YOUR CHILD SAY NO:

Your child can learn to resist alcohol or anything else he or she may feel pressured into. Let him or her know that the best way to say "no" is to be assertive—that is, say no and mean it.

#### TIPS FOR TEENS TO RESIST THE PRESSURE TO DRINK:

##### Say no and mean it!

- Stand up straight.
- Make eye contact.
- Say how you feel.



- Don't make excuses.
- Stand up for yourself.

There are great websites for teen to visit, such as [AbovetheInfluence.com](http://AbovetheInfluence.com).

**The Center for Alcohol and Drug Resources**

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