



Parent Resources

Vision Statement:

We envision a safe and healthy community free of the impact of substance abuse and its negative effects.

Mission Statement:

Working Together to prevent substance use by our youth through community collaboration, resulting in an improved quality of life.

www.workingtogethercoalition.org



Parent Resource Table of Contents

Believe it or not, the teen years or good years! There is no one way to parent teens- each teen is unique. In this parent resource booklet, you will find ideas to try and read about strategies that may work well for you. You know your teen best. The information here can affirm your wisdom, as well as provide you with support as you guide your teen into young adult hood. Remember that teens want you in their life and you need to be there.

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Prevention Begins with YOU

Children report that PARENTS are a major reason they choose not to use alcohol/drugs. Therefore, you are the most powerful influence with your child's behavior. It is important to build your relationship with your child so that there is open communication with consistent messages about the use of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs. This will encourage them to come to you for help in making decisions as well as create a home where they are aware of household rules that have values that will keep them safe and healthy. If they are aware of your personal beliefs, it will create an environment of trust and understanding.

The community and their peers will give them mixed messages about the use of substances, be certain that they are getting the correcting information from YOU! Your children need this information to make good decisions. Do not wait for situations to arise talk to them before so that if they are approached with a situation, they have the skills and knowledge to deal with it.

Take Action

Talk early and often with your child. Establish and maintain an open line of communication. If you get into the habit of talking with your child every day, it will be easier for you to have these types of conversations. Don't assume that your child knows where you stand.

Get involved with your child's every day life. Talk with you child about their activities, this will allow for you to share with common interests and values. Young people are much less likely to have mental health and substance abuse problems if they are involved in positive activities and have caring adults involved in their lives.

Be a good Role Model. Think about what you say and how you act in front of your child. Your actions are the most powerful message that your child will see for what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Do not partake in illegal, unhealthy or dangerous practices with alcohol, tobacco or other drugs. If you child witnesses you do this, they will think that this is an acceptable behavior.

Teach kids to choose friends wisely. Teach your child how to form positive relationships. Help your child to understand what qualities to look for in a friend.

Monitor your child's activities. Know where you children are and get acquainted with their friends. (Join our Parent Network, to meet the parents of your child's friends). Limit the amount of time your child spends without adult supervision. They will then have less time to experiment.

Set Rules. Make clear, sensible rules for your child and enforce them with consistency and appropriate consequences. Following these rules can help protect your child's physical safety and mental well-being. (Please see our family contract section for more ideas)



5 Reasons Teenagers May Use Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs

1. **To feel Grown Up-** Children like to imitate adults. And in our culture, kids are pushed hard to act like grown-ups. A child can understand and accept that there are differences between what adults may do legally and what is appropriate and legal for children. As parents, we want to continue to reinforce this understanding by not abusing legal substances or using illegal drugs.

We must remember that they do have to grow up. The more that we pull in the reins the more that they may want to let us go. Gradually give your child more independence, while still providing loving guidance. This will deter them from using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs as they will feel more grown up and mature. This does not mean that they should be given more time without supervision. Make sure your child is safe and monitored location, encourage participation in extra-curricular activities.

2. **To fit in and belong-** Children want others to like them. Wanting to fit in and belong is one of the most natural parts of growing up. This may mean that they may turn to alcohol, tobacco or other drugs to fit into a group, to overcome anxiety, change their personality or give themselves courage to talk with others. Our society is flooded with messages that encourage us and our young people to use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs to enhance our lives and develop social skills.
3. **To relax and feel good-** Being young doesn't necessarily mean being carefree. Young people often cite stress as a reason they use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Let's face it, there is a lot in the environment that makes things difficult for kids today such as: Changing family structures, multi-media influences, violence, economic pressure, sexually transmitted diseases, easy access to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, lack of adult supervision and positive role models, teen pregnancies, lack of safe places to learn and play. These are all factors that may continue to use. There is a thought that if they use, it will cheer them up and make them forget about their problems.

Children need someone to help them through difficult times, someone to who they can express their concerns and apprehensions without fear of rejection or recrimination.

4. **To take risks and rebel-** All children need to learn how to take risks. This is a part of growing up. There are risks of all kinds everyday and we take more when we are young. We need to teach our kids how to take risks, but not with their health and their lives. As they approach their teen years, everything holds a small amount of risk, because everything is new and unexplored. As greater levels of risk are achieved, they will continue to look for opportunities to expand their horizons and grow, this is why they may look to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Remember that they are unclear about boundaries.
5. **To satisfy curiosity-** For many of the reasons already presented, children are very curious about alcohol tobacco and other drugs. They are smart and quick to pick up on mixed messages in the media, school and at home. Even if we have done an outstanding job of educating and nurturing our children, there are some children who will remain curious about using. Since many kids are going to find out a lot about these substances from unreliable sources, its up to parents and caregivers to deliver basic information to children in their language. It is important to know, what they know.



10 parenting tips to stay ahead of the game.

Be a Parent, Not a pal. Let's face it: The teen years can be bumpy. As parents, we need to be our teen's anchor, not their best friend. Set clear boundaries, yet approach your teen with love and respect. So figure out those limits that work best for your family, and then enforce them. All the time. While it may feel like we're "losing our kid" during the teen years, we're really just a few years away from forming a true friendship as our teen enters adulthood.

Ignore the attitude. Save your energy for the big stuff. Choose your battles. Is it really worth arguing about blue y for the BIG stu hair? If your teen's challenging or general attitude gets under your skin, decide whether it's a battle you want to tackle. Of course you want o stand your ground on issues that are important, but not all issues are monumental. Be selective.

Talk the tough talks. Sex. Cigarettes. Drugs, Alcohol. Guns. Gangs. Definitely uncomfortable topics of conversation with your teen. But teens need to hear your perspective on these topics, understand why you feel the way you do, and know you are someone they can come to with questions.

Compliment your teens. Make it a habit to say at least three positive things to your teen every day (even if it's just, "hey thanks for feeding the dog".) It's easy to notice the negative, but no one has yet to complain about receiving a compliment, even a teen.

Get to know Teen Friends and Their Parents. Friends are a big deal. And you can learn a lot about your teen through their friends, but connecting with the parents of these friends is your lifeline. By checking in with the parents, you'll have your finger on the pulse of your teen's activities, inside and outside of your home. Talking with other parents also lets you know that you're not the only one who (gasp!) sets rules for your teens.

Don't be a maid.It's important for teens to have meaningful roles and responsibilities in the family. Start with household chores- mowing the lawn, making a meal or doing the laundry and you're your way up from there. These tasks prepare teens for independent living as young adults, and give them a sense of responsibility and accomplishment (as long as they don't mix the white clothes with the colors, of course).

Make respect a two way street.If you expect respectful behavior from your teen, demonstrate it daily with your teen, demonstrate it daily with your teen. And this may be difficult as teens roll their eyes at you in exasperation or give you the cold shoulder. But grit your teeth and get through it. Respect will be the foundation for building good relationships and getting teens to accept their family values as their own.

Listen, Don't Lecture.When kids are ready to talk, be ready to listen. While this undoubtedly happens when you are running late or are really tired from a busy day at work, when you stop and listen to your teen, it's amazing what you'll find out. But here's the kicker: resist the urge to offer too much advice or tell them what to do. Help them figure it out for themselves by asking questions that will guide their decisions.

Agree to Disagree.It may seem like you disagree about everything with your teen. Don't worry; it's normal. Teens need to question "the norm" to figure out what makes sense to them and learn how to think for themselves. And while a little latitude is a good thing, you still have the final word when it comes to how your teen should behave.

Have fun together. While the teenage years are certainly challenging, there can be plenty of fun times and good memories. The trick? Know what "fun" means to your teen. And know that it won't always be your idea of "fun". At this stage, you may be the last person your teen wants to be seen with in public, but offer to drive your teen and his/her friends to a movie or sport activity (listen to the conversation during the drive, it will be a wealth of information on your teen). Discovering creative ways to spend time with your teen is what's important and makes one on one time enjoyable.



It this normal for my Teens Behavior?

Parents often wonder what is “normal” for teen behavior?” Try evaluating your teen on a daily basis from a health perspective just like you did when they were younger. It is good to know that “crazy” behavior is just part of being a teen. It is normal for a teen to:

Argue for the sake or arguing. Believe it or not, teens can find arguing exciting. As they grow, they are developing new skills in thinking and logic. This means that arguments with you aren’t necessarily about winning, but rather experience the “art” of an argument, fun isn’t it?

Be self-centered. It’s all about them. You know the whole world isn’t focused on their zit, but they truly believe it is. All we can do it be patient and help them through the “disasters” as best as we can.

Be dramatic. Why is everything such a big deal to teens? Jenny has a fight with her boyfriend and it’s the end of the world. While it’s good for teen to – ahem- care deeply about so many things, the drama will decline as they grow up.

Jump to conclusions. As teens develop the capacity to think logically, they sometimes make leaps in judgment and come to bizarre conclusions. Resist the urge to correct. Listen to what they are saying and let them think out loud. When asked, offer your perspective.

Find fault. Can we ever do anything right in the eyes of teens? We can’t take it personally (even though we could do no wrong when they were younger), and this isn’t a sign of failure. It’s just a normal part of the teen years. And yes, we really do a lot of things right.



Is my Teen using Alcohol or Drugs? Watch for Warning Signs

The teen years can be tough for both parent and child. Teens face numerous pressures: be popular, do well in school, get along with family and make important life decisions. On top of this teens are experiencing physical, sexual and emotional changes.

Some warning signs are subtle, while other are very clear. If a teen is in trouble, there are warning signs to watch for that signal help is needed. You might notice change in your teens behavior. You may learn that your teen has experimented with a risky behavior for the first time. It may simply be that you “sense” that something isn’t quite right, take these signs seriously. Here are examples of some warning signs:

Defiance. Not just occasionally, this is normal.

We’re talking about continued disregard for your authority and rules.

Aggression- fighting with and hurting others.

Extreme withdrawal- teens spending an inordinate amount of time in their room.

Loss of interest in activities your teen normally likes to do.

Change in appearance- neat kids become unkempt, rapid weight loss or gain, ect.

Continue talk about death, depression and suicide.

Suspected substance use or abuse.

Physical and Behavioral Signs of Substance Use

Smell of alcohol, marijuana or tobacco

Slurred speech, impaired coordination, disorientation

Red, glassy eyes or dilated pupils

Vomiting or shakes

Extremely difficult to awaken

Marked change in weight and/or appetite

Excessive yawning and sleepiness, change in sleep patterns

Memory lapses and/or concentration difficulties

Curfew violations and/or constant defiance of rules

Excessive or last-minute requests to sleep at a friend’s house

Frequent use of eye drops or breath mints

Withdrawal from family and/or friends

Pronounced mood swings; increase irritability and/or hostile outbursts

Changes in friends and/or extracurricular activities

Tardiness, truancy at school and/or decreased academic performance



Changes in personal appearance (i.e. dress, hygiene, grooming)
Overly preoccupied with privacy or secrecy, lying
Suspected of vandalism and/or stealing
Talks positively about alcohol or drug use
Repeated requests for money



Watch for Warning Signs (Continued)

Talk to your Teen about your Concerns. Pay attention to what your teen is doing and how they are feeling. Talk to them about it- and not just when you notice something is different. Talk to them on a regular basis. By doing so, you help your teen avoid more difficult problems down the road. For support, talk to parents whose advise you trust.

Learn about issues. Take time to read about issues by visiting www.workingtogethercoalition.org or www.shouldertoshoulderminneosta.org or other resources found at the end of this document. This will provide you information related to teens and risky behavior. You can also find information at your library, school counselors office, medical clinic or faith-based organization.

Get help from professionals when you need it. Professionals can help you get the right support you need, and determine whether your teen is in crisis. Discuss your concerns with your teen's teacher, school counselor, doctor or other people you trust. They can refer you to more information or provide professional care to keep your teen safe.

What can INCREASE the Risks of Developing a Drug or Alcohol Problem?

Early age of first use
Feeling unloved by family, low mutual attachment by parents, ineffective parenting
Chaotic home environment
Poor social coping skills
Perceived external approval of drug use (peers, family, community)
Affiliation with deviant peers
Working at a job or having above-average disposable income
Past or current drug or alcohol problems within the family
Past or current family emotional or physical abuse or neglect (especially depression)
Past or current sexual abuse

Every day that teenagers choose not to use illegal substances improves their chances of avoiding alcohol, drug or tobacco addiction and helps to prevent many irreversible consequences of using chemical substances.



How to talk with your teen.

Does my child care what I think?

Your child cares a great deal about what you think. You play an vital role in shaping your teenagers behavior. Teens will listen when you warn them about use of Alcohol and Drugs and will generally follow clear rules when given about alcohol, tobacco and other drug use. In recent studies, teenagers listen to their parents more than their peers. Parents and teenagers morals, future goals and self-control are similar. Talking encourages family togetherness and increases the likelihood teens will share their parents values.

What kinds of things do teenagers want to talk about?

Family Issues- They want to be a part of making family decisions

Controversial Issues- Sex, Alcohol and Drug use

Emotional Concerns- They will want to know what you feel about things

The big whys- They will want to ask philosophical questions about war and religion

The future- Teens are curious and concerned about they can expect in the future

Current Events- They will have questions about what is going on in the world and community

Personal Interests- They will want to talk to you about what is going with activities, music, sports, friends

Parent's Lives- They are curious about what you did when you were their age including mistakes and emotions

How can I talk with my teen?

Casual conversations are the best conversations. Taking advantage of these moments we can have conversations with our kids (while doing chores or riding in the car) that keep us up to date or help us learn about one another. There will be those times; however, that call for the *serious conversation, please see the section on Solve Problems Together*. Use the following tips to improve your chances for casual conversations with less eye-rolling and more sharing.

- Devote your full attention to your teen and the conversation, avoid multi-tasking.
- Listen with the intent to understand (remember, trying to understand where your teen is coming from doesn't mean you agree. understanding simply builds compassion and connection)
- Avoid minimizing your teen's feelings (no matter how ridiculous it seems to you, it feels real to your teen. When you behave as if what your teen is sharing is stupid or doesn't matter, you reduce future opportunities for sharing. Listening and affirming is a wonderful way to show you care). Respect them, they are often afraid of being lectured, punished or not understood.
- Avoid the rescue complex (check with your teen before you jump in to fix it. Do they want simply to vent or brainstorm *together* about solutions (an added bonus - when you don't feel like you have to fix it, you can listen with your full attention and without planning your response). Stress that they can and should make decisions for themselves, but are responsible for the decisions that they make.
- Express confidence that your teen will make the right decision or handle the situation appropriately (you may also use this opportunity to remind your teen about the good choices s/he has made in the past).
- Invite your teen to follow up with you about how the situation is unfolding.
- Don't lecture, talk for hours or ask a lot of questions
- If your teen tells you a secret, keep it.

- Offer praise. Do one on one time to do things that you both enjoy.
- Tell them that you love them. They need to know that more now than ever!

Pick your battles

Often parents and their children argue about chores, curfew and appearance, issues that are not all that important. Choose battles and decide what is worth fighting about. Use your energy on issues like school, sex, drugs and Alcohol.



How to answer the hard questions!

But you drink!

Yes, you were a teenager once, so it is important to understand where they are coming from. However, times have changed. Kids are starting to drink more a lot earlier. While this may increase your fears, it is probably increasing theirs as well.

Use your own struggles and experiences that you made while you were growing up. Be sure that you are giving them advice and not to lecturing them. They already know that you are not perfect and they will recognize when you contradict that you are saying. Be honest and your child will end up respecting you more, no matter what it is that you did in your past.

It is not enough to tell them “Don’t Drink”, you need to have information available to answer their questions. If you don’t have an answer, that is ok, but get back with them after you find it out.

Tips for talking to your teen about alcohol:

- Bring facts. There is a wealth of information available. You can find some links on www.workingtogethercoalition.org or you can also find information at your local library. Remember, if you don’t have the answers, this is fine, just find them and have another conversation with your child.
- Listen. If you listen, they will be more willing to have conversations with you. They want to tell you about their concerns and feelings, just remember to respect their views.
- Let them know it is ok not to drink. Although, the believe that “everyone is doing it”.
- Establish clear family rules in regards to alcohol consumption. For example, “Once you are of legal age (21), it is ok to have a drink with friends”.
- Model the rules that you set forth for your children. Your child will learn how to use alcohol by watching you, if you suspect to have a problem yourself, seek help.

Did you do Drugs?

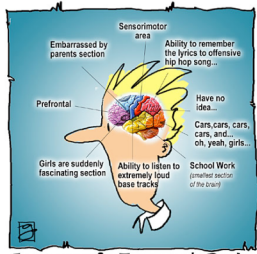
For many parents, a child’s “Did you ever use drugs?” question is a tough one to answer. Unless the answer is no, most parents stutter and stammer through a response and leave their kids feeling like they haven’t learned anything—or, even worse, that their parents are hypocrites. Yes, it’s difficult to know what to say. You want your kids to follow your rules and you don’t want them to hold your history up as an example to follow—or as a tool to use against you. But the conversation doesn’t have to be awkward, and you can use it to your advantage by turning it into a teachable moment.

Some parents who’ve used drugs in the past choose to lie about it—but they risk losing their credibility if their kids ever discover the truth. Many experts recommend that you give an honest answer—but you don’t have to tell your kids every detail. As with conversations about sex, some details should remain private. Avoid giving your child more information than she asked for. And ask her a lot of questions to make sure you understand exactly why she’s asking about your drug history. Limit your response to that exchange of information.

Be prepared to talk about your past.

- **Be honest.** You don't have to tell her all the details. But don't lie, either. (If she ever finds out, you'll lose credibility big time.)
- **Be specific.** Find out why she's asking about your history, and then tell her what she wants to know — nothing more.

- **Be an example.** If you didn't use, tell her why you made the choices you did. If you did use, try to turn her off the idea by sharing an embarrassing, dangerous or painful story about when you used.
- **Be convincing.** No matter what you did (or didn't do) in the past, when talking with your teenager about drugs and alcohol make sure he or she hears these two points: First, today's drugs can be much more powerful and dangerous than anything that was around when you were a teenager. And second, the latest science proves that teens who use drugs and alcohol can [damage their brains](#) — forever.



Anatomy of a Teenager's Brain

The issue isn't about your past. It's about your children's future. What's important now is that your kids understand that you don't want them to use drugs.

It's not the drinking, It's the consequences!

Effects on Brain Development

The brain goes through dynamic changes during adolescence and new research says that the brain is “still under construction” as it does not fully develop until the age 25. Research has also found that;

- The last area of the brain to develop is the prefrontal cortex. This part of the brain is involved in planning, decision making and impulse control.
- Damage from alcohol during the time the brain is maturing can have long-term and irreversible effects on the brain's development.
- Alcohol - and likely other drugs - affects the young person more profoundly than its effects on adults.
- The feelings and impaired behavior that signal intoxication in the adult brain are delayed in the adolescent brain. This can lead to over consumption and even alcohol poisoning which could be fatal.
- An adolescent brain that is exposed to alcohol and other chemicals is more susceptible to depression and other mental illnesses.

Alcohol/Drug-Related Teen Injury and Deaths

It is a major cause of death from injuries among youth people, rates nearly triple between the early teen years and early adult life. It is also associated with car crashes, falls, drowning, burns, suicide, homicide, alcohol poisoning and drug overdoses. A 16-year-old is more likely to die from an alcohol-related incident than from any other causes.

Increased Risk for Sexual Violence, Sexually-Transmitted Diseases and Unintended Pregnancy

Alcohol/drug use increases the risk of carrying out, or being the victim of a physical or sexual assault. It is heavily implicated in cases of date rape and sexual assault among teens and college students. Adolescents (ages 15 and older) who consume alcohol are seven times more likely to have sexual intercourse and twice as likely to have four or more sexual partners than non-drinking peers. Research shows they are also more likely to have unprotected sex, risking sexually transmitted diseases (STD's), HIV, the virus that causes AIDS and pregnancy.

Increased Risk for Alcoholism and Drug Addiction

A study by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism offers scientific validation that young people who began drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcoholism than those who began drinking at age 21 or later. Current research explains that areas of an adolescent's brain that control impulsive behavior are not fully developed, yet circuits that reinforce the effect of chemical use are already operating in high gear. This puts young people who experiment even briefly with alcohol, drugs and tobacco at greater risk of becoming addicted.

Effects on the body

The effects can range from hangovers to death from alcohol poisoning.

Can lead to other problems.

Other problems including bad grades in school, run-ins with the law, burdens relationships with family and friends can be directly related to alcohol and drug use.

Decision Making.

Affects how well a young person judge's risk and makes decisions. For example, after drinking, a teen may see nothing wrong with driving a car or riding with a driver that has been drinking. They may make decisions that they normally, if sober, wouldn't make.

Parenting Skills: 21 Tips & Ideas to Help You Make a Difference

What's the biggest deterrent to your kids' using drugs and alcohol? It's you.



Kids who are close to their parents are least likely to engage in risky behaviors. The more involved you are in your children's lives, the more valued they'll feel, and the more likely they'll be to respond to you.

1. Establish "together time." Establish a regular weekly routine for doing something special with your child - even something as simple as going out for ice cream.
2. Don't be afraid to ask where your kids are going, who they'll be with and what they'll be doing. Get to know your kid's friends - and their parents - so you're familiar with their activities.
3. Try to be there after school when your child gets home. The "danger zone" for drug use is between 4 and 6 pm, when no one's around; arrange flexible time at work if you possibly can. If your child will be with friends, ideally they have adult supervision - not just an older sibling.
4. Eat together as often as you can. Meals are a great opportunity to talk about the day's events, to unwind, reinforce, bond. Studies show that kids whose families eat together at least 5 times a week are less likely to be involved with drugs or alcohol.



Do you know your kids' favorite music group? What's cool at school? The more you communicate, the more at ease your child will feel about discussing drugs and other sensitive issues with you.

1. Be absolutely clear with your kids that you don't want them using drugs. Ever. Anywhere. Don't leave room for interpretation. And talk often about the dangers and results of drug and alcohol abuse. Once or twice a year won't do it.
2. Be a better listener. Ask questions - and encourage them. Paraphrase what your child says to you. Ask for their input about family decisions. Showing your willingness to listen will make your child feel more comfortable about opening up to you.
3. Give honest answers. Don't make up what you don't know; offer to find out. If asked whether you've ever taken drugs, let them know what's important: that you don't want them using drugs.
4. Use TV reports, anti-drug commercials, news or school discussions about drugs to help you introduce the subject in a natural, unforced way.

5. Don't react in a way that will cut off further discussion. If your child makes statements that challenge or shock you, turn them into a calm discussion of why your child thinks people use drugs, or whether the effect is worth the risk.
6. Role play with your child and practice ways to refuse drugs and alcohol in different situations. Acknowledge how tough these moments can be.



Walk the Walk

Be a role model; the person you want your kid to be. What stronger anti-drug message is there?

1. Be a living, day-to-day example of your value system. Show the compassion, honesty, generosity and openness you want your child to have.
2. Know that there is no such thing as "do as I say, not as I do" when it comes to drugs. If you take drugs, you can't expect your child to take your advice. Seek professional help if necessary.
3. Examine your own behavior. If you abuse drugs or alcohol, know that your kids are inevitably going to pick up on it. Or if you laugh uproariously at a movie when someone is drunk or stoned, what message does that send to your child?



Lay Down the Law

Kids between 11-13 - ages highly at risk for drug experimentation - are increasingly independent. Despite their protests, they still crave structure and guidance; they want you to show them you care enough to set limits.

1. Create rules - and discuss in advance the consequences of breaking them. Make your expectations clear. Don't make empty threats or let the rule-breaker off the hook. Don't impose harsh or unexpected new punishments.
2. Set a curfew. And enforce it strictly. Be prepared to negotiate for special occasions.
3. Have kids check in at regular times. Give them a phone card, change or even a pager, with clear rules for using it. (Remember, pagers are not allowed in some schools.)
4. Call parents whose home is to be used for a party. On party night, don't be afraid to stop in to say hello (and make sure that adult supervision is in place).
5. Make it easy to leave a party where drugs are being used. Discuss in advance how you or another designated adult will come to pick your child up the moment he or she feels uncomfortable. Later, be prepared to talk about what happened.
6. Listen to your instincts. Don't be afraid to intervene if your gut reaction tells you that something is wrong.



Praise and Reward

What encourages a kid more than his or her parents' approval? The right word at the right time can strengthen the bond that helps keep your child away from drugs.

1. Reward good behavior consistently and immediately. Expressions of love, appreciation and thanks go a long way. Even kids who think themselves too old for hugs will appreciate a pat on the back or a special treat.

2. Accentuate the positive. Emphasize the things your kid does right. Restrain the urge to be critical. Affection and respect - making your child feel good about himself - will reinforce good (and change bad) behavior far more successfully than embarrassment or uneasiness.

The Anti-Drug
Office of National Drug Control Policy



Connecting Over Mealtime

If it seems like mealtimes are being sandwiched between the other activities in our lives, take a few months and try to increase the quality of family mealtimes. Our children are busy with community and school activities. The average adult is working more hours than 10 years ago, and there are always errands to run, appointments to keep, and activities to attend! Family mealtimes are important in our lives, especially for our children. Recent studies show that children who share at least three meals with their families each week do better in school, experience less stress and depression, have better social skills, are healthier, and are less likely to smoke, use drugs or alcohol, or engage in sexual activity.

When we sit down to eat together, we connect with our children. It is a regular opportunity to communicate values and teach lessons. Most importantly, our children feel loved and connected as part of a family. Start simple, but start! Try 5 meals a week – any day, any meal. Eat out, but do it as a family. **What qualifies as having a meal together?** It is defined as when all or most family members who live in the same household sit down together to eat breakfast, lunch, dinner, or any meal. Anywhere counts, as long as most family members are gathered together and engaged in conversation.

Try some of these ideas:

- Get everyone involved. Take turns planning, cooking, and cleaning up. Even the smallest child enjoys the meal more if he gets to help cook or set the table. It's important for all children to have meaningful roles and responsibilities in the family. These tasks will prepare your children to be independent living as young adults and give them a sense of accomplishment.
- Think of it as a way to “check in” and not how everyone is doing.
- Tell everyone at the table how much you love them, adore them, admire them....etc!
- Keep conversations enjoyable. This isn't the time for discipline, lectures or interrogations.
- Take turns leading the discussion. If one person seems to talk all the time, set time limits so everyone gets a turn.
- Have a joke night, where everyone is encouraged to share a joke.
- Make meals fun and special. Have a beach party in front of the fireplace in January.
- Move the TV out of the dining area or turn it off during your meal.
- Ask non-threatening questions that everyone can respond to. Get a copy of “conversation starters” from the WTC Coalition.
- Listen to your Teens “process” their life through the “telling”. They literally have to talk about where they are at, so they can move to the next stage of development. Be patient, and allow them to talk.
 - By simply listening, you are helping them grow and develop.
 - If teens see that we don't listen to them, they will stop talking.
 - Force yourself to listen. If necessary, count to 100 before responding and avoid giving unwanted advice or lecturing

If I could wave a magic wand to make a dent in our nation's substance abuse problem, I would make sure that every child in America had dinner with his or her parents at least five times a week.

Sharing family meals has less to do with the food on the plate and more to do with what's happening at the table. The nightly ritual of a family dinner gives families a relaxed, nourishing context for coming together, connecting and communicating, talking and listening, seeing and hearing. It's where parental engagement happens.

- Joseph A. Califano, Jr., "How to Raise a Drug-Free Kid"



Strategies for keeping teens safe.

1. Clearly tell your children (every time they go out!) your expectations that they not use illegal substances. Statistics tell us that the #1 reason kids choose to refrain from illegal substances is because they don't want to disappoint their parents.
2. Talk to your children in advance about situations that may arise around alcohol, drugs and tobacco.
3. In order to remove themselves from uncomfortable situations, give your children permission to use you as their "scapegoat" to their peers.
4. Offer your children a safe ride home if they are ever in a situation that threatens their safety. Assure them that no questions will be asked until you can have a calm and caring discussion regarding that situation.
5. Remove or keep alcohol in a locked area of your home to avoid temptation for your children or your children's friends.
6. Get to know your children's friends and their parents. Kids have a hotline of communication....develop a network among parents, as well.
7. Establish clear "sleepover" rules or ban sleepovers altogether. Teens will often spend the night away from home if they plan to use illegal substances.
8. Tell your child you will be checking up on their plans, and then do it. This is "truth through verification."
9. Know how teens are doing in school. Don't blow off parent-teacher meetings.
10. Monitor Internet Use, Music and Television Programming.
11. Have family routines.

12. Check in when teens come home from school

13. Curfews are good. Enforce them. And know the curfew laws in your community.

Respect our Teens by:

- Explaining why we need to know about their activities.
- Acknowledge their need for independence.
- Recognize as teens mature, our expectations should also change.
- Nurturing their self-sufficiently by building trust and giving more freedom gradually.



Keep Your Teenager Safe When They Go Out

Should I Let My Teen Attend a Party?

Follow your *instincts* as well as consider these guidelines:

- Ask your child if the parents are going to be home. Let them know you will be calling the parents to insure they will be at chaperoning the party. Join the Parent Network, see *Parent Network* hand out.
- **Call the parent of the host/hostess**
 - Verify the occasion, times, location, and that there will be appropriate adult supervision
 - Verify that there will be no alcohol or other drugs permitted
 - Offer assistance with chaperoning
 - Offer to bring food or beverages (this is a great ice-breaker if you don't know the other parents)
- **Know where your teen will be and have them check in**
 - When your teen checks in with a cell phone, ask to speak with the parent who is in charge
 - OR make a call to the “landline” to verify.
 - Know how your teen will get to and from the party
 - Assure that you (or a specified neighbor or friend) can be called if he/she needs a ride home
 - Discuss with your teen why and how that might occur
 - Provide any phone contact info to your teen, if you will not be at home
 - Have a “code word” that may use when he/she calls you in order to discretely get out of a bad situation
 - Assure your teen that he/she can call you in ANY situation of concern
 - Remind your child never to get in a car with a driver who has been drinking
- **Designate a firm time (curfew) they have to be home**
- **Be awake when they come home**
 - This can be a good way to check the time, as well as talk about the evening.
 - Talk to your teen “face to face” and “eye to eye”; Check for physical signs of illegal substance use.
 - Be prepared if they ask to stay overnight. Many parents find that overnights are not worth the hassle and this may be an excuse as they are going to be using substances.

Teen Parties Are They Safe?



It is up to parents to provide safe, and reliable places for teens to hang out together. Did you know that parents who host underage drinking parties are breaking the law? Parents who give alcohol to their teen's friends under any circumstances, even in their own homes, are breaking the law. They can also be sued if they give alcohol to anyone under 21 and they in turn hurt someone, hurt themselves or damage property. If you know of anyone that is hosting a place for teens to consume alcohol or drugs, please

report this to the law enforcement!



Hosting a Party for Teenagers

Teens love parties. If your teenager wants to have a party at your house, how should you approach it? Be ready! If your home is an inviting place for your teen's friends to hang out, it will allow for you parents to monitor their teens activities. It can be a place to hang out, have pizza, and watch movies. Teens are, by nature, spontaneous creatures, so they may want to put something together quickly. Whether you're planning a party weeks in advance, or just throwing something together, keep in the mind the following guidelines for planning and having the party.

Tips on Hosting a Teen Party

- Sit down with your teen to get a list of who is invited, try to encourage a limited amount of guests as open house parties may get out of hand.
- Timing is important. Let them know what time the party ends beforehand. Open ended invitations can let a party go later than you want.
- When teens have driver's licenses, there is more of a chance to get "crashers". Your teen may be able to handle this by themselves, but ask if they would like your help if this situation arises.
- Help your teen figure out the party activities. Is the entertainment a movie, dancing or just hanging out? Make suggestions for refreshments.
- Keep the lights on.
- Be clear that alcohol and other drugs are not allowed. Don't let teens bring in beverages since "smuggling" can occur. You can greet them when they arrive and ask to take their jackets, purses, ect and put them in one designated area.
- Tell your teen ahead of time that anyone caught with illegal substances will be asked to leave and their parents will be called.
- Stress that once their guests arrive that they must stay there.
- Be home during the party. Maintain a discreet presence so that teens know you are around, but don't participate unless invited. You might fill up beverages/snacks.
- If it is a larger party, walk around outside your home every once in a while to discourage drinking.

- Consider inviting other parents to join you. Not only can they help with refreshments, but they also may know teens that you may not. This will also be an opportunity to get acquainted with the parents of your teens friends.



Family Contracts

A family contract can be a valuable tool for expressing values and outlining expectations and consequences. This doesn't only have to be used for abstinence of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, it can be used for anything that works for your family.

Reasons for Employing a Family Contract

- It provides an incentive to avoid illegal substances
- Extra incentive for youth that are participating in school-sanctioned athletics or extracurricular activities which mandate a signed alcohol and drug free contract.
- You need an opportunity to discuss your beliefs about illegal substance use.
- If trust has been broken by prior substance use, this contract can provide a fresh step for you both.

Why Are Family Contracts Effective?

- Teenagers believe that they have absolute power and control over their world. When they work with you to develop a contract, they generally sign it out of a sincere belief that they are in control of their chemical use.
- A formal contract helps to clearly define your mutual expectations for abstinence from illegal substances, and outlines consequences for chemical use.
- Once the contract is initiated, any chemical use brings your child into violation of the contract and into conflict with their choice to use an illegal substance.
- If they are able to refrain from chemical use, the contract has worked.
- If they are unable to refrain from chemical use, the contract works by revealing their denial about chemical use.

REMEMBER- The #1 reason kids choose to refrain from illegal substance use is because they don't want to disappoint their parents.

Guidelines about Family Contracts

- The family contract will be most effective if you write it together.
- Keep your contract simple. It only needs to contain four elements:
 1. Date of agreement
 2. Clear expectation of the child abstaining from all illegal substances
 3. Clear consequences for violation of contract
 4. Signatures of all parties agreeing to contract
- Follow through with the consequences of the contract.
- Keep a business-like approach to the contracting process.

Developing an Family Contract (be careful not to decrease their belief of disapproval)

BEFORE beginning the contract process with your child:

- List all possible consequences if your child violates the contract.
- List all the reasons you would follow through with consequences.
- List the reasons your child would give for not wanting to agree to abstain from illegal substance use or refusing to sign the contract. Determine what you will do if your child refuses to sign a contract agreeing to be substance-free.
- Make an appointment to meet with your child in a place free from distractions (i.e. TV, phone, friends, siblings, etc.) Allow one hour. As you are creating the contract:
 - Clearly outline your position on the use of illegal substances and share your honest concerns with your child.
 - Tell your child that you will always give them a safe, calm ride home with no discussion or questions until the following day.
 - Ask your children to name other caring adults in their life that they believe would help them if asked.
 - DISENGAGE! Don't bring up other issues.

The goal of the contract is not to make them feel trapped, but rather to let them make choices, knowing what the consequences will be if they choose to use illegal substances. Make one copy of the contract for you and one for your child. You must sign both copies. Give your child one copy at the end of your meeting. Once the contract has been signed, the meeting is over. Back off and let the contract take effect.

Family Contract Follow-up and Enforcement

- Do not lecture about the contract. Constant reference to the contract will build anger and resentment in your child.
- Monitor your child's behavior and activities
- If your intuition tells you something is wrong, it probably is. There is no need to wait for proof. Trust your instincts. Act now!
- Enforce the contract. If your child violates the contract, enforce the consequences immediately!

- Do not allow your child to renegotiate the terms after the contract has been violated.
- Use escalating consequences. Start with one of the least-severe consequences and increase severity as necessary.
- If the contract is violated and a consequence has been instituted, then negotiate a new contract with a more severe consequence.

Consequences for "Breach of Contract"

There are different levels of consequences. Choose the consequences that are meaningful to your child and are in line with their actions. Some sample consequences could include:

- Lose use of car, cell phone, TV, iPod, video games, computer, etc.
- Earlier curfew time
- Grounding from going out with friends or having friends visit
- Participate in a drug education program or get a Chemical Dependency Evaluation (Rule 25 Assessment)
- Participate in chemical dependency treatment program
- Participate in random drug testing
- Resign from extra-curricular activities
- Lose driving privileges
- Parent turning child in to school or police

Samples of Family Contracts

Example #1:

Date: _____

By signing this contract, I _____, *Child's name* agree to remain alcohol, tobacco, and drug-free.

If I violate this contract, I agree to:
(insert consequences here)

Signature of Child

Signature of Adult

Example #2:

Date: _____

By signing this contract, I _____, agree to the following:

1. To remain alcohol, tobacco and drug-free.
2. To not attend parties or other gatherings where alcohol, tobacco and drugs are being used or sold.

3. To call you, or another caring adult, for a ride home if I am ever in a situation that threatens my safety. We will defer discussion about the situation until both of us can have a calm and caring conversation.

4. Besides you, I feel comfortable calling the following person(s):

- _____
- _____

If I violate this contract, I agree to (*insert consequences here*)

Signature of Teen

Signature of Parent



What if I suspect my Teenager is using? Solve Problems Together! See It, Say It!

When preparing to discuss an issue with your teen, think of the words I CARE, I SEE, I FEEL, LISTEN, I WANT and I WILL... it will help you organize your thoughts and get to some healthy resolution. This is good for any conversation, not just talking with them about substance use.

- **I CARE** — First things first: say I care about you; I want the best for you. This establishes a personal connection and reduces defensive feelings on the part of your child. Don't just plunge into a list of complaints.
- **I SEE** — Talk specifically about the behavior that concerns you. Above all, focus on the behavior, not the person. Present facts, not just impressions. Keep track of incidents. If a pattern emerges, that's a clear sign help is needed.
- **I FEEL** — Be honest about how the behavior makes you feel. This will help remove any sense of blame from the interaction. It will also sound less judgmental and more caring. It's not necessary or helpful to make assumptions about the cause of the behavior; you don't have to diagnose anything or be an expert, you just need to be concerned.
- **LISTEN** — Now be quite and listen to what your child. Respectfully allow him/her to share feelings, problems and explanations. Be prepared for a variety of responses including silence, perhaps the disclosure of a significant problem or even the simple hostility of saying "get out of my life".
- **I WANT** — Be ready to be specific about what you want your child to do to change the behavior. From your perspective, suggest, do not demand, what you want to see happen. And remember, often a referral to a professional help is the most caring thing you can do.
- **I WILL** — Now be ready to say what you'll do to help the person change. A ride? Moral support? Arranging a meeting with someone that can help? More listening? Make it clear that you are willing to keep talking and, if a person chooses to say nothing right now, that the door is open for future discussion.

If behaviors that concern you do not change or you discover problems, you may need to get additional assistance. Knowing possible resources before discussing a problem behavior with someone can be helpful.

It is best to talk with someone about important matters when you feel comfortable, when you will not likely be disturbed and others can't over hear you, when you are not likely to be rushed and have time to talk things through and when neither you nor your child have been drinking or using drugs.

The Working Together Coalition
believes that ANY use of alcohol or drugs by teens merits action.



School Policies on Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs

The Working Together Coalition covers the school districts of Northland Community Schools, Pine River-Backus and Walker-Hackensack-Akeley school districts. Below find the policies and procedures in regards to the use of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs from each of these school districts..

Northland Community Schools has policies and procedures regarding chemical substance violations in the Northland Community Schools Parent/Student Handbook. Please see below for policies.

The Northland School District is a Tobacco-Free Environment
Purpose

- A. The purpose of this policy is to maintain a learning and working environment that is tobacco-free.

General Statement of Policy

- A. No person may use a tobacco product within school buildings, school vehicles, or on the athletic fields.
- B. It shall be a violation of this policy for any elementary school, middle school, or secondary school student to possess any type of tobacco or tobacco-related device in a public school. This prohibition extends to all facilities, whether owned, rented, or leased, and all vehicles that a school district owns, leases, rents, contracts for, or controls. This prohibition includes all school district property and all off-campus school district –sponsored events.
- C. The school district will act to enforce this policy and to discipline or take appropriate action against any student, teacher, administrator, school personnel, or person who is found to have violated this policy. Policy available for review upon request of the District Office.

The Northland Community High School has the following discipline code:

Alcohol/Drug Use or Possession

First Offense- 3 days Out of School Suspension

Second Offense- 5 days Out of School Suspension

Third Offense- Expulsion Considered

Drug Sales	First Offense- Expulsion and Refer to Police
Tobacco Use and/or Possession	First Offense- 3 days Out of School Suspension Second Offense- 5 days Out of School Suspension Third Offense- 5 days Out of School Suspension
Possession All Lighters and/or Matches	First Offense- 3 days Out of School Suspension Second Offense- 5 days Out of School Suspension Third Offense- 5 days Out of School Suspension

The Northland Community Elementary School has the following discipline code:

Alcohol/Drug/Tobacco Use or Possession	First Offense- 1 day suspension and Parent Conference Second Offense- 2 day suspension and Parent Conference Third Offense- 3 day suspension and Parent Conference
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Pine River-Backus has policies and procedures regarding chemical substance violations in the PRBHS Student Handbook. The following acts are unacceptable behavior subject to disciplinary action in the school district.

Dangerous and Harmful Substances:

1. Alcohol: Substances are prohibited from using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages at school, on school grounds, or at school sponsored activities.
Minimum Consequence: Confiscation of the alcohol, parent/guardian conference.
Maximum Consequence: Suspension of up to five (5) days. Other action may include but not limited to notification of legal authorities, referral for a Chemical Dependency Evaluation.
2. Drugs: Students are prohibited from using, possessing, distributing, or being under the influence of illegal drugs or narcotics at school, school sponsored activities, or on school grounds.
Minimum Consequence: suspension from the classroom, confiscation of the drugs, parent/guardian conference, notification of legal authorities.
Maximum Consequence: expulsion or exclusion. Other action may include referral for chemical dependency assessment.
3. Sale or Intended Sale of Drugs or Alcohol:
Minimum Consequence: confiscation of the drugs or alcohol, suspension of not less than five (5) days, parent/guardian conference and notification of legal authorities.
Maximum Consequence: expulsion or exclusion. Other action may include referrals to chemical dependency assessment.
4. Possession of Tobacco: The possessing, using, or distributing of tobacco or tobacco paraphernalia by students is prohibited at school, on school grounds, school vehicles and at school sponsored activities.
Minimum Consequence: confiscation of the tobacco, parent/guardian contact/conference.
Maximum Consequence: suspension of up to five (5) days. Other action may include but not limited to notification of legal authorities, referrals to chemical dependency conduct/discipline assessment.
5. Use of Tobacco. The Pine River-Backus School Board of Education has ruled that all buildings and grounds of District #2174 will be tobacco free. Students may not use a tobacco product 1) in any building or upon any grounds which are owned and occupied by the district; or 2) in any location or facility during any school or school district sponsored education program, activity or event regardless of

the location of such an activity or event; or 3) in any vehicle owned or leased by the school district. Pursuant to Minn.R.Juv.P. 6.02 (1996 Amendments effective August 1, 1996) and Minn.R.Civ.P.4.02 subd. 5(3) the Court HEREBY ORDERS THAT: Tobacco offenses as defined under Minn. Stat, 144.4165 and 144.417 (Tobacco offenses committed on public school grounds), and Minn. Stat. 609.685 subd. 3 (tobacco offenses committed by minors).

Minimum Consequence: behavior intervention/tobacco, notification of parent/guardian.

Maximum Consequence: repeated violations may result in suspension or expulsion.

[Walker-Hackensack-Akeley](#) has policies and procedures regarding chemical substance violations. According to the Student/Parent Handbook cigarettes, chewing tobacco, lighters or matchers, drugs/alcohol are forbidden items and have no place at school. The following are examples of behavior that would be referred directly to administration according to the administrative discipline plan.

Behavior	Consequence
Possession or Use of Tobacco	First offense- three day suspension Second offense- five day suspension Third offense- 10 day suspension; police notification
Alcohol/Drug Use	Five to ten day suspension. Report to police Recommend Chemical Dependency Evaluation
Possession of Alcohol, Drugs, Drug Paraphernalia	Five to ten day suspension. Report to police
Solvent Abuse	Five to ten day suspension. Recommend Chemical Dependency Evaluation
Drug Selling	Ten day suspension. Will recommend expulsion.



The Minnesota High School League Bylaw in regards to Chemical Eligibility.

(BYLAW 205.00)

Each school shall develop penalties which it will apply to the participants in these activities.
A copy of the member school's policy shall be filed in the principal's office.

1. A student shall not at any time, regardless of the quantity:
 - A. use or consume, have in possession a beverage containing alcohol;
 - B. use or consume, have in possession tobacco; or,
 - C. use or consume, have in possession, buy, sell or give away any other controlled substance or drug paraphernalia.

2. Penalties for Category I Activities

Definition - Category I Activities: Those League-sponsored activities in which a member school has a schedule of interscholastic contests, exclusive of League-sponsored tournaments.

- Athletic Activities
- Fine Arts Activities
 - 1) Debate
 - 2) Speech Activities including One Act Play - when a school schedules a season of interscholastic contests.

A. First Violation Penalty

The student shall lose eligibility for the next two consecutive interscholastic contests or *two weeks, 14 calendar days*, of a season in which the student is a participant, whichever is greater.

B. Second Violation Penalty

The student shall lose eligibility for the next *six consecutive interscholastic contests or three weeks, 21 calendar days*, whichever is greater, in which the student is a participant.

C. Third or Subsequent Violation Penalty

- 1) The student shall lose eligibility for the next *12 consecutive interscholastic contests or four weeks, 28 calendar days*, whichever is greater, in which the student is a participant.
- 2) A student who chooses to become a participant in a treatment program may become eligible for participation after a minimum period of six weeks after entering treatment if all of the following conditions are met:
 - a) The student is assessed as chemically dependent,

- b) enters treatment voluntarily, and
 - c) the director of the treatment center certifies that the student has successfully completed the treatment program.
- Successful completion of a chemical dependency treatment program will satisfy only the most recent violation. Any other violations for which the penalty has not been satisfied must still be served in full.

For information on applying the penalty, please see the entire policy at www.mshsl.org



Legal Consequences for Youth Substance Use

For questions regarding legal consequences for Juvenile Substance Use please contact:

Cass County Attorney's Office at 218-547-7255

For clarification on law enforcement policy and procedures please contact them directly. The following are the Local Law Enforcement agencies within the three school districts:

Sheriff's Office

Cass County Sheriff's Office-	218-547-1424
Hubbard County Sheriff's Office-	218-732-2514

City Police Departments

Akeley Police Department-	218-652-4440
Backus Police Department-	218-947-3221
Longville Police Department-	218-363-2022
Pine River Police Department-	218-587-3333
Walker Police Department-	218-547-5507

Tribal Police Departments
Leech Lake Tribal Police

218-335-8277

For questions regarding consequences and rehabilitation services please contact:

Cass County Probation Department at 218-547-7212.



Resources

Community & Parenting Resources

Working Together Coalition Website

www.workingtogethercoalition.org

Shoulder To Shoulder

Parent resource information, some unique info on teens today

www.shouldertoshoolderminnesota.org

Search Institute- An organization whose mission is to provide leadership, knowledge, and resources to promote healthy children, youth and communities

www.search-institute.org

Putting Family First- Grassroots, community-wide organization, raising awareness about finding balance in our over-scheduled lives.

www.puttingfamilyfirst.org

Parenting Education Resources- Through U of M Extension Service

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/Parenting/>

Substance-Related Sites and National Resources

The Anti-Drug- Drug prevention information and parent education center	www.theantidrug.com
National Institute on Drug Abuse- Parent Resource Drug Abuse for Teens	www.nida.nih.gov www.teens.drugabuse.gov
The Partnership for a Drug Free America	http://www.drugfree.org
Drug Free Action Alliance	http://www.drugfreeactionalliance.org
National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) The young teen's place for information on alcohol and resisting peer pressure	www.thecoolspot.gov
MADD- Power of Parents	http://www.thepowerofparents.org/
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	www.samhsa.gov
Talking with kids about tough issues	www.talkingwithkids.org
The Power of Family Meals	www.poweroffamilymeals.com