

REAL LIFE SOLUTIONS



JUNE 2014

10 Vital Steps You Should Take To Keep Your Teen Drug and Alcohol Free This Summer

With more time on their hands during the summer, many teens decide to try alcohol or drugs for the first time, or indulge more often or more heavily.

Take up the subject of drug and alcohol use with your children. No matter how many times your teen rolls her eyes, fewer teens use drugs after parents make expectations clear. Both parents should present a united front, whether they live in the same household or not. Start protecting your children now with these 10 actions:

- 1. Discuss drinking and drug use with your children, being definite about expectations.** If you think that your child won't indulge in drugs or alcohol because he is doing well in school or sports or has great friends, think again.
- 2. Don't let your teen go to parties where alcohol is served and don't allow alcohol to be served at any parties at your home.** A recent survey from Liberty Mutual and Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) revealed that 37% of parents allow teens to drink with them. Fifteen percent of teens said they were allowed to host parties where alcohol was served and 47% said they were allowed to go to parties where alcohol was served.
- 3. Keep the discussion open and caring.** Ask them about any times they saw friends of theirs drinking or under the influence, what they thought, and how they could have handled the situation better. "Seeing" their friends drunk or abusing drugs includes social media.
- 4. Make sure they stay out of vehicles if the operator is under the influence.** Ask them to call you day or night if they need a ride. This allows them to get home safely and they can refuse to get in a car, boat or other vehicle with a driver who's been drinking.
- 5. Always know where they are, who they are with and who their friends are.** One parent said that she prevented problems by locking the pantry that held the liquor when she left the house and telling neighbors when her daughter would be home alone. When she and her husband dropped the girl off at her friends' houses, they would get the phone numbers of the friend and her parents.
- 6. Point out the influence of the media.** A 2012 study at Dartmouth College showed that adolescents (aged 10-14), on average, watched more than four hours of alcohol use in movies, with many young people viewing more than eight hours. Those teens who were exposed to the most on-screen alcohol use were twice as likely to start drinking and 63% were more likely to progress to binge drinking.
- 7. Stay connected with your children.** When relationships between parents and children are closer, this translates to lower substance abuse. Have dinner or family time together. Turn off the TV, computer, cellphones and other distractions, and focus attention on communication between family members.
- 8. Acknowledge and reward your child for those times when they reject peer pressure and stay sober.** Reward them for accomplishments like finishing a class or a project. Invite them to discuss problems that may have come up while they were with friends.
- 9. Help them get involved in drug-free activities they enjoy.** Even a small investment of time on your part can reap great rewards when your child realizes that having fun does not have to involve drugs or alcohol.
- 10. Set a good example for your children.** How you handle alcohol and drugs yourself is more important than you think.

It's Up to You

Don't underestimate the vigilance that will be needed to get your child through his teenaged years alcohol and drug-free. You may have to overcome your child's own interest or curiosity about drinking or drugs, or peer pressure from other teens. It could be your influence that helps your children the most.

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