

Parent to Parent

by Tricia Williams

Fall is the season of change. New school year and teachers, new activities, friends, choices and challenges. These changes can be viewed as obstacles -- or opportunities -- to stay connected with your children.

As your children grow up and enter middle and high school, their circle of friends grows. They may hang out with kids that you haven't met and parents that you don't know either. Look at this as an opportunity to talk and learn about the new people and things in their life. It's important to meet your children's new friends so you can put a face and voice with a name and get to know who they're spending their free time with. Have them invite some friends over to your house to watch a movie, play video games, eat, and hang out. If they don't drive yet, offer to take them somewhere they want to go.

Make an effort to reach out to other parents as well. Give them a call or look for them at a school event and introduce

yourself. Let other parents know what your rules are for your teen; for example, what time curfew is, parents must be home to supervise activities when teens are there, alcohol use is not acceptable until at least 21 years old, and drug use never is. Find out what rules other parents have for their children. As you build a parent network, you will feel supported in setting and enforcing rules and consequences with your teens.

Kids that communicate regularly with their parents are less likely to engage in alcohol or drug use. Embrace changes that fall brings and face the new challenges knowing that *parents are the most powerful influence* in their children's lives.

For more ideas about positive parenting, go to www.mcyaf.com or www.theantidrug.com or contact Tricia Williams at prevention@mcayaf.com.

Monitoring Your Child

Monitoring is an effective way you can help your teen stay alcohol and drug free, and an important thing to do — even if you don't suspect your teen is using alcohol or drugs. By staying in-the-know about your child's daily schedule, you're taking an important step in keeping your child alcohol and drug free. Kids who are not regularly monitored are four times more likely to use drugs than kids who are regularly monitored.

Because monitoring conflicts with your child's desire to be independent, he is likely to resist your attempts to find out the details of his daily whereabouts. Don't let this deter you from your goal. He may accept the idea more easily if you present

it as a means of ensuring his safety or an interest in who he is and what he likes to do, rather than as a means of control.

Four Core Rules of Monitoring:

1. Know where your child or teen is at all times. Make sure he/she knows you're asking out of love, not because of a lack of trust.
2. Get to know all of your teen's friends personally. Know their faces and their voices. Interact with them whenever possible — without actually forcing them to “hang out” with you.
3. Find out how your teen plans to spend her day. Looking for something to discuss during dinner? This is a great one. “So...what are you up to tomorrow?” Easy, right?
4. Limit the time your child spends without adult supervision. The after-school hours of 3-6 p.m. are the most dangerous time for teens to be on their own. Greater peer pressure or boredom can lead to after school alcohol or drug use. If you or another adult you trust can't be home for your teen, find out about after school programs or activities he or she can get involved with.

Source: 2009 Partnership for a Drug-Free America

Fast Fact

did you know?



All the above contain the same amount of absolute alcohol!

21.6% of District 207 10th graders & 33.9% of 12th graders reported drinking 5 or more alcoholic drinks in a row (binge drinking) over the past 2 weeks. Source: 2009 Illinois Youth Survey N=2484

Top 8 Reasons Why Teens Try Alcohol and Drugs

There is no single reason for teenage drug use and alcohol use. In *How to Keep Your Teenager Out of Trouble and What to Do if You Can't*, Dr. Neil I. Bernstein details some of the core issues and influences behind teenage drug and alcohol use. It's important that parents understand these reasons and talk to their kids about the dangers of drinking and using drugs.

- **Other People** — Teenagers see lots of people using various substances. They see their parents and other adults drinking alcohol, smoking, and sometimes abusing other substances. Also, the teen social scene often revolves around drinking and smoking pot.
- **Popular Media** — Forty-two percent (42%) of teens agreed that movies and TV shows make drugs seem like an OK thing to do, according to a 2003 study. Not surprisingly, 12- to 17-year-olds who viewed three or more "R" rated movies per month were seven times more likely to smoke cigarettes, six times more likely to use marijuana, and five times more likely to drink alcohol, compared to those who hadn't watched "R" rated films (Amy Khan 2005).
- **Escape and Self-Medication** — When teens are unhappy and can't find a healthy outlet for their frustration or a trusted confidant, they may turn to chemicals for solace.

- **Boredom** — Teens who can't tolerate being alone, have trouble keeping themselves occupied, or crave excitement are prime candidates for substance abuse.
- **Rebellion** — Rebellious teens choose different substances to use based on their personalities. The reasons for teenage drug use are as complex as teenagers themselves.
- **Instant Gratification** — Drugs and alcohol work quickly. The initial effects feel really good. Teenagers turn to drug use because they see it as a short-term shortcut to happiness.
- **Lack of Confidence** — Many shy teenagers who lack confidence report that they'll do things under the influence of alcohol or drugs that they might not otherwise. This is part of the appeal of drugs and alcohol even for relatively self-confident teens.
- **Misinformation** — Perhaps the most avoidable cause of substance abuse is inaccurate information about drugs and alcohol. Educate your teenager so they get the real facts about the dangers of drug use.

Read the entire article at:

[www.drugfree.org/Parent/UnderstandingTeens/Articles/Why Teens Try Alcohol and Drugs.aspx](http://www.drugfree.org/Parent/UnderstandingTeens/Articles/Why%20Teens%20Try%20Alcohol%20and%20Drugs.aspx)



What can you expect to see and learn about our "*Who Knew?*" social norms marketing campaign this school year? Plenty! Lunch time activities and games for students, increased teacher participation, and new posters around school with positive messages for students, staff and parents.

Who Knew? is a data-driven project that helps correct misperceptions students have about peer alcohol and tobacco use. When asked, students usually significantly overestimate the percentage of their friends who drink and smoke. Peer influence and perception have been found to be powerful factors in shaping an individual's choices.

Who Knew? gives students the accurate number or percentage of students who DO NOT use alcohol or tobacco. *It focuses on the positive number of students who make healthy choices.*

Ask your teen about the posters and their messages, buttons that teachers will be wearing, and cafeteria activities. Not only will this reinforce that they're receiving the messages, but will also open the door for dialog on the subject of drinking and smoking. Keep the dialog flowing with your teen. **Students report that parents are their #1 believable source of information regarding alcohol, tobacco and drugs.**

For more information, visit our website at www.mycaf.com or contact the Social Norms Marketing Coordinator, Peggy Brosnan, RN, BSN at (847)858-8907.

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