



Your student is participating in Too Good for Drugs, a comprehensive substance abuse prevention program. Teenagers who feel their parents' support, communicate effectively with their parents, and live with clear no-use standards are much less likely to become involved with drugs. We hope you will use this newsletter as a resource to talk with your teen about living a safe and drug-free life.

## Setting Reachable Goals

Teens who set reachable goals for themselves make an investment in their future. Six key steps can help students set and achieve their goals.

1. **Name it.** When teens name their goal and write it down, they are more likely to reach it.
2. **Picture yourself reaching your goal.** Picturing yourself reaching a goal will help students define what they are aiming for.
3. **Say, "I Can."** A positive attitude goes a long way toward helping teens reach their goals.
4. **Think how to do it.** Making a checklist can help teens keep track of their action steps.
5. **Go for it!** Well planned goals are ready to be reached.
6. **Celebrate your success.** Once the goal is achieved, it is time for teens to celebrate their success.

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*"If you want your children to improve, let them overhear the nice things you say about them to others."*

*- Haim Ginott*

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## Finding Purpose

Work with your teenager to set a reachable family or community involvement goal. Encourage your teen to be creative and develop unconventional and new ideas for family or community involvement goals.

Name the goal and write it down. Make sure the goal meets the four criteria for a reachable goal.

- **The goal must be personal.** You will work harder to reach goals that matter to you.
- **The goal must be possible.** Do you have the time, ability, and resources to reach the goal?
- **The goal must be positive.** State the goal as a positive action by saying what you will do rather than what you won't do.
- **The goal must be specific.** The goal needs to be measurable so you will know when it is successfully completed.

## Be a Goal Model

What is the last goal your teenager saw you achieve? Humans learn through modeling others, and our behaviors are influenced by the examples people set for us. When your teenagers see you work to achieve a goal, it will have a positive impact on them.

When you are a goal model, you teach your teenagers:

- to put forth the effort.
- to appreciate failure as a learning opportunity and to keep working toward success.
- self-control and determination.
- how to overcome obstacles.

The ability to set and reach goals is a valuable skill you can teach your teenager.

# High Expectations

Families can help their children resist negative influences and bounce back from tough times in life by expressing high expectations in their home.

Some suggestions include:

- Expect success at school. Teens do best when they know what you expect of them.
- Discuss expectations in your family.
- Encourage your children to be challenged but not overwhelmed.
- Look for opportunities to bring out the best in your teenagers.
- Communicate the value of education.
- Encourage your teenagers to stand up for what they believe.
- Ask what your teens think about and listen to what your teens believe.
- Look for the positive in every situation.

## When parents are involved, teenagers...

- *are more likely to graduate from high school.*
- *have better academic performance.*
- *have fewer behavior problems.*
- *are more likely to go to college.*
- *exhibit lower levels of aggression and antisocial behavior.*
- *are less likely to experiment with drugs and alcohol.*
- *have higher levels of self-esteem and internal self-control.*
- *are less likely to experience emotional distress.*

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*"You can tell a child is growing up when he stops asking where he came from and starts refusing to tell you where he is going."*

*- Author Unknown*

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## Resources

### National PTA

Resources for parents on everything from health and wellness to media and technology.

[pta.org](http://pta.org)

### National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE)

Their mission is advancing high impact policies and practices for family, school, and community engagement to promote child development and improve student achievement.

[nafsce.org](http://nafsce.org)

### TeenLife

TeenLife is the leading resource for opportunities that inspire passion in teens. They connect students, parents and educators with community service organizations, summer and gap programs, schools, colleges and services that help teens find their purpose.

[teenlife.com](http://teenlife.com)



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## Help Your Teen Make Responsible Decisions

The road to healthy living begins with setting reachable goals, but to stay on track to reaching their goals, teenagers must learn to make responsible decisions. Four steps can help teenagers make responsible decisions.

- Stop** Before making a decision, encourage your teenager to stop and take a moment to process the choices at hand.
- Think** Think about the choices and the consequences of each choice. Your teen should also consider what is best for him or her now and in the future. Teens should also consider what might be influencing their decision making and how their decision might affect others.
- Act** Act out the best plan.
- Reflect** Consider if the decision was the best one and if the outcome matched what was expected. This is also the time to discuss with your teens if they would do anything differently if a similar decision arises.

Learning these skills requires time and practice to incorporate them into everyday life. When your teens are facing a decision, walk through these steps with them to help them become responsible decision makers.

## Room for Error

Watching your teenagers make the wrong decision may be one of the most difficult things you do as a parent. However, when you allow teenagers room to make some mistakes you equip them with essential life skills.

When teenagers experience failure, they learn...

**responsibility.** If you don't allow teenagers to experience some failure, they miss out on the opportunity to accept full responsibility for the outcome of their decisions.

**how to problem solve.** When teens experience failure, it can encourage them to consider other ways to accomplish the task. It empowers them to be creative and innovative.

**coping skills.** Experiencing failure and the feelings that accompany it provides teens the opportunity to develop coping skills that build self-efficacy.

**to adapt.** If you step in and prevent your teen from failure, you hinder their ability to learn to change and adapt when circumstances change or don't go as they planned.

**to handle disappointment.** Allowing teens to feel disappointment equips them with the ability to bounce back so they can cope better with future mistakes.

**they are not entitled.** When you protect teens from feeling anything unpleasant in their lives, they begin to feel entitled to success. Allowing teens to fail teaches them they must work to achieve success and healthy relationships.

There may be times when you feel it is necessary to step in. For example, if your teen is at risk of physically hurting themselves or others, it will be necessary for you to intervene. You will need to decide when to step in and when to allow events to occur that may provide opportunities for healthy growth for your teen. Teaching teens to learn from their mistakes and to bounce back when they fail is a valuable life lesson.

# Parent Involvement is a GOOD THING

Parents make a crucial difference in teenagers' alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use. They also model and train their children for non-violent living. Teenagers who feel their parents' support, communicate effectively with their parents, and live with clear no-use standards are much less likely to become involved with drugs or violence.

Parents can help students by:

- Asking what happened at school
- Setting aside a space and time for homework to be done at home
- Helping with homework when appropriate
- Following through at home with the concepts taught in the drug prevention programs at school
- Knowing the school's policies regarding alcohol and other drug use
- Getting to know the parents of your teen's friends
- Resolving conflicts at home in healthy ways
- Setting curfews and enforcing them
- Setting up a system with your children that makes it convenient for your teenagers to leave a party if they feel uncomfortable
- Keeping the lines of communication open with your teens so they feel free to discuss everything
- Attending your teenager's activities like band, sporting events, contests, etc.
- Responding to problems as they occur. Don't wait until discipline problems or academic difficulties become emergencies.

## Hold Your Teenagers Accountable

*Teenagers are often excited about making their own decisions and being responsible for themselves. Discuss with your teenager the relationship between age or maturity and the degree to which one should be held accountable for their decisions. How do decisions and accountability differ for children, teenagers, and adults?*

*At what age should a person be held accountable for the decisions they make? Discuss with your teenager the kinds of decisions they should be held accountable for (schoolwork, time management, extracurricular activities, finances, etc.)*

## Resources

### Family Education

Provides current information, including message boards, newsletters, and resources for parents.

[familyeducation.com](http://familyeducation.com)

### *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens* by Sean Covey

Provides information and practical examples with warmth and humor that benefit both parents and teens.

[seancovey.com](http://seancovey.com)

### By Parents For Parents

A useful resource for anyone trying to raise a teenager.

[byparents-forparents.com](http://byparents-forparents.com)

### More4Kids

Their mission is to foster and encourage children's intellectual and emotional growth by providing parents with current and relevant information and resources.

[more4kids.info](http://more4kids.info)



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## Seeing Emotions

Sometimes teens talk about what they are feeling, and at other times they keep their feelings to themselves. Regardless of how much they share, you can identify what your teen might be feeling by observing their facial expressions.

When you can interpret your teen's emotions by reading their facial expressions, you can be ready to respond appropriately. Sometimes, your teen may not even recognize the emotion in themselves. Checking in with your teen about how they feel can build trust and understanding. Recognizing your teen's emotions provides you the opportunity to help them manage their emotions.

## Attributes of Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Developing empathy with your teen is rewarding.

**Empathy requires self-awareness.** To understand another person's feelings, we need to be in touch with our personal feelings. Emotional self-awareness means being able to recognize emotions you experience, understand the feelings associated with the emotion, and understand what you think and do as a result.

**Empathy promotes nonjudgmental perspective taking.** To be able to see a situation as another person sees it, we must find value and credit in the experience of the other.

**Empathy fuels connection with others.** When we feel heard, cared for, and understood, we also feel loved, accepted, and like we belong.

## Building Empathy with Your Teen

- Discuss current or historical events with your teen and ask them how they think the people in the story might be feeling.
- Share stories about times when you recognized a friend or family member was in need, what you were thinking about it at the time, and what you did to help.
- Help your teen problem-solve different situations. For example, "How would you like to be treated if you were the new person at school?" or "If you were being teased, what would you want your friends to do to help?"
- As pets are treated with love, dignity, and respect in your family, your teen and other young children learn to treat other living beings the same. Teens learn to consider the needs of others, rather than disregard them. When young people understand that pets are creatures with their own wants and needs, and not toys or objects for us to use, this perspective carries over into their interactions with others.

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*"I think we all have empathy. We may not have enough courage to display it."*

*- Maya Angelou*

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# Putting it to Practice

Here are some tips to help you improve identifying your teen's emotions...

- **Stay connected with your teen.** Engage frequently with your teen making the effort to be face to face so you can actively listen to your teen and observe their facial expressions.
- **Don't project your own emotions.** You and your teen may be experiencing the same circumstance, but you each may feel differently about it. Practice filtering out how you feel about a situation so you can be open to interpret and understand how your teen feels.
- **Respond promptly and appropriately.** When you notice your teen's facial expressions change, try to name it. For example, say, "You seem sad" or "You seem frustrated." Don't assume you know by saying "You are frustrated." Responding promptly and appropriately demonstrates to your teen you care about their unspoken emotions and you are open to listening to how they feel.

## Hang in There

*It is common for parents to believe they need to be "hands on" with their children in elementary school; however, many believe parent involvement is not as critical when children get to middle school and high school. The research shows that the opposite is true. The more involved parents are through their teenagers' high school years, the better off their students are. It is critical to have shared experiences with your teenagers throughout high school years. Hang in there! Your children need you no matter their age.*

*"When you show deep empathy toward others, their defensive energy goes down, and positive energy replaces it. That's when you can get more creative in solving problems."*

*- Stephen Covey*

## Resources

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## Screen Addiction

Is your teenager dependent on technology? Even though internet addiction is not yet an actual clinical diagnosis, there is no doubt teens are plugged in more than experts consider healthy for normal development. This type of distraction from real life has ramifications.

This type of reliance on technology not only interferes with times when youth could otherwise be studying, but late night texting and other screen time may lead to sleep deprivation.

Teenagers need a healthy balance between their relationship with technology and their human interactions. Such a balance is essential to the development of school and career readiness, because nothing can replace the skills teens learn through relating to others in person.

The first step in addressing teens' overdependence on technology is simply to become aware of it. Encourage your teens to engage in face to face interaction, rather than rely so heavily on technology. Model for your teens how to connect face to face with others by unplugging the technology yourself and talking with people in person.

## Stay Connected

Staying connected with your teenager may seem like a daunting task, but here are some tips to help make communicating with your teenager easier.

- Listen to your teenagers with an open mind.
- Ask open-ended questions to give your teen the opportunity to talk and share more information with you.
- Make eye contact with your teenagers. This means turn off the TV, put down the cell phone, and focus on what your teen is saying.
- Create times to talk. Find time to talk with your teen about everyday events. Talk in the car, over a meal, while shopping, or while playing sports.
- Keep the conversations positive. Ask about their successes, interests, friends, and activities.
- Remember, you can agree to disagree. It is okay if you don't agree, but strive to understand.
- Send your teenagers text messages as a follow-up to your conversations, not instead of talking.
- Spend time together. Teenagers want to know you are available when they need you. You don't always need a reason to be with your teens.
- Keep trying. Communicating with your teens is important, so don't ever give up.

## Genuine Listening

*Listen with your eyes, heart, and ears.*

*7% of communication is contained in the words we use.*

*55% is contained in body language.*

*38% is in how we say the words—the tone or feeling reflected in our voices.*

# Topics of Conversation

Often the most difficult part of talking to your teenager is finding something to talk about. The following is a list of questions that can start a conversation with your teen.

- What did you think of the last movie you saw?
- What do you wish you had more time to do in your life?
- Name one thing that has made you laugh this week.
- What is most challenging about the video game you are playing?
- What is one thing you would like to do that you have never done?
- What are you looking forward to this week?
- What are you dreading the most in school this week?
- If you could change one thing about your school day, what would it be?
- How is (sport your teen plays) going? What does the coach say about the team this season?
- If we could do one thing as a family before you graduate from high school, what would you like to do?

## Social Skills for the Workplace

*Employers seek professionals with finely tuned social skills. Effective communication is a social skill essential to workplace success. Practice communicating effectively with your teenager to help develop effective speaking and active listening skills.*

*Qualities of an effective speaker:*

- **Be assertive.** Use a confident tone of voice.
- **Be aware of body posture.** Stand up tall and sit up straight.
- **Make eye contact.** Speakers who make good eye contact show they are serious about delivering their message.

*Qualities of an active listener:*

- **Pay attention to body language.** Good listeners can read a speaker's body language to notice any unspoken cues.
- **Lean in.** Pay careful attention to what the speaker is saying.
- **Ask clarifying questions.** Don't be afraid to ask questions to clarify what the speaker is saying.

*"Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you."*

*- Robert Fulghum*

## Resources

### HealthyChildren.org

Sponsored by the American Academy of Pediatrics, HealthyChildren.org is committed to the attainment of optimal physical, mental, and social health and well-being for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

HealthyChildren.org

### National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE)

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## How to Be a Friend

Adolescence can be a challenging time for teenagers and their friends. Some helpful reminders and positive qualities for teenagers to use to create and cultivate lasting friendships include:

- ✓ **Be yourself**
- ✓ **Be honest**
- ✓ **Appreciate others**
- ✓ **Have fun**
- ✓ **Be accepting**
- ✓ **Be respectful**
- ✓ **Be adventurous**
- ✓ **Cooperate**
- ✓ **Be dependable**
- ✓ **Be patient**
- ✓ **Offer forgiveness**
- ✓ **Be helpful**
- ✓ **Be compassionate**

## Build a Stronger Relationship with Your Teenager

Parents can help teenagers resist negative influences and bounce back from difficult times by creating strong bonds within your family. Some suggestions...

- Do things with your teens – chores around the house, playing video games, watching a movie, whatever life has in store – spend time together.
- Ask about school, friends, and activities.
- Be willing to listen to and learn from your teen.
- Know your teen's friends.
- Welcome teenagers into your home.
- Eat meals together whenever possible – without TV or technology interfering.
- Model mutual respect.
- Avoid negative labels.
- Show your sense of humor. Conversations don't always have to be serious. Lighten up and have fun with your teenager.
- Remember to set clear and consistent boundaries. Teens appreciate rules and knowing the consequences if they break the rules.

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*"I cannot even imagine where I would be today were it not for that handful of friends who have given me a heart full of joy. Let's face it, friends make life a lot more fun."*

- Charles R. Swindoll

# Build Your Teen's Teamwork Skills

No matter what kind of career your teenager wants to pursue, employers are interested in employees who work well with others. There are many ways you can help your teenager build these skills in high school.

- Point out examples of teamwork in sports, school projects, or in your home. Ask your teen to explain how people's strengths and weaknesses work together for success.
- When you accomplish a project as a family, ask your teen which skills each member of the family brought to the project.
- Encourage your teen to join a club. Many clubs provide opportunities to work as part of a team.
- Help your teen organize a community service project. This will help your teen practice leadership.

## Help!! I Don't like My Teenager's Friend

*There may be times when you don't like your teenager's choice of friends. The following are some helpful tips to help you in these challenging times.*

- ✓ *Don't overreact. Take time to figure out why you don't like them. If it is just conflicting personalities and your teen continues to act and behave responsibly, you may just need to ignore it.*
- ✓ *Reinforce positive and acceptable behavior in your teen without criticizing the negative behavior in your teen's friends.*
- ✓ *If the friend is a troublemaker, explain to your teen that you disapprove of their friend's behavior. Then, clearly state the consequences if your teen decides to follow in the friend's footsteps.*
- ✓ *If necessary, use your authority as a parent to explain why you would prefer for your teen to end the friendship. Have a conversation with your teen about the qualities of a good friendship and help them realize this person isn't really a good friend. Your teen may be grateful for your help to get out of the friendship.*

## Resources

### U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Adolescent Health

Provides resources for parents and teenagers on a variety of health topics.

[hhs.gov](http://hhs.gov)

### Family and Youth Services Bureau

Provides current information, including message boards, newsletters, and resources for parents.

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## Alcohol Affects the Teenage Brain

Researchers continuously study and learn about the effects of alcohol on the teenage brain. It is now well documented that the brain undergoes major changes and developments during the teenage years.

Mounting evidence suggests that underage drinking causes greater damage to the teenage brain than previously thought. The two areas of the brain at the greatest risk of damage are the hippocampus, which is responsible for learning and memory, and the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for decision making.

Damage from underage drinking can lead to loss of motor skills, difficulty in learning new things, and problems with memory. Adolescent drinkers scored worse than non-drinkers on vocabulary, general information, memory recall, and visual-spacing functioning assessments. Research on underage drinking continues to prove that alcohol is not a harmless drug. It is actually associated with many real and serious consequences.

## Give Your Teen Reasons Not to Drink Alcohol

Avoid scare tactics. Instead, stick to the facts, consequences, and your expectations. Some good reasons why teens should not drink include the following:

- **Drinking can cause people to make bad decisions.** Drinking can lead to decisions that could change the course of your teen's life permanently, including drinking and driving and unprotected sex.
- **Alcohol affects teenagers differently than adults.** The use of alcohol during the teenage years can lead to impairment in learning, lower academic grades, and even widespread damage to the brain.
- **Drinking is not cool.** Teens are role models for younger siblings, friends, and classmates. If teens choose to drink, they let other people down.
- **Underage drinking is illegal.** It could result in legal consequences and a criminal record.
- **You expect your teen to avoid drinking.** Your values and expectations are important to your teen, even though he or she may not show it.

## Tips for Talking to Your Teen about Alcohol

- **Choose an appropriate time.** Discuss your expectations well in advance of any special events such as homecoming, prom, spring break, or graduation.
- **Be clear and consistent about expectations and consequences.** Explain to your teen why you disapprove of underage drinking and the consequences that will occur if he or she chooses to drink.
- **Listen to your teen.** Ask open-ended questions like, "What pressures are you dealing with?" or "What can I do to help?"
- **Keep communicating.** Remember to talk with your teen and not preach or lecture.

# Social Media and Underage Drinking

According to a study by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, children and teens who spend time on social networking sites are three times more likely to drink alcohol than those who don't.

The popularity of social media provides the alcohol industry a widening reach to market its products. Alcohol brand fan pages on social media sites are public forums for all to see. It is common to find posts of photos displaying colorful mixed drinks or bottles of beer frosted on ice. Teens need only to "like" a fan page to see these photos and comments in their newsfeed. Teens may also be exposed to advertising secondhand if one of their friends becomes a fan of a brand alcohol page and shares photos from that page.

Youth develop positive expectations of alcohol use when they are repeatedly exposed to the often glamorized and alluring alcohol advertisements and promotions. Correcting misperceptions that alcohol is the key to maturity, escape, and social success, as well as educating them about the negative consequences of underage drinking, can effectively counter the expectations shaped by social media.

## Hosting a Teen Party

*When hosting a party for teenagers, be clear and concise with your expectations. Some guidelines to follow include:*

- *Establish a guest list. Parties should be kept small (10-15 teens per adult). Be sure to agree on the maximum number of guests.*
- *Make sure the rules are clear from the beginning. Agree ahead of time on the hours of the party.*
- *NO drinking or drugs should be permitted. Be sure your teen understands you will call parents (or the police if things get out of hand) to pick up guests should they bring alcohol to the party or arrive drunk. Many drugs can be easily concealed, so beware of kids displaying strange behavior.*
- *Be sure your teen understands that you are legally responsible for anything that happens to a minor who has consumed alcohol or drugs in your home.*
- *Encourage your teen to have activities planned to keep guests busy.*
- *Keep the party in one area of the house. This will prevent wandering and couples breaking off from the party.*
- *Invite other parents to chaperone. Be visible and available, but don't join the party.*
- *Do not allow guests to leave the party and return later.*
- *Be sure to serve plenty of food and non-alcoholic drinks in single-serving containers.*

## Resources

### Partnership for Drug-Free Kids

Find out the latest drug information, advice, and news for parents.

drugfree.org  
Helpline: 1-855-DRUGFREE

### SAMHSA

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offers an underage drinking prevention app for parents and other caring adults to...

- practice bringing up conversations about alcohol.
- learn questions to ask.
- get ideas for keeping it going.

samhsa.gov

### By Parents For Parents

A useful resource for anyone trying to raise a teenager.

byparents-forparents.com



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## Effects of Nicotine on the Teen Brain

As with alcohol and other substances, nicotine has an especially harmful effect on the developing teenage brain. Research shows that nicotine directly impacts parts of the brain necessary for emotion regulation, behavior, and memory.

Furthermore, studies show that teens are more sensitive than adults to nicotine's addictive properties, because the reward center in their brain develops at a quicker rate than the prefrontal cortex. In other words, teens are more likely to take a risk and seek reward, which means they are also more susceptible to negative peer influence.

It is essential that we correct any misperceptions of harm teens have about nicotine by educating them about its negative health consequences. Well informed teens are better equipped to make responsible decisions, resist negative peer influence, and stay free from nicotine addiction in all of its forms.

## Smokeless tobacco...

- causes bad breath, yellow teeth, mouth sores, cracking and bleeding lips and gums, and tooth loss.
- users suffer from cancer of the esophagus, pharynx, larynx, stomach, and pancreas.
- increases the heart rate and raises the blood pressure which can lead to an increased risk for heart attack or stroke.
- causes leukoplakia, a disease of the mouth characterized by white patches and oral lesions on the cheeks, gums, or tongue. Leukoplakia can lead to oral cancer and occurs in more than half of all users in the first three years of use.

## E-cigarettes and Vaporizers

Electronic cigarettes, personal vaporizers, or electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) are battery operated devices designed to deliver nicotine with flavorings and other chemicals to users in the form of a vapor instead of smoke. These intriguing devices range in size from a standard pen to a large marker.

The standard vaporizer has three components:

- A cartridge that holds a liquid solution containing varying amounts of nicotine, flavorings, and other chemicals.
- A heating device.
- A power source, usually a battery.

Puffing or vaping activates the heating device that heats up the liquid turning it into a vapor that is slowly inhaled into the lungs.

The big question is the safety of these devices. The information learned from studies conducted so far is rather limited. The fact that these products haven't been thoroughly evaluated in scientific studies and no one knows what long term health risks are associated with them makes them dangerous.

Keep the lines of communication open with regard to these new devices. Help your teenager think through the possible dangers of products that have not been thoroughly studied or evaluated.

# Talk with Your Teen about Tobacco

When talking with your teen about tobacco, emphasize the immediate short-term effects of tobacco use, such as bad breath, yellow teeth, smelly clothes, and stained fingers. This seems to make more of an impression on teens than talking about the long-term, life-threatening effects such as lung cancer, emphysema, or heart disease.

## Smoke-Free Car Laws

As the public has become more aware of the harmful effects of second-hand smoke, many public facilities have become tobacco-free zones.

In addition, both individuals and legislators are taking action to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke in vehicles. Since 2006, several communities and states have enacted laws to prevent smoking in cars when children are present.

Regardless if a law has been passed in your state, exposing passengers to secondhand smoke in the confined space of a car is hazardous. Encourage others not to smoke in vehicles whether their passengers are adults or children.

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*"None of us want to believe that addiction can touch us or those we love. No parent can tolerate the idea of harm coming to their children, much less the nightmare that is addiction."*

*- Jim Lapierre*

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## Resources

### Center for Disease Control and Prevention

The CDC works to promote health and quality of life by preventing and controlling disease, injury, and disability.

[cdc.gov/tobacco/](http://cdc.gov/tobacco/)

### Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids

This campaign provides information to get everyone involved in tobacco prevention as well as current research, facts, and federal and state initiatives.

[tobaccofreekids.org](http://tobaccofreekids.org)

### American Cancer Society

In addition to learning more about cancer and fighting cancer, the American Cancer Society also has a quit smoking program.

[cancer.org](http://cancer.org)

### American Lung Association

The American Lung Association has information on a variety of lung-related illnesses and provides a free online smoking cessation program.

[lung.org](http://lung.org)

### Mendez Foundation

For more than thirty-five years, the Mendez Foundation has been developing and implementing unparalleled evidence-based, skill-building programs that equip students with the tools they need to live safe, healthy, and drug-free lives.



Your student is participating in Too Good for Drugs, a comprehensive substance abuse prevention program. Teenagers who feel their parents' support, communicate effectively with their parents, and live with clear no-use standards are much less likely to become involved with drugs. We hope you will use this newsletter as a resource to talk with your teen about living a safe and drug-free life.

## Marijuana...

- contains a mind altering substance called tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).
- has various nicknames such as pot, weed, Mary Jane, etc.
- is a plant which is dried and smoked, usually as a joint or blunt or in a pipe or a bong.
- causes short-term memory loss.
- speeds the heart rate.
- increases appetite.
- is addictive. Each year, teens enter treatment with a primary diagnosis of marijuana dependence.
- causes lack of motivation.
- causes poor depth perception.
- causes poor coordination.
- causes poor concentration.

## Marijuana Use Linked to Lower IQ

The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS) recently released a study that researched the long-term effects of marijuana use. The results included MRI scans that observed physical changes in the brain and reveal chronic marijuana use can actually lower the IQ by five points. This is particularly the case when use begins at an early age. Because the human brain continues developing into the mid-twenties, regular exposure to toxic substances can hinder its healthy maturation.

Teens engaging in marijuana use risk interfering with their ability to function at peak capacity and meeting their fullest potential.

With recent trends of increasing legal access to marijuana, it is crucial you talk to your teens about the effects of marijuana use on the brain and body. For some teens, the evolving legal status may imply a green light to use. Remind your teen that just because something is legal does not mean it is necessarily safe. Informing your teen of the negative consequences of substance use, as well as equipping them with the skills they need to make responsible decisions, can keep them healthy and substance-free.

## Legal Status

Legalization for medical and/or recreational use as well as other changes in state marijuana policies across the United States make it easy for adolescents to underestimate the negative effects of the drug's use on the brain and body. It is often overlooked that Marijuana is classified as a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substances Act. It is against federal law to possess, use, and distribute marijuana.

The key for prevention educators is to stick to the facts about the effects of THC on adolescent brain development. It is particularly important for adolescents to understand what is known about the negative effects of marijuana use on the brain and body, and that no matter the legal status, even for recreational use, it is illegal for anyone under 21 for these reasons.

# Party On

Your teen tells you there is a party Saturday night. These tips can help you be sure your teen is safe when going to a party.

- Know exactly where your teen will be.
- Call the host's family to thank them for hosting the party or to offer to help. This gives you the opportunity to verify the party will be supervised and drug and alcohol free. It also lets the host know a party has been planned at his or her house.
- Make arrangements for how your teens will get to and from the party. Remind teens never to ride in a car with a driver who is impaired.
- Be sure to discuss ways for your teen to leave the party if they want to. Tell them it is okay to use you as an excuse.
- Discuss and identify a time when your teen will be home and the consequences if he or she is late. Hold them accountable to that time.
- Stay awake or have your teens wake you when they get home. This gives you the opportunity to talk to your teen about the party, know they are home safely, and see what condition they are in after the party.

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*"Adolescence is a period of rapid changes. Between the ages of 12 and 17, for example, a parent ages as much as 20 years."*

- Author Unknown

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## Resources

### National Institute on Drug Abuse

NIDA works to significantly improve prevention, treatment, and policy as it relates to drug abuse and addiction. Find out the latest information about marijuana.

[drugabuse.gov](http://drugabuse.gov)

### SAMHSA

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) website offers current research and information pertaining to the effects of marijuana use, its legal status, and policy changes.

[samhsa.gov](http://samhsa.gov)

### Office of National Drug Control Policy

The ONDCP establishes policies, priorities, and objectives for the nation's drug control program.

[whitehouse.gov/ondcp](http://whitehouse.gov/ondcp)



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## Abuse of Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drugs

Prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse is a growing problem among teenagers. Knowing the facts can help protect your teens.

- Teenagers often have the misperception that prescription and over-the-counter medications are safe because they are prescribed by a doctor and made in licensed laboratories.
- Prescription and over-the-counter drugs have legitimate use in medical treatment but are still powerful substances that are dangerous if used incorrectly.
- Many prescription drugs and some over-the-counter medications produce effects similar to those of street drugs.
- Misuse or abuse of prescription and over-the-counter drugs creates the risk of dependency and death.

## The New Face of Heroin

Teens and young adults are increasingly exposed to heroin in places few of us would expect. In less than a decade, the demographic of heroin users has dramatically shifted. What once was considered an inner-city street drug can now be found in suburban neighborhoods and households.

Why this surge in heroin use and the change in demographic? The answer comes in the direct correlation between prescription medication abuse and heroin use. Pain relievers and heroin belong to the same class of drug called opioids. Effective measures to control access to prescription pain medications have driven some addicted users to the next affordable source for their high, heroin.

Heroin users quickly develop a tolerance to the drug and risk many serious health problems from intravenous drug use. The risk of overdose is also high because there is no way to determine the content or strength of the drug.

## Say What?

If you overheard teenagers talking about hillbilly heroin or skittles, would you know what they meant? Be prepared by knowing some common drug names and nicknames.

- **Methamphetamine**  
ice, glass, meth, crystal
- **Cocaine**  
crack, coke, snow, blow
- **MDMA**  
Ecstasy, X, XTC
- **Heroin**  
smack, skag, junk, dope
- **Prescription Stimulants**  
r-ball, bennies, speed, uppers
- **Prescription Pain Relievers**  
oxy, vikes, morf, hillbilly heroin
- **Prescription Depressants**  
zanies, barbs, downies, phennies
- **Dextromethorphan**  
DXM, dex, syrup, robo, triple-c

# Protecting Your Teen

There are steps you can take to limit accessibility and protect your teens from prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse:

- Keep your medications hidden or locked up. Be sure to inform family members, especially grandparents, about locking up their medications too.
- Store medications in a place where you can access them, but where your teenager is unlikely to look.
- Keep medications in a separate location for each member of the family. This will help keep family members from taking the wrong medications.
- Clean out your medicine cabinet. Discard any leftover or expired prescription medications. Do not keep leftover medications.
- Properly dispose of medications. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about proper disposal of medications.
- Monitor your teens' activities online. Since some of these medications can be purchased online, know what your teens are doing when they are online.
- Remind your teens not to share medications or self-medicate.
- Read the label before you open the bottle. Be sure you and your teens always follow the directions and proper dosages when taking medications.
- Keep track of quantities of prescription medications in your home and ask relatives to do the same.
- Keep the lines of communication open. Talk to your teens about the dangers of misusing and abusing prescription and over-the-counter medications.
- Inform your teens that you expect them to remain drug free.

## What is Dextromethorphan?

*Dextromethorphan (DXM) is a cough suppressant used in many over-the-counter cough and cold medications. When used according to the product label, it is a very safe and effective cough suppressant, but when taken in excessive doses, it can produce a high or cause psychoactive effects. The effects of DXM vary depending on the dose. Users report everything from nausea and vomiting to a complete dissociation of one's body. In high doses, DXM may produce psychotic behavior similar to PCP.*

## Resources

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[whitehouse.gov/ondcp](http://whitehouse.gov/ondcp)

### Partnership for a Drug Free America

A joint effort among scientists, parents, and teens to reduce the use of drugs in America.

[drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org)

### Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

SAMHSA works to improve the quality and availability of substance abuse prevention, alcohol and drug addiction treatment, and mental health services.

[samhsa.com](http://samhsa.com)



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## Great Expectations

For the few teens that do choose to use drugs, several reasons explain their misguided decision.

These reasons include:

- to feel older
- to fit in and belong
- to relax or escape
- to take risks and rebel
- to satisfy curiosity
- to treat injury

If someone makes the decision to use drugs for any of these reasons, they are not considering better ways to handle the situation. Discuss with your teen alternative, healthy ways to handle these types of situations so they don't make the misguided decision to try or experiment with drugs.

*"The best way to keep children at home is to make the home atmosphere pleasant, and let the air out of the tires."*

- Dorothy Parker

## Parents Key to Substance Abuse Prevention

You may feel that your teens are not listening to you or that what you say has no effect. This couldn't be further from the truth.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), national surveys of teens ages 12 to 17 show that teens who believe their parents would strongly disapprove of their substance use were less likely to use substances than others.

Talking about the effects of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs with teens and setting clear expectations against use can be critical in preventing your teens from using. Some good websites are available to help you navigate talking points, and a great place to start is the National Institute on Drug Abuse. ([drugabuse.gov](http://drugabuse.gov)).

## Helping Your Teen Stay Drug-Free

Teenagers hear about drugs from the music they listen to, the movies and TV shows they watch, and their friends. These unreliable sources of information can lead teens to develop positive expectations about drug use. You can help your teen resist these positive expectations and make good choices.

- Help your teen develop a healthy sense of self and create strong bonds within your family.
- Set an example by not using illegal drugs or misusing alcohol or prescription medications.
- Talk to your teenagers about the consequences of drug use. Explain how drug use can affect their health, goals, and relationships.
- Make it common knowledge in your family that drug use is unacceptable.
- Be a part of your teenager's lives.
- Meet the parents of your teenager's friends.
- Be sure your teen is involved in a variety of activities.

# Signs Your Teen May Be Using Drugs

A teenager's behavior often changes during the teenage years making it difficult for adults to recognize the warning signs of drug use. While it may not be easy to differentiate typical teenage behavior and substance abuse, there are signs that may be indicative of drug use. These signs include:

- Mood changes or emotional instability
- Reclusive and secretive behavior at home
- Day-to-day erratic behavior
- Poor concentration
- Changes in eating and sleeping patterns
- Carelessness about personal grooming and hygiene
- Changes in personal values
- Loss of motivation and goals
- Negative attitude toward school
- Loss of interest in previously favored sports or hobbies
- Makes endless excuses
- Extreme fatigue and chronic cough
- Weight loss or gain
- Changes in friendships
- Frequent conflict with parents

## How Can I Help My Teenager Be "Too Good for Drugs"?

- ✓ *Set an example by not using illegal drugs or misusing alcohol or prescription drugs.*
- ✓ *Talk about alcohol and other drugs with your teenager.*
- ✓ *Carefully explain the consequences of drug use.*
- ✓ *Help your teen develop strong values.*
- ✓ *Chaperone your teenager's parties.*
- ✓ *Make it a point to meet the parents of your teenager's friends.*
- ✓ *Be sure your teen is involved in a variety of activities.*

## Resources

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[drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org)

### Monitoring the Future

Monitoring the Future is an ongoing study of the behaviors, attitudes, and values of American secondary school students, college students, and young adults.

[monitoringthefuture.org](http://monitoringthefuture.org)



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