

Let's Keep Talking



A Resource for Parents to Talk With Their Teens About Not Drinking

Let's Keep Talking

As a parent of a teen, you have reached an exciting time in life for both you and your son or daughter. From teaching them to ride a bike and tie their shoes, to talking them through the growing pains of friendships and school-related issues, your positive parenting has paid off. Over the years, you have been the one to talk with them when they needed support or insight. As your teen prepares to embark on the next chapter of life, whether to go to college or to take on other adult responsibilities, take the time to talk with your son or daughter - and *keep talking* - about waiting to drink alcohol until they are 21.

Despite a quest for independence, your son or daughter wants and needs your guidance and support, especially during this time in his or her life. Young people, even through their teenage years, usually develop their boundaries and values through you - their parents.

The need to communicate openly with teens is even greater when the topic is difficult. Some very important topics, like underage drinking, are certainly not easy to approach. But is anything ever easy for parents? Not if it *really* matters!

Let's Keep Talking was designed for parents and concerned adults to help teens make healthy, responsible decisions - including the decision to wait until they are 21 to consume alcohol, if they choose to do so as an adult.

Advisory Panel

Jay Gittleston, President
A Vision in Motion, Prevention Specialists
Senior Developer

Michael Couty, Director
Department of Mental Health
Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse
Jefferson City, MO

Jennifer Crum, Resident Director
University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign, IL

Dr. Freddie Hill, PhD
Vice President, Campus Life
Dillard University
New Orleans, LA

Michael G. Davis, Executive Director
IMPACT
Milwaukee, WI

Jennifer Ford, Program Coordinator
Alcohol and Drug Education Programs
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX

Michael M. Geraci Sr., Chief of Police
Schenectady, NY

Tom Madrigano
W.O.W. Distributing Co., Inc.
Waukesha, WI

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PARENTS...WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Parents are the single most important influence on children's decision to drink, yet many parents do not fully understand the extent of their influence.¹ That's why it's important to continue maintaining an open line of communication with your teen by talking with them everyday, celebrating their achievements and accomplishments, and encouraging smart choices. Most parents already have begun this through a lasting relationship built upon trust, reliability and honesty. Your teen needs - and wants - a positive relationship with you. You can be their most important role model.

Teens are often very concerned about being accepted by their peers. That's why peer pressure can play a major role in the decisions teens make. While teens grow more independent and focused on their lifestyle and culture, parents often become uncertain about their role in their child's life.

However, you can help your teen understand that the decisions they make should be well informed and healthy. Understand that peer pressure is real but can be a positive influence. Goal setting and self-direction, together with friends who support similar ideals, can help provide a good environment for your teen. The need to communicate openly is even greater when the topic is personal. Nevertheless, remember that you are the greatest influence on their lives and decisions.

Parents are the single most important influence on their children's decision not to drink.

Your teen needs to know that you disapprove of underage drinking under any circumstance.



Open, two-way communication is particularly important when talking about the use of alcohol. Your teen needs to know that you strongly believe that an underage person should not drink alcohol under any circumstance - at a party, with other peers or adults, or alone. This also means not consuming alcohol even if parents or friends or older siblings provide it while in the security of their homes. Ask your son or daughter if he or she has been in situations where underage drinking occurred. If so, ask how he or she handled the situation. Together, explore options for what your teen could do if in that position again - or better yet, to anticipate when that situation might occur. For example:

- ▶ Find out in advance whether there will be parental supervision at a party.
- ▶ Decide with a friend, in advance, not to drink so you don't feel alone.
- ▶ Coordinate reliable transportation (yourself, mom or dad) so you don't have to rely on someone else when you feel you need to leave a party.
- ▶ Take non-alcohol drinks to a party for yourself and others who choose not to drink.
- ▶ Plan activities (rent movies, play board or card games, dance, or plan and make a four-course dinner).
- ▶ Leave if you feel uncomfortable.
- ▶ Decide not to go.



Ask the five "Ws":

- ▶ Who?
- ▶ What?
- ▶ When?
- ▶ Where?
- ▶ Why?

ACTION STEPS: WHAT PARENTS SHOULD DO

Be a positive role model

Being a teen today is much more difficult than it was 20 years ago. Being the parent of a teen is even more of a test. But parents nationwide are excelling at providing the proper direction and setting fine examples. As a parent, you have the opportunity to provide a constructive foundation for your children simply by your own behavior and attitude. Your actions are important to your teens and affect their decisions about drinking.

- ▶ If you choose to consume alcohol, drink responsibly.
- ▶ Be aware of the amount of alcohol kept in your home.
- ▶ Have non-alcohol beverages available even for adult parties.
- ▶ Set and enforce household rules that incorporate a "no tolerance" policy for underage drinking.

Ask, ask, ask

Nevertheless, parents must always ask their teen the five "Ws" - who, what, when, where and why. Ask, ask, ask. Who are you going to be with? What are you going to do? When are you coming home? Where are you going? Why are you going there?

Practice possible situations and offer alternative suggestions. What if:

- ▶ You were invited to a party where you knew alcohol would be available?
- ▶ You were at a party and someone arrived with alcohol?
- ▶ Someone you knew had been drinking offered you a ride?

As the parent, you identify the rules and consequences. However, teens need to feel comfortable with options to avoid problems without losing friends. Suggest they:

- ▶ Make conscious decisions about the social functions they attend.
- ▶ Feel confident enough to leave when things seem beyond their control.
- ▶ Call home for a ride or offer to drive a friend home.

*Identify rules and consequences.
Give suggestions on how to handle
tough decisions.*



Stay involved

Part of interacting with teens means getting to know their friends and their friends' parents. Sometimes parents have to be creative when establishing times and places young people can socialize. Friday or Saturday evenings could be pizza and movie night at your house. One way to be involved without interfering is by serving food and soft drinks at various intervals. The key is that you are there during the party.

On occasion, parents unknowingly facilitate teens' unacceptable behavior. Research indicates that minors obtain alcohol primarily from noncommercial sources such as friends, parents and other adults. Social availability of alcohol to teens through parents, friends and strangers can only be addressed by changing adult attitudes about teen use.² Sadly, some parents and older adults still believe drinking alcohol while underage is a "rite of passage," or is okay as long as the keys to the car are taken away. ***These beliefs send mixed - and dangerous - messages.*** Look for any situation in which you might inadvertently provide the resources and opportunity for teens to engage in irresponsible or illegal behavior. It may also be helpful to monitor the alcohol you keep in your home to avoid temptation and stem curiosity when teens are home alone.

College and the real world

Talk openly now with your teen about alcohol. It will go a long way as they move to one of the most important phases in their life - college or otherwise beginning their adult life in the real world. While your 18-year-old may still be your "baby," they are adults to the outside world and will be expected to behave accordingly. Drinking underage is illegal and the ramifications for breaking the law can become more serious.

- In most states, it is illegal to:***
- ▶ ***Purchase or consume alcohol under age 21***
 - ▶ ***Purchase alcohol for minors***
 - ▶ ***Sell or serve alcohol to minors***



It's also important for parents to understand what often goes on at college campuses across the country. The nation's "Healthy People 2010" initiative identified binge drinking among college students as a major health problem. While colleges vary widely in drinking rates, the U.S. Surgeon General and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services are committed to reducing the frequency of "drinking to intoxication."

Many universities and colleges have implemented alcohol policies to address alcohol abuse. Also underway are efforts to increase alcohol-free housing, special programs and awareness activities. However, your influence as a parent remains the most important factor in affecting your teen's perception and consumption of alcohol.

THE TRUTH ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING

You should always remain honest about the possibility that your teen (or 20-year-old) will be faced with an opportunity to consume alcohol. Both you and your teen should know what the law says about underage drinking. In most states:

- ▶ **It is illegal to purchase or consume alcohol if you are under age 21.**
- ▶ **It is illegal to purchase alcohol for minors.**
- ▶ **It is illegal to sell or serve alcohol to minors.**

Know the rules and share them

It is important for you to ask questions when visiting colleges and to request a copy of the school's policies regarding student alcohol consumption. Make a list of questions that you can use at each campus. Get a clear understanding of what social interaction is accepted and expected at each institution.

² Source: Federal Trade Commission - Alcohol Marketing & Advertising Report to Congress, September 2002.

Research indicates that minors obtain alcohol primarily from legal sources such as friends, parents and other adults.

Know the laws governing underage drinking and supplying minors with alcohol

Intoxication is caused by the amount of alcohol in your bloodstream (known as the blood alcohol concentration level or BAC). Legal blood alcohol concentration levels vary state to state, however, you can be convicted of driving under the influence (DUI) in all states.

In some states, people under 21 found to have any amount of alcohol in their systems can lose their driver's license, be subject to a heavy fine, or have their car permanently taken away. One drink can cause a minor to fail a breath test. Your teen should know the law and the consequences.

Many young people, including older siblings of legal drinking age, are not aware that they may be held accountable just by attending a party where alcohol is served to minors, or if they ride in a car that has an open container. They may be arrested even if they did not drink. Make sure they know that ignorance of the law is not an excuse accepted by law enforcement. And if your son or daughter has his or her 21st birthday around the corner, remind them that they can be arrested, imprisoned or substantially fined for providing alcohol to minors. Just as there may be pressure to drink underage, there also can be pressure on an of-age person to buy alcohol for underage friends and siblings, or to share an I.D. card. The only legal and socially-acceptable response is "No way."

Parents should inquire about all current local laws and ordinances that pertain to underage drinking and its legal consequences. Share these facts with teens and older siblings to help them make responsible decisions before negative situations occur that could possibly affect their health and safety.

Even if your teen is not prone to peer pressure or drinking, sharing the rules may help them to help someone else. Research indicates that when youth perceive that their parents would strongly disapprove of their alcohol consumption, they are less likely to try drinking. The Roper Youth Report finds 73% of young people identified their parents as a leading influence in their decisions about drinking alcohol.

The majority of teens do not drink alcohol.² Among the reasons why is their parents have been proactive and consistent in addressing the consequences of underage drinking. However, teens may know someone who does drink. That is why you must continue to encourage self-restraint. Simply stated, alcohol is for legal drinking age adults.

The majority of teens do not drink alcohol, but most are faced with the opportunity.



²Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health & Human Resources, 2002.



Take advantage of "moments of opportunity."

Keep talking

Take advantage of "moments of opportunity" before they leave high school. A golden opportunity for candid talk is when your teen is preparing for their driver's license training or exam. When you are together practicing, ask what they think is the best part about getting a license. It is natural for young people to feel a sense of freedom that comes with the chance to drive on their own. This is a great time to share your thoughts about responsibility and the consequences that go hand in hand with that freedom.

Stress that driving is not a right but a privilege that can be revoked by your state - and by you - the parent. Many young people will acknowledge that drunk driving is illegal but don't think through all of the implications and hazards if they do so.

Ask your teen for their opinion about alcohol and ask often. There are opportunities that you can use as starting points: consider a movie where alcohol is being used, a family celebration where alcohol is available, or a holiday or summer party. Before initiating a discussion about how your teen feels about alcohol being legal for adults and not for teens, be prepared to respond to questions your son or daughter may have. Some questions may include: When did you start drinking? What was the reason you started? Being prepared to respond honestly and giving consequences for your decisions may help to build open communication and trust.



Potential consequences to you and your teen:

- ▶ *Social embarrassment*
- ▶ *Hefty legal fines*
- ▶ *Traffic accidents*



Popular jargon pertaining to alcohol abuse has specific meaning to teens. If you know particular terms, use them during your discussions to help the conversation remain current and engaging. It is important that two-way communication not appear judgmental or as a lecture.

Determine levels of accountability for teens

As you know, many teens feel invincible. In their youthful zest, they believe that they are too young to be injured as a consequence of irresponsible or illegal behavior. Because children need to learn to be accountable for their own behavior, parents can provide guidelines for them. Establishing family rules can prevent emotional confrontations when problems arise. Teens need to know the boundaries and parents need to stick to the rules. Clear rules and consequences help them focus on understanding boundaries and their role in the family and community.

Making responsible decisions

While underage drinking remains a personal and unwise choice, it is illegal. The consequences can be numerous for you and your teen. Consider social embarrassment, hefty legal fines assessed to the teen and parent, college probation, traffic accidents with injuries, revocation of an athletic scholarship or suspension from a team.

Many parents and teens know and are concerned about the risks of drinking and driving, but more serious consequences often are not readily seen or discussed. Teens should be told that underage drinking and other irresponsible choices can cause unintentional injuries, a student to be assaulted by another student, sexual abuse or date rape, suicide attempts, and general health problems. Vandalism and property damage, added to the cost of legal proceedings, must also be considered as expensive outcomes. Health risks have been directly linked to underage drinking and play a role in the overall cost of insurance coverage. While some teens may think "this could never happen to me," an arrest record stays with a person and can even limit future job opportunities.

***Teens need to know the boundaries
and parents need to stick to the rules.***

***Remember actions speak louder than words,
particularly when they comes from you.***



If your child has a problem - seek help.

Ask for help

Many local communities offer programs on substance abuse awareness and parenting skills. Take advantage of training sessions that address positive aspects to strengthening family relations and provide updated factual information regarding teen interests.

There are a number of signs that could indicate your teen might have issues related to underage drinking. Signs might include: sudden, excessive rebellion; depression; and alcohol missing from the home. If you feel that your teen may need help, counselors, doctors and clergy are often good resources for guidance and support.

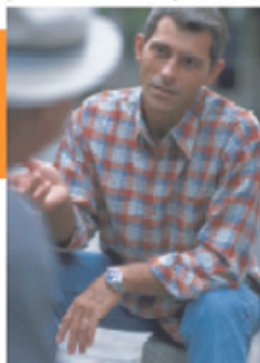
Keep the door open

As parents, you should be commended for all of your work in guiding and educating your teens. If you have frank and open discussions with your teen about underage drinking, congratulations. Continue to foster an open door of communication. Your teen will appreciate your protection and leadership, even if they don't openly show their gratitude. Remember, actions speak louder than words, particularly when they comes from you. You are the positive role models - at home and in the community - who clearly send out the message that underage drinking is not a necessary part of the teen experience.

Parent To Parent:

Be empowered to stop underage drinking.

- ▶ ***Not with my kid***
- ▶ ***Not in your house***
- ▶ ***Not even if you take the keys***



A MESSAGE FROM MILLER

For 150 years, Miller Brewing Company has proudly brewed its products for legal drinking aged consumers. We recognize, however, that despite state laws prohibiting people under the age of 21 from drinking alcohol, some minors still choose to drink illegally. The reasons why some minors choose to drink illegally is as multifaceted as the approaches needed to help prevent underage drinking in the first place. That is why Miller Brewing Company, as part of our Live Responsibly campaign, partners with local, state and national agencies, educators, parents, and law enforcement officials to help prevent illegal underage access, reduce drunk driving, implement new legislation and promote responsible (and legal) decision-making regarding the consumption of alcohol beverages.

As a parent, you should never shy away from telling other parents your stance on alcohol - because together, we can stop underage drinking.

Let's Keep Talking: A Resource for Parents to Talk with Their Teens About Not Drinking was created by an advisory panel of experts in the fields of education, family therapy, law enforcement and student health and wellness. These experts provide sound insight and direction that will help parents help their teens make smart decisions about alcohol, reinforce family values, and remind teens of society's expectations that they will follow the law and not drink until they are 21.

At Miller Brewing Company, we care how our products are used. We are committed to doing our part to help prevent underage drinking and make our communities safer places. After all, we're parents too.

For further information on these and other Miller Brewing Company responsibility efforts, visit www.millerbrewing.com/liveresponsibly or call 1-800-MILLER-6.

Additional Resources

Let's Talk

Hablemos Claros

www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov

www.avisioninmotion.com

www.impactinc.org

www.dmh.missouri.gov/ada/adaIndex.htm

