



# ALCOHOL ABUSE CONVERSATION STARTERS

*Communicate Effectively Today*



Parents are the #1 influence on their kids' decisions to drink—or not drink—alcohol. Open lines of communication are important as kids get older and may have more questions. Communication is vital – it allows kids to connect, understand each other, and learn how to express themselves successfully and appropriately.

As your child becomes curious about alcohol, they may turn to you for answers and advice. Use this opportunity to start an open, honest conversation about drinking, and to establish or reinforce your rules about alcohol and outline the behavior you expect. Peer pressure can be powerful among youths, and having a plan to avoid underage drinking can help children make smart choices.



**TALKING WITH TEENS ABOUT ALCOHOL: ESTABLISH YOUR CONVERSATION GOALS. IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO START TALKING WITH YOUR TEEN ABOUT THE RISKS OF UNDERAGE DRINKING.**

As teens get older, they make more decisions on their own, and also face more temptation and peer pressure. Though it may not seem like it, teens really do hear your concerns. It's important you show that you care and continue having conversations with them about the dangers of alcohol, and why they shouldn't use it.



Talking to your kids early and often about underage drinking is important. You should be able to feel comfortable having conversations about alcohol. Kids will have questions, so encourage them to ask them. Be there to listen. Learn together about the best ways to communicate that keep the lines of communication open.



# TALK-THEY LISTEN



*Armed with the proper knowledge of asking the right questions, your kids will open up to you when you approach in a conversation manner and not a interrogation manner.*

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN TALKING ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING.

- ✓ **ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS** AND TRY NOT TO INTERJECT OR INTERRUPT TOO MUCH. TRULY LISTEN TO WHAT YOUR CHILDREN HAVE TO SAY. IT CAN HELP YOU TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THEIR THOUGHTS ON DRINKING IN GENERAL, RATHER THAN LIMITING THE DISCUSSION TO “DO YOU DRINK?” MAYBE MOST IMPORTANT, IT’S A GREAT SIGNAL TO THEM THAT YOU ARE THERE TO LISTEN, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE, IF OR WHEN THERE REALLY IS A PROBLEM.
- ✓ **TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ALL KINDS OF SITUATIONS.** ANYTIME THERE’S A COMMERCIAL, A TV SHOW, A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE OF SOMEONE YOUR KID KNOWS, A DRUNK PERSON IN PUBLIC, OR ANY OTHER OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING—TAKE IT.
- ✓ **USE AGE-APPROPRIATE MESSAGES.** IT’S NEVER TOO EARLY TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING—AND THERE’S NO STOPPING POINT, EITHER. JUST REALIZE THAT DIFFERENT TYPES OF MESSAGES WILL BE MORE EFFECTIVE DEPENDING ON YOUR CHILDREN’S AGES. **(JUST SAYING NO IS NEVER ENOUGH.)**

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**YOUNGER KIDS — PRE-TEENS AND TWEENS** — ARE TYPICALLY MORE CURIOUS ABOUT ALCOHOL, AND THIS IS A GREAT TIME TO HAVE AN HONEST CONVERSATION ABOUT WHAT ALCOHOL IS AND THE DANGERS ASSOCIATED WITH IT.

**ONCE KIDS BECOME TEENAGERS**, CURIOSITY CAN TRANSFORM INTO PUSHING BOUNDARIES: “WHY CAN’T I?” THEY KNOW WHAT ALCOHOL IS, AND NOW THEY NEED TO KNOW WHY THEY SHOULDN’T USE IT, EVEN WHEN MANY OF THEIR FRIENDS ARE.

**BY THE TIME THEY GET TO COLLEGE**, UNDERAGE DRINKING IS UNFORTUNATELY VERY PRESENT IN THEIR LIVES AND CULTURE. FOCUS ON THE IMPLICATIONS THEIR ACTIONS CAN HAVE ON THINGS LIKE FUTURE JOB OPPORTUNITIES. KEEP IN MIND THAT ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL IN TALKING WITH YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING. THE MORE YOU TALK TO YOUR KIDS, AND THE MORE YOU REALLY GET TO KNOW THEM, THE EASIER IT WILL BE TO GAUGE WHAT THEY NEED TO HEAR



# THINGS TO SAY ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE, LISTEN AND MAKE YOUR RULES CLEAR.



## RELATE IT TO WHAT'S HAPPENING AT SCHOOL.

"DO YOU GUYS TALK ABOUT ALCOHOL AT SCHOOL?"

"HAVE YOU EVER SEEN SOMEONE FROM YOUR SCHOOL DRUNK?"

## TELL A STORY FROM YOUR OWN LIFE, AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE CONSEQUENCES.

"DID I EVER TELL YOU ABOUT THAT TIME..."

"HAVEN'T I TOLD YOU ABOUT MY FRIEND..."

"WHEN I WAS A TEEN, SOME KIDS HAD FAKE ID'S. HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THAT?"

## SHARE THE FACTS. SHOW YOU CARE ENOUGH TO HAVE DONE YOUR HOMEWORK.

"I READ THAT X IN 10 KIDS YOUR AGE ARE DRINKING. I KNOW IT MIGHT NOT BE YOU, BUT IT'S PROBABLY HAPPENING WITH YOUR FRIENDS AND WITH PEOPLE YOU KNOW. DO YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT?" "DID YOU KNOW IT ONLY TAKES X AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL BEFORE YOU ARE TOO IMPAIRED TO DRIVE?"

## SIGNAL YOUR WILLINGNESS TO TALK, WHEN THERE IS A PROBLEM AND WHEN THERE ISN'T.

"DO YOU HAVE ANY FRIENDS WHO ARE IN TROUBLE? OR MAYBE NEED SOME HELP? I'M INTERESTED IN YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS' HEALTH/SAFETY AND WANT YOU TO BE ABLE TO COME TO ME." "ARE ANY OF YOUR FRIENDS PUSHING YOU TO JOIN THEM?"

## PRAISE THEIR GOOD JUDGMENT AND REINFORCE ALL THE POSITIVE THINGS THEY DO.

"THANKS FOR BEING A GOOD FRIEND TO \_\_\_\_\_ - THEY NEED TO SEE IT'S JUST AS COOL NOT TO DRINK. YOU'RE A GOOD ROLE MODEL, AND I'M PROUD OF YOU."

## ASK ABOUT A PARTY OR EVENT. FIND OUT WHAT THEY'RE DOING. MAKE SURE THEY KNOW EXPECTATIONS.

"YOU'RE GOING TO YOUR FRIEND'S PARTY THIS WEEKEND? LET'S TALK ABOUT WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR." "DID YOU HAVE FUN AT THE PARTY? WHAT DID YOU GUYS DO?"

## COMMENT ON A COMMERCIAL OR TV SHOW.

"DO KIDS REALLY DRINK LIKE THAT THESE DAYS?" "WHY DO YOU THINK KIDS DRINK ALCOHOL?"

## TALK ABOUT THE LATEST LOCAL NEWS. USE REAL WORLD EXAMPLES TO EXPLAIN THE DANGERS AND CONSEQUENCES.

"HEY I HEARD ABOUT... WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT?"

"DID YOU HEAR ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO...?"

"MY COWORKER'S SON..."

