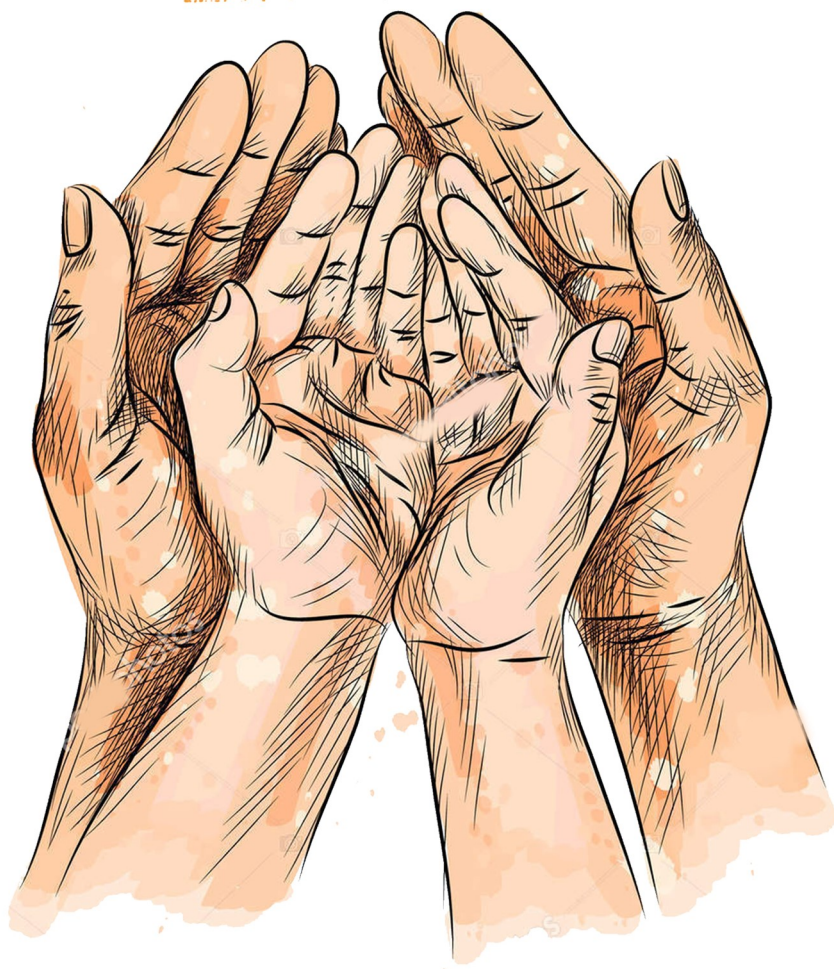


PARENTS' GUIDE TO
**ALCOHOL &
DRUG USE**
PREVENTION



WHAT DO WE DO?

The National Authority for the Campaign against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) is a government body established to coordinate the prevention, treatment and management of alcohol and drug abuse in Kenya. We work towards a Kenya free from alcohol and drug abuse by conducting research that helps in formulating policies and laws, conducting public education and facilitating development of rehabilitation facilities.

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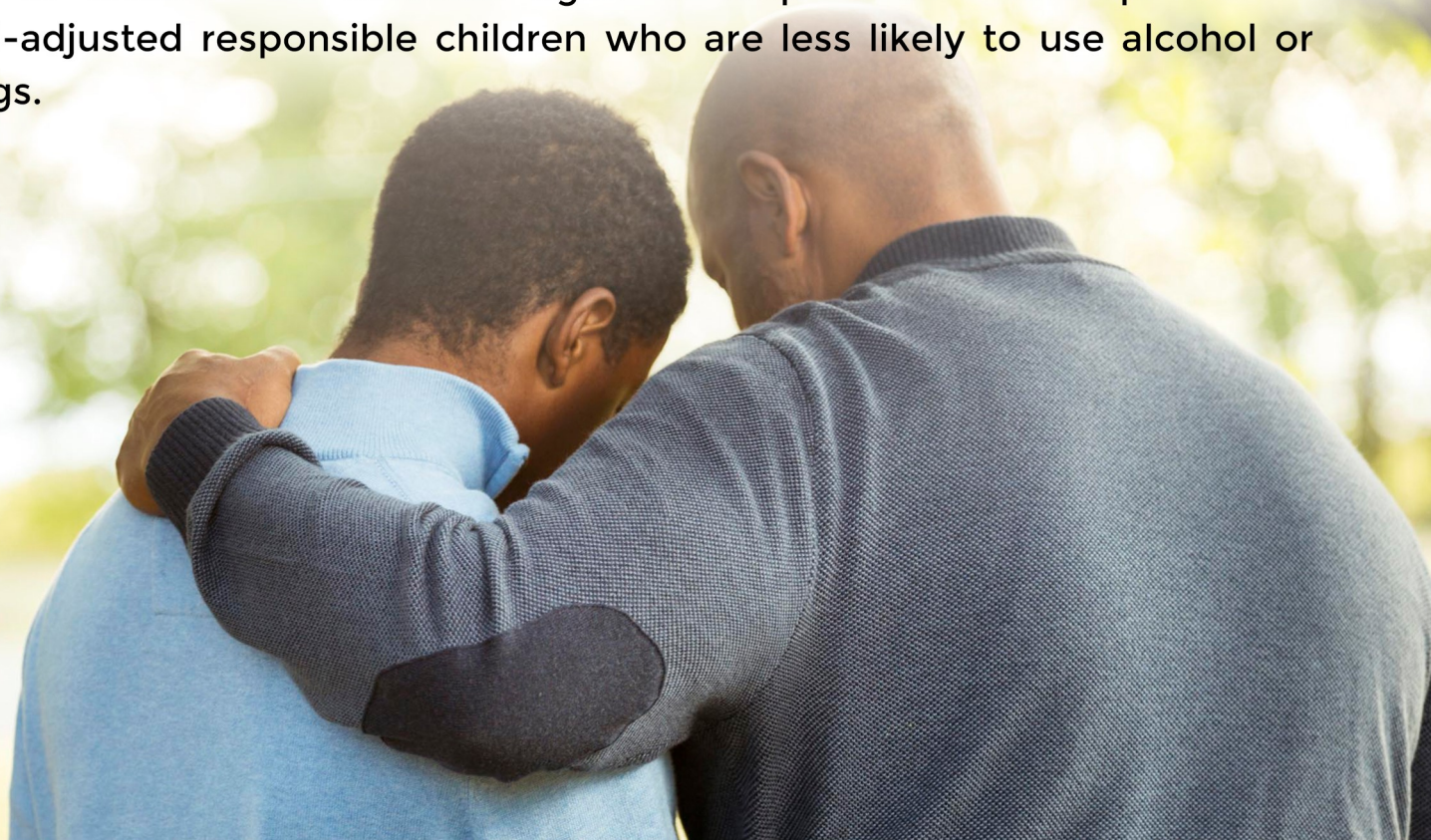
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DID YOU KNOW?

That as a parent you have the greatest influence on your child – including whether or not they use alcohol and/or other drugs? Your children look up to you for guidance and support. A child's primary caregiver in the early years shapes the cognitive, social and emotional development that sets the stage for the child's future. Parenting, whilst a rewarding job, can be very challenging especially in this modern information age. We hope that this guide will provide you with useful information and practical suggestions to help you navigate with a little ease.

HOW TO TALK ABOUT ALCOHOL TO YOUR CHILDREN

Communicating with your children is the building block of your relationship with them. When you have nurtured an open communication style and practice good listening then talking about drugs and alcohol should not be very hard. Here are some tips on how to talk to and what to say to children of different ages to help in the development of well-adjusted responsible children who are less likely to use alcohol or drugs.



CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR 2 - 4 YEAR OLDS

- **Explain the importance of taking good care of our bodies** – eating right, exercising and getting a good night's sleep. Discuss how good it feels when you take care of yourself – how you can run, jump and play for many hours.
- **Celebrate your child's decision - making skills.** Whenever possible, let your child choose what to wear. Even if the clothes don't quite match, you are reinforcing your child's ability to make decisions.
- **Turn chores like brushing teeth, putting away toys, and caring for pets into fun experiences that your child will enjoy.** Break the activities down into manageable steps so that your child learns to develop plans.



CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR 2 - 4 YEAR OLDS



- **Help your child steer clear of dangerous substances that exist in her immediate environment.** Point out poisonous and harmful chemicals commonly found in homes, such as bleach, pesticides, kitchen cleansers, paint and varnish. Explain that she should only drink, eat or smell food from a caregiver known to her. Medicines should only be administered by caregivers. Also explain that drugs from the doctor help the person the doctor gives them to but that they can harm someone else.
- **Help your child understand the difference between make - believe and real life.** Ask your child what he thinks about a TV program or story. Let your child know about your likes and dislikes. Discuss how violence or bad decisions can hurt people. Limit the time your child spends engaged in media (TV, computers, phones) and monitor the content they watch, play and listen to.
- **Turn frustration into a learning opportunity.** If a tower of blocks keeps collapsing during a play session, work with your child to find possible solutions to the problem.

CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR 5 - 8 YEAR OLDS

- **Talk to your child about the drug-** related messages they receive through advertisements, the news media and entertainment sources. Ask your child how they feel about the things they have heard or seen – you will learn a great deal about what they are thinking.
- **Keep your discussions about substances focused on the present** – long-term consequences are too distant to have any meaning. Talk about the differences between the medicinal uses and illegal uses of drugs, and how drugs can negatively impact the families and friends of people who use them.
- **Set clear rules and explain the reasons for your rules.** If you use tobacco or alcohol, be mindful of the message you are sending to your child.
- **Build problem solving skills:** Help them find long-lasting solutions to homework trouble, a fight with a friend, or in dealing with a bully at school or at home. Be sure to point out that quick fixes are not long-term solutions.
- **Give your child the power to escape from situations that make them feel uncomfortable.** Make sure they know that they should not stay in a place that makes them feel uncomfortable or bad about themselves. Also let them know that they do not need to stick with friends who do not support them.
- **Get to know your child's friends and their friends' parents.** Check in once in a while to make sure they are giving their child the same kinds of messages you give your child.



CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR 9 - 12 YEAR OLDS

- **Communicate rules** - make sure your child knows your rules and that you will enforce the consequences if rules are broken. Research shows that children are less likely to use tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs if their parents have established a pattern of setting clear rules and consequences for breaking those rules. Include rules on the use of internet.
- **Build your child's refusal skills** - let him know that he can always use you as an excuse. For example: "No, my mom [or dad, aunt, etc.] will kill me if I smoke a cigarette." Children who do not know what to say when someone offers them drugs are more likely to give in to peer pressure.
- **Boost their self-confidence** - feelings of insecurity, doubt and pressure may creep in during puberty. Offset those feelings with a lot of positive comments about who he is as an individual – and not just when he brings home a grade A.
- **Focus on immediate effects of drug use** - Preteens are not concerned with future problems that might result from experimentation with tobacco, alcohol or other drugs, but they are concerned about their appearance – sometimes to the point of obsession. Tell them about the smelly hair and ashtray breath caused by cigarettes.
- **Monitor your child** - Get to know your child's friends, and their parents. Check in by phone or a visit once in a while to make sure they are on the same page with prohibiting drug or alcohol use, particularly when their home is to be used for a party or sleepover.
- **Help children separate reality from fantasy** - Watch TV and movies with them and ask lots of questions to reinforce the distinction between the two. Remember to include advertising in your discussions, as those messages are especially powerful.

CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR 13 - 18 YEAR OLDS

- Set and communicate rules - make sure your teen knows your rules and the consequences for breaking those rules and, most importantly, that you really WILL enforce those consequences if the rules are broken.

Research shows that children are less likely to use tobacco, alcohol and other drugs if their parents have established a pattern of setting clear rules and consequences for breaking those rules. Children who are not regularly monitored by their parents are four times more likely to use drugs.

- Make it clear that you disapprove of all alcohol, tobacco and drug use. Explain reasons for disapproval and lead by example.
- Let your teen know all the things you find pleasing about him. He needs to hear a lot of positive comments about his life and who he is as an individual – and not just when he does well in exams. Positive reinforcement can go a long way in preventing drug use among teens.
- Show interest in and discuss your child's daily ups and downs. You will earn your child's trust, learn how to talk to each other, and will not take your child by surprise when you voice a strong point of view about drugs.
- Do not just leave your child's anti-drug use education up to her school. Ask your teen what he's learned about drugs in school and then build on that with additional topics, such as how and why addiction occurs; the unpredictable nature of addiction and how it varies from person to person; the impact of drug use on maintaining a healthy lifestyle; or positive approaches to dealing with stress.
- Avoid being confrontational – it is important that your child does not feel accused. Listen to your child's view first and offer your own in an honest and respectful manner so that they feel comfortable coming to you in the future.

CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR 13 - 18 YEAR OLDS

Stay calm if your child informs you of an incident or mistake that they have done. Try the following steps:

C

Control your thoughts and actions

A

Assess and decide if you are too upset to continue

L

Leave the situation if you are feeling too angry or upset

M

Make a plan to deal with the situation within 24 hours



CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR 19 - 24 YEAR OLDS

- Make sure you keep an open line of communication with your child as she leaves home. It does not all have to be about the topic of drinking and drug use. It is about maintaining a really supportive relationship.
- Your child needs to know that if any problems or difficult situations arise, he can turn to you for help. Be an at-home resource for your college/university child.
- Stay alert to possible mental health issues. There is a strong link between mental and physical health issues (including stress) and the use of drugs and alcohol.
- In case something happens, make sure you know what campus mental health resources are available to your child – and make sure they know, too.
- Alcohol and cannabis (bhang) are the most popular drugs on college/university campuses. Be aware that non-medical use of prescription stimulants, analgesics (painkillers), tranquilizers and e-pills is on the rise and just as harmful.



EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF ALCOHOL OR DRUG USE

Sometimes despite parents' efforts children still go ahead to experiment or use alcohol and drugs. The sooner you are able to identify the signs the sooner you can help your child to address the problem. There are various symptoms to look out for that largely will signal changes in your child's behaviour, routines and attitudes. These changes can only be observed if you spend time and know your child. They could also signal the existence of other behavioural disorders or mental illness.

EDUCATIONAL	Truancy; General loss of interest in school; Poor school performance; Complaints about poor class conduct and attitude; Dropping out of organized activities; Dropping out of school.
PSYCHOLOGICAL	Depression or over activity; Talkativeness; Loss or increase of appetite; Mood swings; Anxiety; Hallucinations; Unpredictable behaviour; Lack of ambition and drive
SOCIAL	Changes in friends; Unknown friends; Secretive phone conversations; Noticeable hostility and outbursts; Constant lying; Stealing of small items; Constant manipulation for money; Unexplained disappearance of money.
PHYSICAL	Poor physical coordination; Eye changes; Slurred speech; Overall changes in physical appearance; Dreamy - blank expression; Loss of memory; Trembling; Needle marks; Disappearance of medicines from the medicine cabinet; Unexplained appearance of pills, seeds, drug paraphernalia (syringes, rolling paper, burnt spoons, etc)



WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOU SUSPECT THAT YOUR CHILD IS USING DRUGS?

- Gather evidence to be sure you understand what drug they may be using and its effect. Reflect on how your child is acting.
- Arrange a suitable time to talk ensuring privacy and that you will not be interrupted. Pick a time when the child is not under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Start the conversation by sharing your concerns. For example, “I’ve noticed a few changes in you lately, and I’m concerned...” Have some specific examples.
- Avoid being judgemental or confrontational. Ensure they know you care about them and feel valued. Be sure to listen.
- Expect anger and denial but resolve to be calm. It may take more than one conversation so reassure your child that you are available to talk about it again.
- Offer empathy and compassion communicating that help is available.
- Call **NACADA helpline 1192** free of charge to speak with a counsellor.
- Do not rush your child to a treatment and rehabilitation center. They are likely at the experimentation stage.



Keep in mind that the symptoms you observe may be an indication of mental illness or disorder and not alcohol or drug use. Do not make assumptions. Have that conversation.

MYTHS & FACTS

ABOUT ALCOHOL & DRUG USE

ASSUMPTIONS /MYTHS BY PARENTS	FACTS
My son or daughter is not interested in drinking or using drugs.	Research by NACADA shows that about 7.2% of primary and 23.4% of secondary school children have tried alcohol.
My teen's friends are good children who do not drink alcohol or use drugs.	About 3.8% of primary and 9.3% of secondary school children have used at least one substance of abuse in the last 30 days.
My son or daughter has learned about the negative effects of alcohol or drugs in school.	Although students may learn about alcohol and drug use in school, many important issues never get covered. School programs alone are not enough to stop teens from alcohol or drug use.
At teenage, my son or daughter should know better not to use alcohol or drugs.	Unfortunately, the reality is that many teens at this point in their lives are still uninformed about how dangerous alcohol or drugs can be.
My son or daughter will not listen to me at this point.	It is true that children will idolize celebrities but they also admire (look up to) YOU. As a parent you have the power to shape their attitudes about alcohol and drugs. Children who learn risks about alcohol and drugs from their parents are less likely to use than those who do not.
My child is not exposed to drugs and would not use drugs anyway.	Children of all ages are exposed to drugs and substances in the home, school, and community. NACADA research shows that the most common periods when drugs are abused are during school holidays (30%) and on the way home from school (22%). Similarly, 29.3% of students reported obtaining alcohol or drugs from home.

MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT ALCOHOL & DRUG USE

ASSUMPTIONS /MYTHS BY PARENTS	FACTS
It is normal for children to experiment with alcohol or drugs.	Experimenting with alcohol or drugs is not normal. USE can lead to ABUSE which can lead to ADDICTION therefore any use is not acceptable.
My children do not care what I think.	Your children do listen to you even if they roll their eyes and pretend not to. They do care what you say but you have to tell them what you think and what you expect.
It is okay for me to use because I am an adult.	Your children look up to you and want to be like you. When you drink or smoke, your children think it is okay for them to do it too, no matter what you say. If they watch you struggle to quit drinking or smoking they understand the difficulty of breaking the addiction. Show your beliefs about alcohol or drugs through your actions and your child is likely to believe you.
I do not want to isolate my child by being too strict.	Children need a clear understanding of your expectations. They may test you occasionally by pushing boundaries of the rules you set. Develop a strong parent-child bond in which you take control.
I can teach my child how to 'drink responsibly' by providing alcohol and a place to consume it.	Allowing teenagers to drink may instill a sense of comfort in alcohol use which could increase their tendency to drink, with or without their parents present. Underage drinking is also prohibited by law.

Having the correct information is empowering to parents. Do not rely on popular culture and talk by other parents. Get accurate information on alcohol and drug use and the effects.

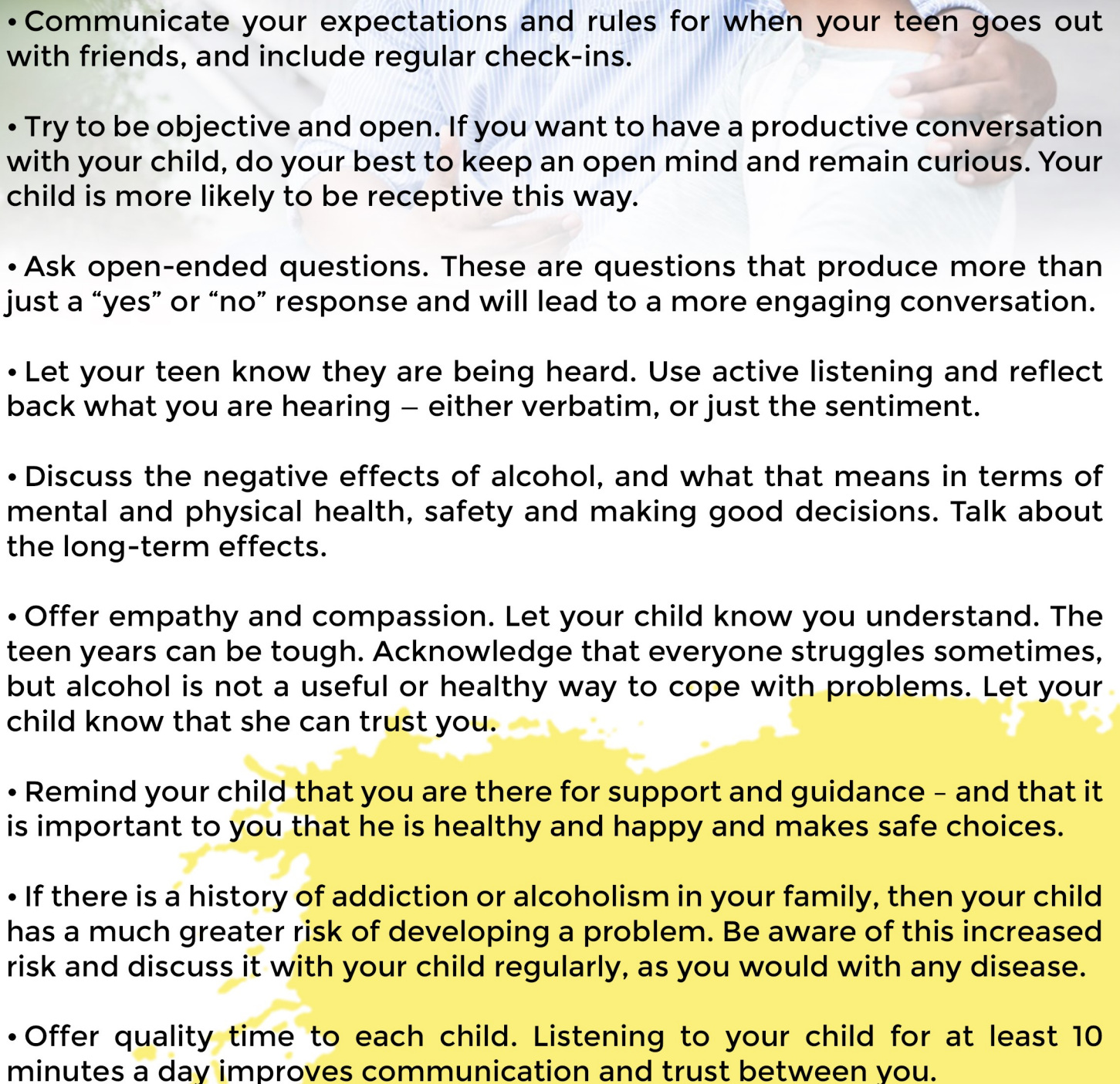
UNDER AGE DRINKING AND DRUG USE

There is no safe amount of alcohol. All alcohol and drug use can cause harm to the human body. The harm is even greater on children.

- Teen brains are more vulnerable to alcohol. Research shows that the teen brain does not fully develop until 25 years. Alcohol can alter this development, potentially affecting brain structure and function.
- Under age drinking increases the risk of alcohol problems later in life. Research shows that people who start drinking before the age of 15 years are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence at some point in their lives.
- Consuming alcohol alongside other drugs (bhang, Miraa, tobacco) is dangerous and can significantly impair judgment. The level of intoxication from secondary effects experienced can be unpredictable.
- Consuming alcohol alongside prescription medicines is especially dangerous and can cause serious health problems.

HOW DO YOU PROTECT YOUR TEENAGER FROM UNDERAGE DRINKING AND DRUG USE?

- Do not make alcohol available to your child or their friends. This is not only a matter of safety, but it is against the law to provide alcohol to minors.
- Children see many alcohol advertisements in a year. Discuss what you see and help put context around the alcohol messaging your child receives from friends and the media.
- Supervise any parties in your home to make sure there is no alcohol - and make sure your teens know the rules ahead of time.
- Is your child socializing at someone else's home or going for sleep overs? Know where he or she will be. Call the parents in advance to verify the occasion and location and that there will be supervision. If the activity seems inappropriate, express concern and keep your child home.

- 
- Communicate your expectations and rules for when your teen goes out with friends, and include regular check-ins.
 - Try to be objective and open. If you want to have a productive conversation with your child, do your best to keep an open mind and remain curious. Your child is more likely to be receptive this way.
 - Ask open-ended questions. These are questions that produce more than just a “yes” or “no” response and will lead to a more engaging conversation.
 - Let your teen know they are being heard. Use active listening and reflect back what you are hearing – either verbatim, or just the sentiment.
 - Discuss the negative effects of alcohol, and what that means in terms of mental and physical health, safety and making good decisions. Talk about the long-term effects.
 - Offer empathy and compassion. Let your child know you understand. The teen years can be tough. Acknowledge that everyone struggles sometimes, but alcohol is not a useful or healthy way to cope with problems. Let your child know that she can trust you.
 - Remind your child that you are there for support and guidance – and that it is important to you that he is healthy and happy and makes safe choices.
 - If there is a history of addiction or alcoholism in your family, then your child has a much greater risk of developing a problem. Be aware of this increased risk and discuss it with your child regularly, as you would with any disease.
 - Offer quality time to each child. Listening to your child for at least 10 minutes a day improves communication and trust between you.

PARENTAL MONITORING

Parental monitoring helps to keep children safe and protect them from risky behaviors. It includes:

- 1) The expectations parents have for their children's behavior;
- 2) The actions parents take to keep track of their children; and
- 3) The ways parents respond when their children break the rules.

HOW DO YOU MONITOR AS A BUSY PARENT?

- Monitoring should start in early childhood and continue throughout the teen years, changing as children grow and mature.
- As children develop into teenagers, parents might view them as more independent and less in need of monitoring. But, consistent monitoring throughout the teenage years is critical because the desire to be independent can bring opportunities for unhealthy or unsafe behaviors.
- It works best when parents have good, open, and caring relationships with their children. Listen, ask questions, ask for opinions, offer support and praise, and stay involved in their lives.
- Talk about your rules and expectations, and explain the consequences for breaking the rules. If rules are broken enforce the consequences fairly and consistently.



- Get to know who their friends are.
- Get to know the parents of their friends.
- Talk and listen often about how he feels and what he is thinking.
- Talk with your relatives, neighbors, the teachers, and other adults (such as a pastor) who know your child. Ask them to share what they observe about her behaviors, moods, or friends.
- Pay attention to changes in mood and behavior at home, and discuss any concerns you might have.
- If you give pocket money, track how they spend that money.
- If they are visiting friends, find out if there will be an adult present; set expectations of when they are to return home.
- Beware of the dangers of sleep over visits even when there is adult supervision.
- Keep track of how your child spends time online and talk about using the Internet safely.

Most teens do not drink alcohol or use drugs and parental disapproval of youthful use is the key reason children choose not to drink or use drugs. Make no mistake: **You can make a difference!**

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