

Happy and Healthy Holidays!

Keep these pointers in mind to help keep this a happy and healthy holiday season:

1. **Start the conversation about underage drinking prevention.**

Regardless of how old your kids are, start the conversation with them **now** about underage drinking prevention. They may have more exposure to alcohol during the holiday season - set boundaries and align on your expectations. [Here are some tips for having age-appropriate conversations about alcohol.](#)

2. **Be consistent with communication.**

Strong, consistent communication with your kids is key. Ensure you and your spouse or partner are on the same page when communicating expectations. As part of regular discussion, ask them open-ended questions to help prepare them for situations where alcohol is present.

3. **Don't create an opportunity for underage drinking.**

For adults, holiday parties may include alcohol. If you're hosting an adult holiday party where alcohol is present, make sure you have other plans for your kids. Should it be an event where all ages are included, remember that your kids are always watching and model responsible behavior.



The Conversation(s): What to Expect

The holidays provide lots of down time to connect. Teens will often resist your efforts to discuss the topic of alcohol or marijuana but, research indicates that teens list

their parents as their most trusted resource when they are faced with difficult decisions.

Use this time to have some conversations around substance use:

- Convey that you care about and love your teen
- Be willing to back off if your child resists and try another time. Your willingness to back off shows that you are respectful of your teen and their privacy.

Your teen will react to discussing alcohol or marijuana in various ways; here are some possible reactions:

- Suspicion about your sudden interest in the topic
- Doubts that you will understand/respect them
- Fear of hearing a lecture
- Indifference or lack of concern
- Anger for invasion of their privacy

A conversation with your teen about substance use may always be difficult – but the more you talk with them, the easier it will become.

What to Say

Inform them. Talk about the [risk of marijuana use for teens](#) and [risks associated with underage drinking](#) such as:

- Accidents or injuries
- Increased chance of sexual assault
- Reduced academic achievement
- Relationship issues
- Negative impact on the body (e.g. weight gain, blackouts, hangovers, lower inhibitions)

Empower Your Teen. Talk to your teen about how to stand up for their beliefs and decisions, empower them to take a stand when someone is pressuring them to make high-risk choices. Discuss what they would do if such a situation presented itself and where to go for help.

Be open and firm about:

- Family consequences if caught using. Be clear on what consequences your teen will face and think about setting up a 'behavior contract'.
- School consequences

- Legal consequences and cost
- Convey your willingness to help. This is a great time for you to express your love and concern for your child. Express your desire to help if they are struggling with something or find themselves in a difficult situation.

The Conversation: Continuous and Consistent

- Try to ask questions instead of lecture.
- Set CLEAR expectations for your teen regarding alcohol use and hold them accountable to those expectations.
- Continue having the conversation, everything doesn't have to be discussed in a single setting.
- Be a role model – set an example of appropriate drinking behavior in your own life. Sharing stories about your own drinking can send a mixed message to your teen.



Time for Fun!

Use the time over the holidays to have some family fun. Check out some of these [holiday themed games](#) or [teen games](#) if you have a gathering of your teens friends over.

Here are some [local activities](#) including a [new light display](#) at Roger Williams Zoo. Create new memories with your teens! Hop in the car and check out these [FREE, local displays!](#)



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“When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years.” – Mark Twain

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