
Parenting for Prevention

Student Assistance Services Corp., 660 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York, 10591, May, 2006

Spring Celebrations



Spring has arrived with a flourish this year. Trees and flowers are blooming several weeks early and the earth is already softening to get ready for spring and summer plantings.

It is also the time of year when proms and graduation and other end-of-the-year-parties are planned. It is an exciting time but also a time when parents need to help their adolescents avoid some of dangerous situations that can occur. Included in this issue are some suggestions on ways to make these celebrations safe for teens.

I have also included the results of a recent study about adolescent drinking that describes it as a leading public health problem in this country. The study points out that in 2003, the average age of first use of alcohol was about 14, compared to 17 1/2 in 1965. A recent meeting of treatment and prevention providers of Westchester County confirmed the relevance of those statistics in our area. Professionals are seeing younger children getting into trouble as a result of alcohol and drug use and they are needing treatment at twelve and thirteen.

What Every Parent Should Know About Prom Night...And After

Remember your prom experience? Some things have changed and some things are exactly the same. Many adolescents go to the prom with someone they don't know well or know only as a classmate or friend. Yet they are expected to dance together and spend time together at post-prom activities which are often not chaperoned. Many adolescents also feel pressured to have sex with their prom date, even when they don't know each other well. These situations cause enormous stress for adolescents.

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To cope with these pressures many adolescents use alcohol or other drugs. The use of these substances can cause relaxation, loss of inhibitions, alter perception, judgement, feelings and behavior. In other words, adolescents may do things they would normally not do. They behave in uncharacteristic ways including making questionable choices about sexual behavior and other behaviors that put their health and safety at risk.

What Parents Can Do ?

All year long educate yourself about current drug use trends that exist in your community. If you have concerns, speak to the Student Assistance Services staff, school staff and PTA officers. Many communities provide education throughout the year, take advantage of these opportunities and attend workshops that address the issues that young people face, and alcohol and other drug use.

At least a week before the prom,

- Talk to your son or daughter.
- State that you love your child and your primary concern is for their safety.
- Ask your adolescent what they expect from prom night and ask if they have any concerns.
- Ask what plans are in place (if any) for post prom celebration.
- Reassure your adolescent that you understand prom night pressures and fears and list them.
- Discuss your position on situations that might arise. Suggest ways to handle these situations.
- Ask your adolescent for other ways these situations can be handled and evaluate the different strategies. Ask your child to think about these issues and tell your teen you would like to continue the discussion.

At least one day before the prom,

Re-state your concerns for health and safety and re-state your expectations.

- Ask your child about any additional thoughts or feelings.
- Get a schedule of the evenings activities. Determine where your child will be at what time, the time you can expect to hear from your child, the time your child will be home.
- Stress that you will pick up your child whenever or wherever your teen wants to come home. Remind them

that you will leave money for a taxi if they prefer to come on their own.

When the limousine or party van comes:

- Speak directly to the driver and discuss your expectations for an alcohol/drug free ride.
- Inspect the limousine, including the trunk, to make sure there is no alcohol or any other drugs in the vehicle.
- Do not permit your son or daughter to bring non-alcoholic beverages in the limousine if the seal has been broken or the beverage opened.

Tell the driver you do not want any stops made on the way to the prom. Things to remember:

- Accidents can happen going to, coming from, and at the beach, or other party locations.
- Vomiting, passing out, and other alcohol and drug-related incidents can result in damaged reputations, lowered self-esteem, medical complications and even death.



Alcohol Poisoning

Make sure that your child knows the signs of alcohol poisoning. The victim may experience the following:

- Mental confusion, stupor, coma, unable to rouse the person
- No response to pinching the skin
- Vomiting while sleeping or unresponsive
- Seizures
- Slowed breathing (fewer than 8 breaths per minute)
- Irregular breathing (10 seconds or more between breaths)
- Hypothermia (low body temperature), bluish skin color, paleness

Alcohol poisoning requires immediate medical attention. Drinking black coffee, taking a cold bath or shower, or sleeping or walking it off cannot reverse alcohol poisoning. The victim must have immediate medical attention. Call 911, stay with the victim to prevent him choking on vomit, and tell emergency personnel how much alcohol the victim drank

Underage Drinking

A leading public health problem in this country

According to a report issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in January, 2006, underage drinking is a leading public health problem in this country. Approximately 5,000 people under the age of 21 die as a result of consuming alcohol. This includes motor vehicle crashes, homicides, suicides and drowning. In addition young people are also injured by falls and burns.

Research shows that many adolescents start to drink at a very young age. In 2003, the average age of first use of alcohol was about 14, compared to 17 1/2 in 1965.

Yet, drinking continues to be a widespread problem among adolescents. According to the 2005 Monitoring the Future study, about two-thirds of 12th graders, more than two-thirds of 10th graders and about two in every five 8th graders have consumed alcohol. The study also showed that when young people drink they are likely to consume four or five drinks at a time. This is what is described as binge drinking.

Research shows that many adolescents start to drink at a very young age. In 2003, the average age of first use of alcohol was about 14, compared to 17 1/2 in 1965. Young people who start to drink before the age of 15 were four times more likely to report that they met the criteria for alcohol dependence at some point in their lives. In fact, new research indicates that serious drinking problems typically associated with middle age, can begin to appear in adolescents and young adults.

Other research shows that children and adolescents who drink at a younger age are more likely to engage in behaviors that harm themselves and others. This includes using drugs such as cocaine and marijuana, having sex with multiple partners and failing at school.

Why Do Some Adolescents Drink?

Adolescence is a time of profound physical and emotional changes. Children are gaining more independence and trying to define themselves as individual persons. In addition there are other factors that are influencing their decisions about all aspects of their life including the use of alcohol.

Risk-Taking-The past few years have produced insights into the adolescent brain which shows that the brain keeps developing well into the twenties. This research shows that an important part of the brain, where “management” or “executive” decisions are made is one of those areas that is not fully developed until after the teen years. This may explain the thrill-seeking or risk-taking behaviors of some adolescents and may also explain their sense of invulnerability and lack of recognition of the consequences of their behavior.

Expectancies-Alcohol research is also looking into the connection between the way young people view alcohol and their likelihood of using alcohol. An adolescent who expects drinking to be a pleasant experience is more likely to drink than one who does not. A child who is younger than nine usually regards alcohol as “bad” but by the time a child reaches 13 there is a shift and their attitudes towards alcohol are more positive.



Upcoming Events

Sensitivity and Tolerance to Alcohol—As one might expect, there are vast differences between a fully developed adult brain and the brain of an adolescent. Researchers feel that this may explain why many young drinkers are able to consume more alcohol than adults before experiencing drowsiness, lack of coordination and hangovers. Young drinkers also respond positively to the effects of alcohol that enables them to feel more comfortable in social situations.

Personality Characteristics and Psychiatric Co-morbidity—Children who begin to drink before 12 are often children who are already having problems. They may be disruptive, hyperactive or aggressive as well as depressed, withdrawn or anxious. A child who acts without regard for rules or the feelings of others is also at risk for alcohol use.

Heredity Factors—A child of an alcoholic (COAs) and a child

who has many alcoholic relatives is at greater risk for alcohol problems. A COA is likely to begin drinking at a younger age and to progress to drinking problems more quickly.

Environmental Aspects—The implication of the connection between genetic factors and environmental factors in adolescents are just beginning to be explored. However, research has shown that children with parents who drink more and who view drinking in a positive manner may have children who drink more. It has also been determined that an adolescent girl who has an older or adult boyfriend is more likely to use alcohol, other drugs and engage in other risky behaviors.

There is also research about the link between media campaigns that promote the use of alcohol and the influence that it has on young adults.

To read more about this study go to www.niaaa.nih.gov.

May 9 6:00– 8:30pm
Westchester County Center,
White Plains, New York
**It's 10 P.m. Do you know
where your children are.....
in cyberspace?**
Parry Aftab, Executive Director,
WiredSafety.org
Contact: 914-995-2912

May 8 7:30-9pm
Ossining High School
**Teens Parents, Drugs and the
Law**
Contact: 762-5760, x325

May 16 7:00pm
Somers High School
**Teens Parents, Drugs and the
Law**
Contact: 248-8595, X227

May 23 7:00pm
Peekskill City Schools Admin
Bldg. Auditorium
**Making a Difference Ten Sec-
onds at a Time**
Bobby Petrocelli
Contact 737-0201 X347
737-4542 X361