

Parent Messages Affect Teen Choices And Behaviors

Parents should communicate clear and consistent messages to teens

BY MANHASSET PRESS STAFF

MANHASSET@ANTONMEDIAGROUP.COM

Some behaviors by parents and caregivers, while unintentional, may encourage underage drinking and drug use. Manhasset CASA's Talk. They Hear You. Campaign as well as New York State's Talk2Prevent Campaign want parents to know that the message we send our children affect their choices and behaviors when it comes to alcohol or drug use:

- Do you ever reach for a drink in front of your kids saying, "I had a tough day?" This can make alcohol seem like a good way to relive stress and something you need to relax.
 - Do you tell drinking stories in front of your kids? Laughing about heavy drinking can seem like alcohol is always necessary to have fun and encourages them to drink.
 - Do you ever ask your kids to get you a beer or other alcoholic beverage for you?
 - Do you offer alcohol to your teen as a special treat for celebrations, family gatherings, etc.?
 - Do you ever encourage your friends or other family members to drink more in front of your kids? This could make kids think "more drinks, more fun" and teaches them that it is okay to give into peer pressure.
 - Do you have alcohol in your home that is readily accessible to your child?
 - Does your child observe you drinking to excess?
 - Does your child observe you drinking and then driving?
- If you can answer yes to any of these questions, you may be unintentionally sending mixed messages to your child and could be implying that it's okay for him or her to drink and experiment with alcohol. Research has shown that one of the biggest protective factors in reducing the likelihood a child develops a substance abuse problem is strong parental disapproval of alcohol and drug use. Remaining clear and consistent and avoiding messages that glorify or promote alcohol is a good way to provide your child with the role modeling they need to help them from underage use. Research also shows that teens whose parents communicate to them that underage drinking is completely unacceptable are more than 80 percent less likely to drink than teens whose parents give them other messages about underage drinking (Source: www.talk2prevent.org).

Talking and sharing your thoughts

about the dangers of alcohol with your child is essential. It's also important to hear their point of view, provide them an opportunity to ask questions, as well as listen to what they have to say. Children who have parents who listen to their feelings and concerns are also more likely to say "no" to alcohol.

For information about Manhasset CASA or its Talk. They Hear You. Campaign, go to manhassetcasa.org.

Parents:
Did you know?

The messages you send your kids can affect their choices and behaviors?

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107 NORTHERN BLVD.
GREAT NECK, NEW YORK 11021
516-466-7900
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