

# PRESS RELEASE

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## TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT ALCOHOL

**JACKSON** (March 12, 2014) - It can be difficult for parents to approach the subject of alcohol with their kids, especially if the topic was taboo in their households growing up. Some parents never bring up the subject of drinking, in hopes that it will go away. For a healthier, more realistic approach, below are some smart tips on broaching the subject of alcohol with kids.

1. **Start now.** The most common reason parents put off talking to their kids about drinking is thinking their children are too young or won't listen.
2. **Keep it age-appropriate.** Young kids have short attention spans, so keep it short and concrete. If your preschooler asks to have a sip of "what daddy's drinking," don't launch into a ten minute lecture. Instead, talk about drinking as you would any other adults-only activity. As kids get older, open-ended questions and "what if" scenarios are best; asking "What would you do if other kids were drinking at a party?" opens up dialogue and gives insight into your kid's mind.
3. **Use moments of opportunity.** Look for ongoing windows of opportunity. That may even mean talking to your children about a family member who overdid it at Christmas and needed a ride home. It's personal, but avoids the awkwardness of a more rigid conversation.
4. **Define your house rules.** At some point, you may hear an argument for underage drinking that goes something like this: "My friend Stephen gets to drink wine with dinner. Why can't I do that?" Be clear that the only rules that matter are the ones in your house.
5. **Remember you're a role model.** Just like every other aspect of parenting, what we do is more important than what we say. Do most of your social events include alcohol? Do you frequently have a drink to unwind after work? As parents, we get to choose what we show our kids, so monitor how much you drink in front of them -- seeing you drink frequently puts drinking in the 'this is OK to do' category.
6. **Give kids choices.** If your child is offered alcohol and has no experience making decisions on her own, chances are she's more likely to cave in to peer pressure. So let your kid make relatively "safe" choices now -- for a 7-year-old, that might mean selecting clothes; for a tween, picking an after-school activity. If you swoop in and make every decision for them, they'll never learn to solve problems on their own.
7. **Take them rock-climbing...or kayaking, or rollerblading...** in other words, let kids experiment with exciting new activities. As they reach the teen years, they crave new experiences, and they want to be challenged. Kids who are busy and engaged are less likely to turn to alcohol. If your kid's not the outdoorsy type, that's OK -- maybe their thing is music or theater. Focus on how you can challenge him/her and help them grow with new experiences.
8. **Skip the threats.** Believe it or not, teens want to have a close relationship with their parents, and they want to please you, too -- even if they never say those words. Kids who feel close and connected to their families are less likely to abuse alcohol; studies show that parents are by far the most powerful influence in their children's lives when it comes to underage drinking.

For more information about talking to your kids, please visit [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org) or [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

### More information about:

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