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SPRING/SUMMER 2021

**5 WAYS TO
(RESPECTFULLY)
DISAGREE**

Talking to kids about
**alcohol and
other drugs:**
5 Conversation
Goals

**WHY DO TEENS
DRINK** and Why Shouldn't I?

**WHY IS EVERYONE
WEARING A
FACE MASK?**

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WHY DO TEENS DRINK

and Why Shouldn't I?

Experimentation with alcohol during the teen years is common.

Some reasons that teens use alcohol and other drugs are:

CURIOSITY

to feel good,
to reduce stress,
and relax

TO FIT IN

TO FEEL OLDER

<https://teenshealth.org/en/teens/alcohol.html?WT.ac=ctg#catalcohol>



From a very young age, kids see advertising messages showing beautiful people enjoying life — and alcohol. And because many parents and other adults use alcohol socially — having beer or wine with dinner, for example — alcohol seems harmless to many teens.

You can look really stupid.

The impression is that drinking is cool, but the nervous system changes that come from drinking alcohol can make people do stupid or embarrassing things, like throwing up or peeing on themselves. Drinking also gives people bad breath, and no one enjoys a hangover.

Why Shouldn't I Drink?

Although it's illegal to buy alcohol in the United States until the age of 21, most teens can get access to it. It's therefore up to you to make a decision about drinking. In addition to the possibility of becoming addicted, there are some downsides to drinking:

The punishment is severe.

Teens who drink put themselves at risk for obvious problems with the law (it's illegal; you can get arrested). Teens who drink are also more likely to get into fights and commit crimes than those who don't.

People who drink regularly also often have problems with school. Drinking can damage a student's ability to study well and get decent grades, as well as affect sports performance (the coordination thing).

Alcohol puts your health at risk.

Teens who drink are more likely to be sexually active and to have unsafe, unprotected sex. Resulting pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases can change — or even end — lives. The risk of injuring yourself, maybe even fatally, is higher when you're under the influence, too. One half of all drowning deaths among teen guys are related to alcohol use. Use of alcohol greatly increases the chance that a teen will be involved in a car crash, homicide, or suicide.

Teen drinkers are more likely to get fat or have health problems, too. One study by the University of Washington found that people who regularly had five or more drinks in a row starting at age 13 were much more likely to be overweight or have high blood pressure by age 24 than their nondrinking peers. People who continue drinking heavily well into adulthood risk damaging their organs, such as the liver, heart, and brain.

WHY IS EVERYONE WEARING A **FACE MASK?**

You've probably seen the medical face masks that doctors and nurses sometimes wear. The masks help stop germs.

Most medical masks are made of soft material that covers the nose and mouth. There are stretchy bands that go behind the head or ears. They keep the mask in place. The mask lets air go in and out, but not germs.

You might think those masks are mostly for the operating room. But lately, you probably see more people wearing them. And not just doctors and nurses, but other people too. You might see people wearing masks or cloth face coverings they made at home. You might get to wear one too.

That's all because of the new coronavirus that's going around. People are doing lots of things to keep this virus from spreading. Experts think that wearing a mask is one more thing that can help.

Who Will Wear a Mask?

You'll probably see lots of health care people wearing masks. Doctors and nurses will wear them. Medical people who give therapies and treatments will wear masks. They also might wear clear face shields or plastic glasses. Those can help stop germs too. In the hospital, people who keep the rooms clean, give directions, bring meal trays, and bring supplies also will wear masks. While coronavirus is going around, doctors might see people with video visits instead of in person. They don't need to wear a mask for that.

Anyone can wear a mask when they need to be near other people. Many people who work at stores and restaurants will wear them. A mask is an extra way to stop germs. Some people might wear a homemade cloth mask. Some might wear scarves or bandannas to cover their nose and mouth.

How Will I Feel When I See my Doctors Wearing Masks?

At first, you might feel surprised to see your doctors wearing masks. You might even feel a little cautious. That's natural. It's just because you're not used to seeing them in masks. You're used to seeing their whole face.

But give yourself a minute and you'll get used to their new look. And as soon as you hear their friendly voices saying "hello," you'll probably relax and feel just fine.

You'll probably notice that, even with the mask, you can see the kindness on their face. You can't see their mouth, but you might be able to see the smile in their eyes. Maybe the mask is their way of saying, "My superpower is stopping germs." When you feel ready, go ahead and smile right back at them.



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5 WAYS TO (RESPECTFULLY) DISAGREE

<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/tips-disagree.html?WT.ac=take5>

It's easier to agree than disagree. But we can learn a lot from conversations where we don't see eye to eye — if we can listen and talk rationally, that is.

Unfortunately, many of us either shy away completely from disagreements or lose it when things don't go our way. These 5 tips can help keep disagreements constructive — whether you're talking to a parent, friend, or anyone else:

1 Listen to the other point of view.

Being a good listener is a way of showing that you respect and understand the other person's perspective. That makes it more likely he or she will do the same for you. When the other person is talking, try to stop yourself from thinking about why you disagree or what you'll say next. Instead, focus on what's being said. When it's your turn to talk, repeat any key points the other person made to show you listened and heard what was said. Then calmly present your case and why you disagree.

5 Use "I" statements to communicate how you feel, what you think, and what you want or need.

Using "you" statements can sound argumentative. For example, telling your mom or dad, "You always remind me about my chores on Wednesdays when you know I have a lot of homework" has a very different tone from "I'm feeling pressured because I have a lot of homework tonight. Can I do those chores tomorrow?"

2 Don't make it personal.

If you get upset, it can help to remember you're mad at the idea or concept your parent (or friend, coach, coworker, etc.) is raising, not the person.



3 Avoid putting down the other person's ideas and beliefs.

If you've ever been on the receiving end of someone's tirade or put-downs, you know how valuable using respectful language and behavior can be. So instead of saying what you might be thinking ("That's a stupid idea!"), try: "I don't agree, and here's why." Resist the temptation to yell, use sarcasm, or make derogatory comments and you'll have a much better chance of getting your point across.

4 Stay calm.

This is the most important thing you can do to keep a conversation on track. Of course, it's a huge challenge to stay calm and rational when you feel angry or passionate about something — especially if the person you're talking to gets heated. You may need to be the mature one who manages the conversation, even if the other person is a parent or someone who should know better.

Respect goes beyond difficult conversations, of course. Being helpful and considerate toward family members, teachers, or coaches in our everyday actions helps all of us (again, parents included!) establish a foundation for those times when we might disagree.



Talking to Kids About Alcohol and Other Drugs: 5 Conversation Goals

Research suggests that one of the most important factors in healthy child development is a strong, open relationship with a parent. It is important to start talking to your children about alcohol and other drugs before they are exposed to them—as early as 9 years old.

Young people are more likely to listen when they know you're on their side. Reinforce why you don't want your child to drink or use other drugs—because you want your child to be happy and safe. The conversation will go a lot better if you're open and you show concern.



1 Show you disapprove of underage drinking and other drug misuse.

Over 80 percent of young people ages 10–18 say their parents are the leading influence on their decision whether to drink. Send a clear and strong message that you disapprove of underage drinking and use or misuse of other drugs.

3 Show you're a good source of information about alcohol and other drugs.

You want your child to make informed decisions about alcohol and other drugs with reliable information about its dangers. You don't want your child to learn about alcohol and other drugs from unreliable sources. Establish yourself as a trustworthy source of information.

2 Show you care about your child's health, wellness, and success.

4

Show you're paying attention and you'll discourage risky behaviors.

Show you're aware of what your child is up to, as young people are more likely to drink or use other drugs if they think no one will notice. Do this in a subtle way, without prying.



5

Build your child's skills and strategies for avoiding drinking and drug use.

Even if you don't think your child wants to drink or try other drugs, peer pressure is a powerful thing. Having a plan to avoid alcohol and drug use can help children make better choices. Talk with your child about what they would do if faced with a decision about alcohol and drugs, such as texting a code word to a family member or practicing how they'll say "no thanks."

Keep it low-key. Don't worry, you don't have to get everything across in one talk. Plan to have many short talks.



SMA-18-5073