

Raising Healthy Teens

Promoting the Health & Safety
of Kent & South County Teens

Special Edition
Underage Drinking
Prevention

Summer 2020

Parents As Good Models for Teens Coping With Stress

Stress is a common problem among teens, and as a parent, you have a role in helping the teen in your life cope with it. So what exactly is stress? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), stress is the body's physical and psychological response to anything perceived as overwhelming. This may be viewed as a result of life's demands—pleasant or unpleasant — and the body's lack of resources to meet them.

While stress is a natural part of life, it often creates imbalance in the body, especially a teen's body, which is already experiencing so many changes. Girls also report feeling "frequently stressed" more than boys.

A certain amount of stress can be helpful as a way of keeping your teen motivated. But too much or too little may render them ineffective and interfere with their relationships at home and socially, as well as their physical well-being. According to a recent survey, 43 percent of 13- to 14-year-olds say they feel stressed every single day; by ages 15 to 17, the number rises to 59 percent. The day-to-day pressures teens experience, such as the pressure to fit in and to be successful, can lead to stress. Jobs and family economics can also prove stressful for teens, as nearly two-thirds of them say they are "somewhat" or "very concerned" about their personal finances.

If stress becomes unmanageable and teens are left to their own devices without guidance from a parent or caregiver, they may find their own ways of coping. Sometimes these coping mechanisms involve unhealthy behaviors such as drinking, smoking marijuana, and engaging in other risky behaviors.

Here's how you can help the teen in your life with healthy, productive coping strategies.

Recognize when your teen is stressed-out. Is your teen getting adequate rest? Are they eating well-balanced meals? Do they ever get to take breaks to restore their energy? If these needs are unmet, your teen will show it through chronic moodiness, irritability, anxiety and/or long bouts of sadness. If you have a teen daughter, be particularly aware if she is obsessing about looks or weight.



Introduce positive coping strategies to your teen. Let's face it, stress will be a part of your teen's life. Help them identify healthy ways in which they can relieve their stress. It can be as simple as having them talk to you about their problems or pressures. Other ideas include: exercising, getting enough sleep, listening to music, writing in a journal, eating a healthy diet, seeing a counselor and reminding them of their accomplishments.

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Parents as Good Models *(continued from front cover)*

Be a good example. Young people often pick up their coping strategies by watching their parents. If a child sees a parent drink an alcoholic beverage or smoke a cigarette every time they are overwhelmed, they are more likely to imitate the same behavior. So, be mindful of your own reactions to stress and set a good example for your children.

If signs of stress persist, ask for help. Some sources you can consult include: a health care provider, mental health center, social worker, counselor, nurse, therapist or clergy.

Prevention Efforts Continue in Our Communities During Covid

Much of our prevention work centers around programs in our schools and at community events. Home learning and social distancing has put most of that on hold.

So what do we do? Make lemonade from lemons and find creative alternatives to promote healthy lifestyles and provide resources for parents to help raise substance-free kids.



Taking It to the Streets As a way to promote good mental health and well-being for all, The South and Kent County Coalitions have placed lawn signs with positive messages at key locations to help spread “good vibes” in our communities. **If you see one of these signs, take a pic and tag us!**

Parenting for Prevention

Rhode Island Regional Coalitions

Rhode Island Regional Coalitions recently produced a series of short YouTube videos for parents on various prevention topics such as laws regarding minors transporting alcohol in a car and the Rhode Island Social Host laws. Look for these videos as they are released on Facebook and Instagram.

Rhode Island Social Host Laws – What Parents Should Know

Usually, at this time of year, celebrations and gatherings like prom, graduation parties, cookouts and summer festivities are in full swing, so is the presence of alcohol.

While many of these activities have been cancelled due to social distancing restrictions, parents should remember underage drinking remains unsafe, unhealthy and illegal.



With many teens, especially graduating seniors, “feeling cheated” out of these milestone events, parents may feel under the circumstances, it’s OK for their teens and friends “to make up for it” by allowing alcohol at home parties.

Added to the mix is the stress that comes with the current global situation from Covid-19 and how some people may turn to drinking as a way to cope, including teens.

RI Social Host Law

It is against the law in Rhode Island, for a host to “permit” an underage person to consume alcohol. “Permit” is defined as *to give permission for, or approval of, the possession or consumption of an alcoholic beverage by any form of conduct, that would cause a reasonable person to believe that permission or approval has been given.*

The Consequences:

- First offense is a misdemeanor punishable by a minimum fine of \$350 and a maximum fine of \$1,000, and/or a prison sentence not to exceed six months.
- Second offense is a misdemeanor punishable by a minimum fine of \$750 and maximum fine of \$1,000, and/or a prison sentence not to exceed one year.
- Third and subsequent offenses are a felony punishable by minimum fine of \$1,000 and maximum fine of \$2,500, and/or a prison sentence not to exceed 3 years.
- For 18- to 21-year-olds, there may be a civil penalty of not more than \$500 and required attendance at an educational program to recognize the dangers of underage drinking, and completion of up to 30 hours of community service.

Hosting a party with underage drinking can be a dangerous situation. As a community, we need to respect our teens by providing safe and enjoyable experiences. Let’s join together to reduce underage drinking for the safety of our community.

Parents – Teens Hear What You Say, See What You Do & Post

Covid-19 has completely altered our daily routines. Since we are spending much more time at home, the temptation for some adults to start cocktail hour early or to have a drink to “take the edge off” may seem less problematic. If your kids hear you say “this is crazy, I need a drink,” think about the message it may send to them on how to handle stress during situations like this.

During this time, social media may be used by adults more than usual. Kids may be exposed to adult posts on Facebook or Instagram about alcohol-related events or memes about “day drinking.” If teens see parents posting photos or sharing memes making light of drinking, it may affect how they look at using alcohol themselves.

Parents are role models and many perceptions young people develop about handling stress and alcohol could be learned from adult behaviors. Setting a good example can have a powerful impact on kids developing positive, healthy habits of their own.



DRUGS 101 What Parents Should Know



How Binge Drinking Hurts Teens

Before you discount binge drinking as something your teen won't do, take a look at the numbers. About 90 percent of teen drinking is considered binge drinking due to the speed and quantity of consumption. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism by age 15 around 33 percent have had a minimum of one drink, and by 18 that number goes up to 60 percent.

Americans between the ages of 12 and 20 consume a full 11 percent of all the alcohol in the United States, and that's before they reach the age of consent! 7.7 million in that age range admitted having more than a few sips, and they often binge drank.

It's not just the boys, either. Drinking among teenage girls has risen steadily in the past decade, with 45 percent of ninth grade girls binge drinking and a full 62 percent indulging by the 12th grade.

Because the brain continues to develop up to age 25, drinking alcohol, especially binge drinking, can potentially cause permanent damage. Cognitive function and learning ability may be affected as can the structure and basic function of the brain. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports teens who drink before age 15 are four times more likely to be alcohol dependent as adults.

Because alcohol impairs judgment it can have other dire consequences in an age group that is just learning to make decisions. Binge drinking skyrockets the odds of engaging in risky behavior and the results can last a lifetime.

RI RESOURCES

BH Link Hotline — 401-414-LINK (414-5465)
24/7 call center connecting people to care and resources.

Kids' Link RI — (855) 543-5465

National Suicide Hotline — 1-800-273-TALK (273-8255)
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/

Change Direction (Mental/Emotional Health)
www.changedirection.org/

Tobacco/Vaping Resources
QuitNowRI — 1-800-784-8669
Youth — Text HOPE4RI to 88709
<http://tobaccofree-ri.org/cessation-resources.htm>

Alateen — (401) 781-0044 www.alateenri.org

Parents Support Network of RI
(401) 467-6855 or (800) 483-8844 www.psni.org

Partnership for Success at Work

Kent County and South County Regional Prevention Coalitions were thrilled to be awarded the Partnerships for Success (PFS) grant during the fall of 2018.

With this grant we will be able to identify factors within all high need RI PFS communities in our regions that contribute to underage drinking among individuals aged 12-20 and any required capacity building activities necessary to address the contributing factors identified.

We have developed community-level strategic plans addressing the factors that contribute to underage drinking with special attention to populations that may experience health disparities.

The implementation plan details how funds will be used to address underage drinking among the targeted population(s). We will evaluate the impact of evidence-based interventions as well as capacity building community activities including:

Alcohol Prevention Educational strategies addressing underage drinking in schools and the community.

Environmental Strategies addressing social and retail access.

Public Awareness Campaigns and local events.

Workplace Interventions aimed at employers of 18-20-year old's that fit the culture and context of their community.

Parents Talk Early, Talk Often, Listen

Practical Tips for Parents When Talking to Kids

Start the Conversation About Underage Drinking

Regardless of how old your kids are, start the conversation with them now about underage drinking prevention. Now is a good time since they may have more exposure to alcohol during prom and graduation season. Talk with your child, set boundaries and your expectations with them.

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.



**South County
Prevention Coalition**
Member of Rhode Island Regional Coalitions

For more information contact South County Prevention Coalition Director Heidi Driscoll at hdriscoll@risas.org or Kent County Prevention Coalition Director Kathy Sullivan at ksullivan@risas.org and please visit us at www.riprevention.org or on Facebook.

Strengthening



"You're the expert with your own youth."

Providing Families with Ways to Prevent Underage Drinking

The Strengthening Families Program (SFP) is an evidence-based family skills training program for high-risk and general population families that is recognized both nationally and internationally. Parents and youth attend 14 weekly SFP skills classes together, learning parenting skills and youth life and refusal skills. They have separate class training for parents and youth the first hour, followed by a joint family practice session the second hour.

SFP is effective because it was specifically crafted to increase Protective Factors and reduce the Risk Factors that lead to both substance abuse and youth depression.

The well-being of a nation depends on strong and loving families. They have the job of producing the next generation of emotionally healthy, responsible, educated citizens who are addiction-free and prepared to maintain the physical and social infrastructure of society. Research shows well-trained parents help youth avoid substance abuse and have better life outcomes.

Children are a nation's most valuable asset. They deserve to grow up in a stable, loving family with nurturing caregivers who protect them from abuse, help them become their best selves, and stay addiction-free.

For more information, email Kathy Gardner, South County Prevention Coalition Partnership for Success Project Manager at Kgardner@risas.org.



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