

Raising Healthy Teens



Newport County
Prevention Coalition
Member of Rhode Island Regional Coalitions

Promoting the Health & Safety
of Newport County Teens

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Important Social Media Safety Tips for Teens and Parents

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Your teenager just asked you if she can start an *Instagram* account. What should you do? We've put together some social media tips for parents to help you and your kids navigate the online world.

It's okay for your teen to be online

We've all heard the horror stories of kids being bullied on social media or friending sexual predators pretending to be kids. But it really is okay for your teen to be online.

Discuss protecting their privacy

Warn children about the importance of privacy and the dangers of predators and sexting. Teens need to know that once content is shared with others, they will not be able to delete or remove it completely. This includes texting inappropriate pictures. Teach your kids how to balance how much they share about themselves online.

Teens may also not know about or choose not to use privacy settings, and they need to be warned that sex offenders often use social networking, chat rooms, email and online gaming to con-



tact and exploit children. Make sure your kids know about identity theft and false identity.

Find an appropriate balance

It's important for teens to balance healthy and essential activities such as sleep, exercise, learning and family time with digital consumption. You can help them do this by discussing what activities need to be prioritized daily and then

budget for social media/screen time through the use of a family media plan. The media plan should include clear boundaries about what media is allowed and what is not. Time limits are also very important. A timer is one of the best ways to help set a limit.

To help your teen get over the fear of missing out, have them block or silence notifications from social media that alerts them to what their peers are doing, such as playing certain video games or attending parties.

You can also create media-free zones, such as during meal times and at bedtime, and set aside specific days or hours as "media-free" periods.

Be a good role model

Teens tend to do what they see rather than what you say. So if you spend all your time looking at *Instagram*, chances are your teen will too. Be a good role model and limit your time on social media and screens. And when you are using your own device, make sure you don't ignore your kids.

Parents as Role Models During Holidays

Parents are still **THE** biggest influence on their kids and during this season of parties and celebrations, it is important that they keep in mind that they are **ROLE MODELS** when it comes to being responsible in regards to alcohol!

The article below was submitted by two teenagers living in Newport County and their observations of adults during the holiday season.

“With the holidays quickly approaching it has come to our attention that parents/adults are known to abuse alcohol and drugs during the season. Specifically the major holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas adults tend to think that its their time to let loose. Although its OK to have one or two drinks, adults do not realize that their children are always around watching and thinking of them as role models. Adults/parents that get drunk or high in front of their children are setting a bad example. If children see their parents and adults drinking or smoking, it is a high possibility that they will grow up and presume that it is okay to abuse substances.



Parents will teach their kids as they grow up that drinking and smoking is bad for them but when they contradict their own lessons, their children will think it is permitted for them to do the same. Personally, when I was younger and uneducated of the dangers of substance abuse and I saw my parents drink and smoke, I would think its perfectly acceptable to do the same. Just like anything else a parent would do. Their kid would think it was OK, from texting and driving to eating healthy foods. Every action made by their parents would be taken into consideration by their children. Mental health and stress is a huge cause of adults executing bad decisions.

After a long few months before Christmas, adults are overtired, stressed out, and their mental health is at the lowest point. During the holidays when all of the long hours of shopping, cooking and cleaning are over, they seek some sort of relief and most adults turn to alcohol and drugs. Parents are supposed to be the responsible figure in their child's life, but when they make bad decision, it will have an effect on their child.”

The Four Gift Rule

Consider using the four gift rule for giving Christmas gifts this year. One gift they want, one they need, one they wear, and one they read.

Be careful giving cash as a gift — it could be money used to purchase items that may be harmful to your teen. Consider giving specific gift cards to stores or restaurants. If you have a teen that drives, consider a gas gift card.



As a family, consider giving handmade gifts, donating to a charity, making one or more Christmas boxes to be delivered to kids overseas that may not get any toys. Many churches or your school student council have programs like this.

Alcohol & Holidays

For most people, holidays are a time for celebration and quality time with family and friends. While alcohol is often present during these occasions and consumed more than on an average day, the tradition to drink can make holidays more triggering than joyous for those in recovery.

Although Americans seem to find a reason to drink for every holiday (even the candy-centered Halloween), certain celebratory events are 'boozier' than the rest. Christmas, New Year's Eve, the Superbowl and St. Patrick's Day are considered the 'booziest' of the year.

Consider serving guests delicious non-alcoholic versions of favorite cocktails!

Christmas A quick internet search revealed hundreds of tasty and festive alcohol free beverages — including countless versions of Christmas punch.

New Year Toast 2020 with sparkling grape juice or seltzer with some yummy hors d'oeuvres! Host a “mocktail” competition and challenge your guests to bring a recipe and ingredients for alcohol-free drinks.

St Patrick's Day Erin go Bragh with green milk, green soda, and/or Irish tea served alongside the traditional corned beef and cabbage.

Mardi Gras “Fat Tuesday” celebrates the last day before Lent by indulging in food and drink. Let the good times roll — but everything in moderation!

Don't Forget to Stay Active

Plan physical activities or traditions that you can enjoy as a family, such as taking a walk outside and enjoying the weather or nature. Consider volunteering at a local soup kitchen or collecting non-perishable items for the local shelter. Celebrate with music and having a dance competition — the ideas are endless! These activities can help your family to stay connected — and that is one of the biggest protective factors when it comes to practicing prevention!

Coping Tips for Holiday Stress & Depression

The holiday season often brings unwelcome guests — stress and depression. The holidays present a dizzying array of demands — parties, shopping, baking, cleaning and entertaining, to name a few. Here are some practical tips to help you minimize holiday stress. You may even end up enjoying the holidays more than you thought.

Helpful Tips to Prevent Holiday Stress and Depression

- 1. Acknowledge Your Feelings** If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, realize it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to cry or express your feelings. Don't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holidays.
- 2. Reach Out** If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events. They can offer support and companionship. Volunteering your time to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.
- 3. Be Realistic** The holidays don't have to be perfect. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children can't come to your house, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails or videos.
- 4. Set Aside Differences** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. Be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they feel holiday stress and depression, too.
- 5. Stick to a Budget** Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. *Try these alternatives: donate to a charity in someone's name, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange.*
- 6. Plan Ahead** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan menus and make a shopping list to help prevent last-minute scrambling for ingredients and make sure to line up help for party prep and cleanup.
- 7. Learn to Say No** Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. If you can't say no when your boss asks you to work overtime, remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.
- 8. Don't Abandon Healthy Habits** Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. *Try these: have a healthy snack before holiday parties so you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks, get plenty of sleep and incorporate regular physical activity into each day.*
- 9. Take a Breather** Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. *Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm like taking a walk at night, listening to soothing music, getting a massage or reading a book.*
- 10. Seek Professional Help If You Need It** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

Four Relationship Tips for the Holidays

Adapted from article by Jeremy S. Nicholson, M.A., M.S.W., Ph.D.



The holidays are an exciting time, filled with food, presents, and loved ones. For many of us, however, there are also some relationship challenges as well. Fortunately, the tips and strategies that we use to help keep our dates and mates happy throughout the year, can also work to get us through the holidays. Keep the following tips in mind.

Keep Conversations Genuine & Caring
Good conversation and rapport-building requires a balance between being genuine, empathetic, and warm. Try to engage others and share your feelings, but be open and accepting of their perspectives too.

Avoid Manipulation
Try not to make promises with others that you or they will not keep and set boundaries with those who take too much from you without reciprocating and be respectful with your requests too.

Reconcile & Forgive
With everyone crammed together for the holidays, emotions can run high. When arguing, try to acknowledge the other person's point of view, focus on satisfying aspects of the relationship, and suggest more positive ways that you both can get along.

Remember, Reward & Appreciate
Finally (and most importantly), this is the time of year to share with others, acknowledge what they mean to us, and be grateful for their efforts.

When & How to Talk to Your Kids About Drugs & Alcohol

Substance abuse is a subject that keeps every parent up at night at some time or another. It can destroy individual lives as well as the lives of those in close proximity.



It is particularly insidious because substance use — not abuse — is often socially acceptable. Adults drink wine with dinner or have a cocktail in the evening. Recreational marijuana has been legalized in several states as we speak. In fact, in many ways drug and alcohol use is more acceptable today than smoking was just a decade or two ago.

This means that kids are exposed to alcohol and drug use through the media and through observation of their parents and their parents' friends at an even earlier age. For this reason, research shows it's a good idea to talk to them at an early age about substance use and abuse — sometimes as early as ages eight or nine.

One good way to broach the subject is to take advantage of a teachable moment when it presents itself. Perhaps your child sees a person who has consumed too much alcohol and is behaving erratically — at a restaurant or football game, perhaps. Take the opportunity to explain that while drinking alcohol is legal and accepted for adults, overconsumption can lead to bad and even dangerous situations. You might also point out that when you're with your children and you consume a glass of wine, you're doing so responsibly and that you know when you know you've had too much. Taking advantage of these moments is ideal because the child can relate to them as they are witnessing them.

The bottom line is, the earlier you talk to your kids about the dangers of drugs and alcohol, the earlier they will be armed against the pressure to use illicit substances as they get older.

More helpful information for parents can be found at Boystown.org/parenting.



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For more information contact NCPC Director Rebecca Elwell at 401-835-5311 or elwell@riprevention.org. www.riprevention.org

Coalition Meetings

The Newport County Prevention Coalition is comprised of the Little Compton, Middletown, Newport, Portsmouth & Tiverton Coalitions.

Newport County Meetings

Dec 17, Jan 21, Feb 18, Mar 17, Apr 21

**10am – The Brown House,
121 Linden Lane, Portsmouth**

Director: Rebecca Elwell
elwell@riprevention.org

Little Compton Meetings

Dec 10, Jan 14, Feb 11, Mar 10, Apr 14

1pm – Little Compton Town Hall

Coordinator: Polly Allen
littlecompton@riprevention.org

Middletown Meetings

Dec 18, Jan 23, Feb 27, Mar 26

6pm – Middletown Town Hall

Director: Lori Verderosa
mpc@middletownri.com

Newport Meetings

Dec – No meeting

Jan 27, Feb 24, Mar 16, Apr 20

1pm – Newport Police Station

Coordinator: James Day
newportpreventioncoalition@gmail.com

Portsmouth Meetings

Dec 11, Jan 8, Feb 12, Mar 11, Apr 8

**8:30am – The Brown House,
121 Linden Lane, Portsmouth**

Coordinator: Corey Silvia
portsmouth@riprevention.org

Tiverton Meetings

Dec 9 – Contact Coordinator Polly Allen for 2020 meeting dates.

**10am – Holy Trinity Parish Hall,
1956 Main Road, Tiverton**

Coordinator: Polly Allen
tiverton@riprevention.org

