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ABSTRACT

This booklet is one of two publications designed to assist parents in guiding their preadolescents away from experimentation with alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, while enhancing the parent-child relationship. The book is divided into 10 steps: (1) talk with your child about alcohol; (2) learn to really listen to your child; (3) help your child feel good about himself or herself; (4) help your child develop strong values; (5) be a good model or example; (6) help your pre-teen deal with peer pressure; (7) make family policies that help your child say "no;" (8) encourage healthy, creative activities; (9) team up with other parents; and (10) know what to do if you suspect a problem. A conclusion and review section lists, in outline form, the 10 steps to help preadolescents say "no" to alcohol and other drugs, and key points of each step. Resource groups that can provide additional information to parents are listed and references are included. A special note to group leaders is provided for readers intending to use this publication in workshops to enhance parenting and general communication skills. (NB)

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10 steps to help your pre-teen say “NO”

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Prepared by the NIAAA National Clearinghouse for Alcohol Information • P.O. Box 2345 • Rockville, MD 20852 • (301) 468-2600



introduction

The Problem

As a parent of a pre-teen child (a child in the 9- to 12-year-old age group), you have a special opportunity. Your child is in that "in between" age—old enough to understand many adult subjects, yet still young enough to willingly accept guidance from parents. This is a time when you can openly discuss the dangers of alcohol abuse with your child and prepare him or her for the peer pressure to drink that will come in the near future... if it is not there already.

10 Steps to Help Your Pre-teen Say "No" has been designed to help parents reach their pre-teen during this period. The information contained in this booklet is based on proven communication techniques that can strengthen the parent-child relationship in areas beyond alcohol-related communication.

The division of this booklet into 10 separate steps allows busy parents to read however many sections their schedules allow, or they may choose to read the whole booklet at once. Other parents may wish to "pick and choose" the steps that seem most useful and save the booklet as a reference guide.

This booklet does not presume to tell you how to be a good parent. You know your child best, and

chances are the two of you share a very special relationship. Rather, the following pages have been prepared to enhance your efforts to provide your child with the solid foundation needed for the confusing adolescent years ahead. □

We hope that *10 Steps to Help Your Pre-teen Say "No"* will be helpful and that you will recommend it to other parents. After you have read *10 Steps to Help Your Pre-teen Say "No,"* please take a moment to write the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol Information (NCALI) and tell us your impressions of this product, as well as areas of concern that you would like us to address in future publications for parents. We welcome your comments with the anticipation that they will help us serve you better in the future.

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Talk With Your Child About Alcohol

Whether or not the adults in your home drink alcohol, you can bet your child is aware of alcohol use—from friends, other adults, the media, etc. When you talk with your child about alcohol, you may discover that he or she already has obtained many mistaken ideas from these sources.

Research tells us much about how pre-teens view alcohol-related peer pressure. National surveys (references are listed at the end of this booklet) have revealed the following information about pre-teens:

- Four out of 10 sixth graders say there is pressure from other students to use alcohol.
- Approximately 35 percent of fourth graders believe drinking is "a big problem" for their age group.
- Eleven percent of 11–13-year-olds report that they have used alcohol.

All these findings point to the importance of parental communication about alcohol. Parents can intervene to help change incorrect pre-teen perceptions.

Challenge the Myths

A survey of fourth to sixth graders found that television and movies are a major source of their ideas about drinking. Yet many of the impressions about drinking that pre-teens get from the media are wrong. You



may want to discuss some of the myths your child is exposed to by casually introducing the topics with open-ended questions like the ones listed after each myth and fact.

Myth 1: All famous and talented people drink alcohol.

Fact: There are also lots of famous and talented people who don't drink. Drinking does not make you famous or talented, and problem drinking may have the opposite effect.

Question: "Why do you think there are so many famous people used in advertising?"

Myth 2: When things go wrong, having a drink will help.

Fact: Alcohol can make different people feel different ways. It even makes the same person feel different ways at different times. A drink of alcohol may make you feel more relaxed or happier, or it may make you feel angry, sad, and depressed. Either way, drinking does not solve your problems.

Question: "What would happen if a person drank a lot when things weren't going very well in his (or her) life?"

Myth 3: Alcohol is harmless. It can't hurt me.

Fact: Alcohol is a drug, like heroin or nicotine. People can become dependent on alcohol, needing the chemical in their bodies to keep from feeling sick. Alcohol makes some people take dangerous risks they would not ordinarily take. Some, for instance, may try to drive a car, get too close to a fire, or try to swim when they are not in control of themselves.

Question: "What are some of the things that can happen to the body when a person drinks alcohol?"

Myth 4: I am better at sports when I drink

Fact: Drinking dulls your judgment, your ability to think clearly, and your muscle control.

Question: "Why do drunk drivers have so many accidents?"

Myth 5: Drinking is the best way to "party" or celebrate.

Fact: Alcohol may or may not be part of a fun time. But it is not needed to feel good. People who say they must have alcohol to have fun probably have an alcohol problem, and they need help to overcome this problem.

Question: "What kinds of things can people do to 'party' beside drinking alcohol?"

Myth 6: Drinking relaxes people and makes it easier for them to be friendly.

Fact: Meeting new people can be scary, especially for young people who are learning social skills. If they try to depend on alcohol instead of social skills to make friends, they may grow up without ever learning these basic social skills. To grow into a well-adjusted adult, you must learn how to make friends without the "relaxing" influence of alcohol.

Question: "What kinds of things can you talk about when you meet people for the first time?"

Myth 7: Young people who drink alcohol are popular.

Fact: Taking chances with your health and safety is not cool—it's dangerous! And the kind of people you want as friends will not want you to risk getting into trouble.

Question: "What does being 'popular' mean?"

Myth 8: All young people drink a little and smoke cigarettes. The ones that don't are oddballs.

Fact: Only about 10 percent—10 people out of 100 people—have tasted alcohol by the time they are in the sixth grade. And less than 10





percent are smokers. Therefore, pre-teens are odd if they do smoke or drink.

Question: "What do you think about kids who drink and smoke?"

Clearly Explain Why Minors Should Not Drink

One reason why your pre-teen should not drink, of course, is because you say so. Research has shown that children whose parents strictly forbid smoking are less likely to begin smoking. The same rule should apply with alcohol. Parental authority can be a powerful tool to help your pre-teen say "no" to alcohol and cigarettes.

Parents sometimes assume that pre-teens understand the practical reasons why they should not drink, and so they do not explain the reasons. But remember, your pre-teen's friends may be saying that drinking is a positive activity, and the media sometimes seem to make drinking appear all the more exciting!

The following are ways you could share with your child some concrete reasons why minors should not drink, to help him or her see the other side of pre-teen drinking.

Reason 1: *Drinking alcohol is dangerous for children.*

"The plain truth is that scientists just don't know the effects that childhood drinking has in the long run. They do know that children are often harmed before their births if their mothers drink while pregnant. And they do know that heavy drinking can have very bad effects on all people over a period of time. Your body is too precious to be used as a guinea pig."

Reason 2: *Pre-teens' day-to-day activities and alcohol do not mix.*

"Pre-teens are still growing, and because they weigh less than adults, they will probably feel alcohol's effects on the body after drinking smaller amounts. Since they are not emotionally grown up, they are not likely to handle these feelings brought on by alcohol well. Growing up is not easy, and pre-teens need clear heads to become emotionally healthy adults. Besides affecting feelings, alcohol can make school harder. And alcohol gets in the way of sports because it throws timing off."

Reason 3: *Alcohol use is illegal for minors.*

"It is against the law for people under 18 (21 in many States) to



buy or drink alcoholic beverages. Although pre-teens cannot be put in adult jails, they may be taken to special youth courts for disobeying the law."

Choose a "Teachable Moment" to Talk with Your Child

Children may start asking questions about alcohol when they are only 3 or 4 years old. The answers you give will start to form their ideas about drinking, even at such a young age.

Making sure that pre-teens understand the kind of information detailed under the previous headings "Challenge the Myths" and "Clearly Explain Why Minors Should Not Drink" does not have to involve a formal "talking to." Instead, look for productive times when your child is in a talkative mood to raise the issue in a non-threatening way. Good times might be when you see drinking situations on TV or in magazine ads, if someone drinks too much at a party, or if you're serving alcohol as part of a holiday meal.

Educators call these natural leads "teachable moments." Points made at these times have the most impact. □





Learn To Really Listen To Your Child



Children of all ages are more likely to talk to parents who know how to listen—about alcohol, other drugs, and other important issues. But there are certain kinds of parental responses that will stop pre-teens from sharing their feelings. The following have been shown to be harmful parental responses:

- Being judgmental
- Being self-righteous or hypocritical
- Giving too much advice or pretending to have all the answers
- Criticizing or ridiculing
- Treating the child's problems lightly.

Effective listening communicates your loving concern to your child, but listening is more than just "not talking." Real listening takes concentration and practice. There are five listening skills that can help even the best parents reach their children, and these are described in the next few pages.

Listening Skill 1: *Rephrase your child's comments to show you understand.*

Like everyone else, pre-teens need to sound off about their anger or frustration. When they are upset, they want understanding—not solutions. They will be ready for solutions after they have "let off steam."

One way to show you sympathize is to answer by rephrasing your child's comments. This is sometimes called "reflective listening." Reflective listening serves three purposes: it assures your child you hear what he or she is saying; it allows your child to "rehear" and consider his or her own feelings; and it assures you that you correctly understand your child.

Examples of Reflective Listening:

Son: "I hate Johnny. He invited everybody except me to his birthday party."

Father: "Sounds like you really don't like Johnny because he didn't ask you to come to his party."

Son: "Yeah! Well, no, I really like Johnny. But I thought he was my best friend, and I wanted to go to his party."

Father: "So you are angry and sad at the same time, because you weren't invited to your best friend's party."

Son: "Yeah (thoughtfully). I wonder if he did it just 'cause I didn't invite him to my party?"

Listening Skill 2: *Watch your child's face and body language.*

Often a child will assure you that he or she does not need feel sad or dejected, but a quivering chin or too-bright eyes will tell you otherwise.



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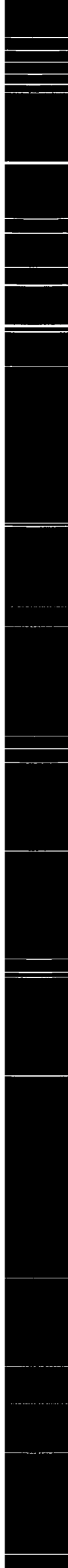
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When words and body language say two different things, always believe the body language.

Listening Skill 3: Give nonverbal support and encouragement.

This may include giving a smile, a hug, a wink, a pat on the shoulder, nodding your head, making eye contact, or reaching for your child's hand.

Listening Skill 4: Use the right tone of voice for the answer you are giving.

Remember that your voice tone communicates to your child as clearly as your words. Make sure your tone does not come across as sarcastic or all-knowing.

Listening Skill 5: Use encouraging phrases to show your interest and to keep the conversation going.

These helpful little phrases, spoken during appropriate pauses in conversation, can communicate to your pre-teen how much you care.

"Oh, really?"

"Tell me about it."

"It sounds as if you . . ."

"Then what happened?"

Here is an example of a conversation about alcohol that uses the listening skills:

Son: "I stopped by Frank's house

on the way home. His mother was out, and he took a beer from the refrigerator and divided it between Joey, himself, and me. I poured mine down the sink, and Frank got real mad."

Mother: "You seem upset because Frank is angry with you. Will you tell me about it?"

Son: "I didn't know what to do when he gave me the beer."

Mother: "It sounds as if you felt confused about how you wanted to act. Now that it is over, what are some of the other ways you might have handled it?"

Son: "I could have said, 'No, thanks, I don't drink beer.' I could have said I didn't like beer, and I would rather have soda. Or I could have said I had something else to do and left."

Mother: "What stopped you from saying those things?"

Son: "I didn't want them to think I was a baby."

Mother: "I know situations like that can be hard. How do you think you'll handle something like that in the future?"

Son: "I'll probably just leave if they begin to drink."

Mother: (Hugs son) "I'm proud of you for not drinking the beer, and I think your ideas for dealing with the problem are good ones." □

Help Your Child Feel Good About Himself or Herself



How does self-esteem relate to alcohol use? Studies show that people with drinking problems usually have low self-esteem. A pre-teen who feels positive about himself or herself is more likely to have the self-respect to say "no" to drinking.

Just as there are five listening skills that can help a parent become a better listener, there are eight esteem-building skills that can enhance a parent's ability to increase a child's self-esteem.

Esteem-Building Skill 1: Give lots of praise.

Look for achievement, even in small tasks, and praise your child often. You are more likely to get the behavior you want when you emphasize the positive, and your praise will help your child have positive feelings.

Esteem-Building Skill 2: Praise effort, not just accomplishment.

Let your child know he does not always have to win. Trying hard and giving one's best effort is a noble feat in itself.

Esteem-Building Skill 3: Help your child set realistic goals.

If the child, or the parent, expects too much, the resulting failure can be a crushing blow. If a pre-teen

who is an average athlete announces he plans to become the school quarterback, it might be wise to gently suggest that just making the team would be a wonderful goal and a big honor.

Esteem-Building Skill 4: Don't compare your child's efforts with others.

There will always be other children who are better and worse at a sport than your child, more and less intelligent, more and less artistic, etc. Your pre-teen may not know that a good effort can make you just as proud as a blue ribbon.

Esteem-Building Skill 5: When correcting, criticize the action, not the child.

A thoughtless comment can be devastating to a child. A pre-teen still takes an adult's word as law, so parents should notice how they phrase corrections.

Helpful Example: "Climbing that fence was dangerous. You could have been hurt, so don't do it again."

Hurtful Example: "You shouldn't have climbed that fence. Don't you have any sense?"

Help Your Child Develop Strong Values

Esteem-Building Skill 6: Take responsibility for your own negative feelings.

One constructive way to share your own negative feelings about a situation is to use "I Messages." "I Messages" do not make children feel they are under attack or that they are intrinsically bad.

Helpful Example ("I Message"):

"Keeping the house neat is important to me. I get upset when you leave your books and clothes in the hall."

Hurtful Example: "You act like a pig sometimes. When will you learn to put things where they belong?"

The "I Message" gives an honest statement of need for change, but it also respects your child's feelings.

Esteem-Building Skill 7: Give your child real responsibility.

Children who have regular duties around the house know that they are doing something important to help out. They learn to see themselves as a useful and important

part of a team. Completing their duties also instills a sense of accomplishment.

Esteem-Building Skill 8: Show your children you love them.

Hugs, kisses, and saying "I love you" help your child feel good about himself or herself. Children are never too young or too old to be told that they are loved and highly valued.

In families where parents are divorced, it is helpful if the nonresident parent also expresses love and support for the child. Contrary to popular belief, research shows that children of divorced parents are no more likely than others to abuse alcohol.

When the parent-child relationship is strong and loving, single parent families, including those where parents are widowed or unmarried, can give children the same basis for self-esteem as two-parent families. □

Pre-teens are old enough to have ideas about right and wrong and to make decisions based on standards that matter to them. A strong value system can give them the courage to make decisions based on facts rather than peer pressure. □

Be a Good Model or Example

Parents are models for their children, even when they are not trying to be. You have probably already seen occasions when your child acted or spoke like you.

Parents can use this strong influence to help their pre-teens avoid drinking. You can be a model in your own drinking habits and in your attitudes about others' drinking.

Your Own Drinking Habits

Studies show that most adults are a lot like their parents in drinking habits. Heavy or moderate drinkers and those who do not drink at all tend to have children who, as adults, do the same. The amount you drink is not the only alcohol-related behavior you show your children. They also notice the following behaviors:

- Why you drink (because you're "down," to relax, to celebrate, etc.)
- When you drink (after work, at parties, while you're watching TV, with dinner, etc.)
- Whether you drive, boat, swim, operate firearms, or perform any other dangerous activity after drinking.

All these behaviors are cues to your children as they form ideas about alcohol use. Research has not shown drinking in front of your

children to be harmful. But studies do suggest that it is not good to drink too much in front of them. Showing children that adults may abstain or use alcohol occasionally in nonrisk amounts is setting a positive example.

Parents who do not drink sometimes make the mistake of not discussing alcohol use with their children. These parents need to remember that they are not the only role models their children have. Surprisingly, research shows that 10 percent of the children from non-drinking homes become alcoholics. If you abstain, be open with your children about why you choose not to drink, using concrete reasons such as the following:

- "I have personal or religious beliefs that reject alcohol use."
- "I do not like the taste."
- "I like to be in control of my behavior."
- "Alcoholism seems to run in my family, and I do not want to take a chance."
- "I think it is better for my health and fitness not to drink."
- "I do not want to include the extra calories in my diet."



Your Attitudes About Others' Drinking

Parents also are role models for children in the way they react to situations that involve others' alcohol use. Parents who treat nondrinkers as "nerds," laugh at drunkenness, or treat alcohol abuse lightly are sending faulty messages to their children. Such faulty messages may actually encourage children to experiment with alcohol.

Some of the ways you can be a good role model for your child are listed below:

- Have parties where alcohol is not the focus of activity.
- Offer nonalcoholic drinks for guests who prefer them.
- Never force drinks on guests.
- Drive alcohol-impaired friends home or call a cab for them.

When a Parent Is an Alcoholic

Children of alcoholic parents have a higher risk of becoming alcoholic themselves. This happens because a tendency toward alcoholism may be inherited, and this tendency may often be reinforced by the negative role model of an alcoholic parent.

Both the alcoholic parent's actions and the reactions of the non-alcoholic parent often form harmful behavior models for the child. A nonalcoholic parent usually is not

aware of the negative ways he or she copes with the alcoholic spouse, but the effects are strongly felt by the child. There are, however, some ways to help the child deal with alcoholism in the home. These are listed below:

- Do not deny or attempt to hide the problem. Children are able to sense problems, and your child can cope best when you acknowledge that your spouse is an alcoholic.
- Educate yourself on the subject of alcoholism, and pass information on to your child. Understanding takes some of the fear out of the disease.
- Let your child know that he or she is not responsible for the alcoholic parent's disease, nor are the drinking binges related to anything the child does. The child must understand that he or she has no reason to feel guilt for the problem.
- Do not give the impression that alcoholism is a taboo topic for conversation in your home. Chances are the subject will be on your child's mind often, and sharing with you may help.
- Make sure your child understands that alcoholism is a disease, like cancer or diabetes. Assure him or her that it is not bad or disloyal to feel anger at the disease. The child can hate the illness and

still love the alcoholic parent.

- Research shows that children who have consistency and ritual in their lives are better able to deal with family alcoholism. Try to have dinner or other activities at the same time or in the same way each day. Plan family rituals at holidays. Show your child that there are some things you both can count on.
- Join a group of spouses of alcoholics for your own peace of mind, and help your child find a similar group for children of alcoholics. (Some of these groups are listed at the end of this brochure.)
- If you are an adult child of an alcoholic, you may want to attend self-help meetings for people, like yourself, who grew up in alcoholic homes. Often local Al-Anon groups will have information on where meetings for adult children of alcoholics are being held.

Help Your Pre-teen Deal with Peer Pressure



Like all people, pre-teens want to belong, and the urge to go along with the crowd can be a strong one. Studies show that pre-teens already feel pressure from peers to use alcohol. As a parent, you can make sure the answer is “no” to that first drink.

Many of the things already mentioned—self-esteem, strong values, and consistent family policies—will give your child important supports. The following “peer pressure skills” will allow you to help your child even further.

Peer Pressure Skill 1: Teach your child to value individuality.

During a teachable moment, bring up the subject of individuality. Tell your child what you think makes you a special and unique person. Talk about other people the child loves—grandmother, best friend, favorite teacher, etc. Ask the child what makes these people individuals. Ask what he or she likes about his or her own individuality. Add any nice characteristics that your child might leave out. For example: “You are a good friend, and you have a great sense of humor. You have interesting hobbies, and you are fun to talk with.”

Peer Pressure Skill 2: *Explore the meaning of "friendship" with your child.*

Ask your child to make a list of "what a friend is" and another list of "what a friend is not." While your child is working on this, make a list of your own. Make a game out of seeing how many of the same characteristics you both have on your lists. An example of some of the items you might have on your list is noted below:

What a Friend Is

- A friend understands when you have a problem and wants to help.
- A friend likes you just because you are you.
- A friend sticks by you even when other people make fun of you and give you a hard time.

What a Friend Is Not

- A friend does not judge you by what you wear or whether or not you act like the rest of the crowd.
- A friend is not a person who tries to get you to do things that will hurt you or get you in trouble.
- A friend is not a person who quits hanging around when the going gets tough.

Peer Pressure Skill 3: *Give your child the support needed to say "no."*

In trying to raise well-behaved children, parents may teach them to

be polite, respectful, and agreeable. While these are good traits in most situations, they do not necessarily prepare a child to stand up for himself or herself.

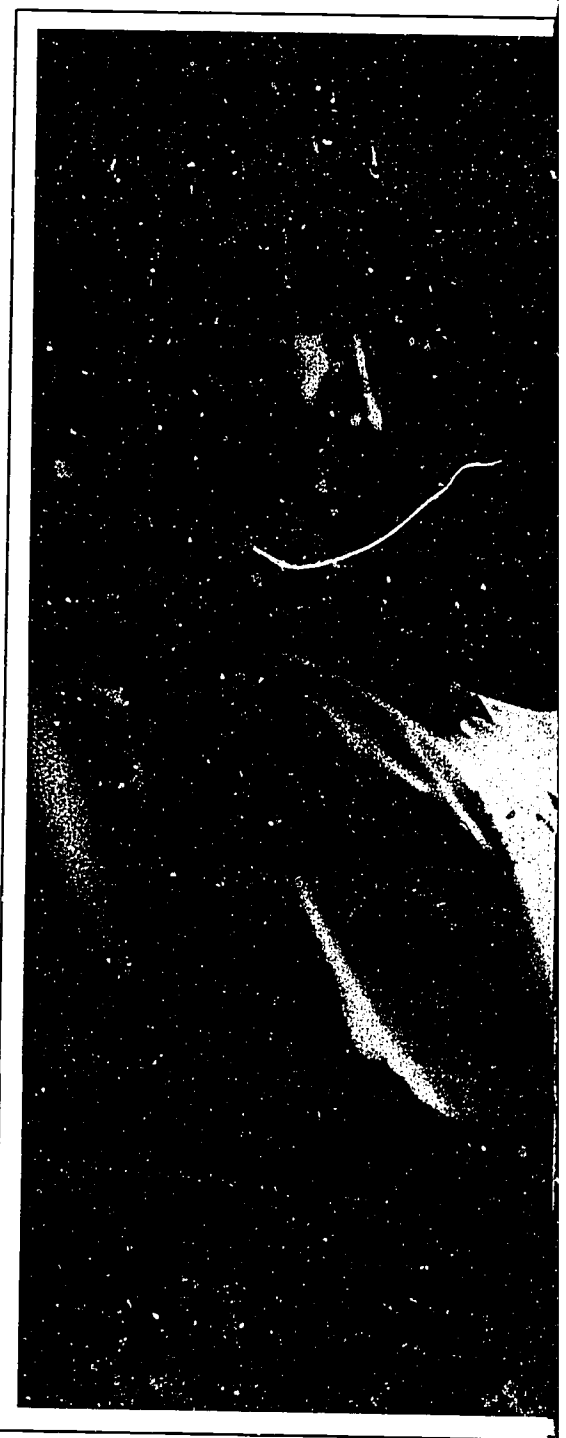
Children who have been taught to be gentle and loving may need parental "permission" to say "no" to peer pressure. Tell your child that there are certain times that he or she must stand up and insist on respect. These times include when peers push alcohol or drugs at the child.

Peer Pressure Skill 4: *Know the facts about pre-teen drinking.*

There are certain situations that encourage pre-teen peer pressure to drink. For example, one reason children use alcohol earlier is that they spend more time by themselves, and alcohol is easy to find in many homes. You can help your child avoid a sticky situation by making a rule that the child will not play at friends' houses when their parents are not at home, nor will your child attend unchaperoned parties.

Peer Pressure Skill 5: *Use peer pressure.*

Many communities have found that peer pressure can also be a positive force. Many school systems and youth groups, for instance,





sponsor "peer programs" where children support each others' positive values. Inquire about such a program at your child's school. Promoting programs that foster positive group values is a good way to help children avoid negative peer pressure.

Peer Pressure Skill 6: Encourage your child to practice saying "no."

Your whole family might talk about the problems both adults and children have saying "no" to peer pressure, and then practice or "role play" saying "no." If possible, involve an older brother, sister, or teenage friend in the game to show your child that "cool kids do say 'no.'" Let your child play the part of a bully trying to pressure you to drink, and show how to be firm and definite about refusing. Then play as if the rest of the family is a group that wants your child to drink. Discuss the motivation that the bully or the group may have, like the need to belong and have others join, jealousy, contempt, fear of being rejected, etc. The role playing game will give your child practice in saying "no" before peer pressure gets too rough. □

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Studies have shown that, contrary to popular belief, children want structure in their lives. They behave more responsibly when parents set limits.

Parents can help by going over *in advance* what may happen as a result of certain actions. Discuss with the child beforehand how you expect him or her to behave, what to do to carry out the behavior, and the logical results of doing or not doing it.

Make sure your child knows that under no circumstances is he or she

Make Family Policies that Help Your Child Say "No"

to experiment with alcohol. And spell out the serious consequences that would follow. Verbalized or even written family policies can help your child say "no" to alcohol and assist in the development of responsibility.

Also, family policies automatically give your child an easy way of saying "no" to peer pressure: "No thanks. My parents told me last week that I would have to wait a whole extra year to get my driver's license if they caught me messing around with booze." □

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There are two parts to this step. The first is supporting your child's involvement in school activities, sports, hobbies, or music without pressuring your child to always win or excel. The specific activity is not important; when the child has positive interests he or she may be less likely to focus on alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs out of boredom or idle curiosity.

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Encourage Healthy, Creative Activities

The second part to this step is doing things with your child. The key is togetherness—surveys show that children appreciate the time parents spend with them even if doing chores is involved. □

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Team Up with Other Parents

When parents join together in support groups, they can take broad steps that will reinforce the guidance they provide at home.

You can join a group that is already organized, or you can form a neighborhood council. Your group can raise the alcohol issue with relevant community organizations like parent-teacher organizations, churches, youth groups,

Know What To Do if You Suspect a Problem

With most pre-teens, it is hard to tell when they have tried alcohol because they do not drink enough to have noticeable effects. But while your child may not show signs of alcohol experimentation, your refrigerator or liquor cabinet may. Missing beer, or liquor that seems to be going too fast, or tastes watered down, may alert you to a problem.

If you suspect your pre-teen has experimented with your liquor, immediately move your supply out of easy reach. It would also be a good idea for you to put a lock on



health care facilities, etc. You can use your group's voice to influence school and local government policies that can affect pre-teen alcohol use, like starting a petition to make alcohol education part of the school's health education course, or convincing city officials to make a commitment to recreation programs and facilities for youth. □



your liquor cabinet and keep count of how many beers you have in the refrigerator. After you have removed the supply, talk with your child, but do not accuse him or her of taking the missing beverages. Accusations will make your child defensive and resentful—and he or she will focus on your anger rather than on your message about alcohol use. Instead, lead into the subject casually. When you have a drink, for example, ask if your child has ever tasted alcohol. Go on to stress the undesirable effects alcohol has on the developing body and the

reasons it is dangerous for children to drink.

If, on the other hand, your pre-teen comes to you on his or her own and admits an experience with alcohol, the following suggestions may be helpful:

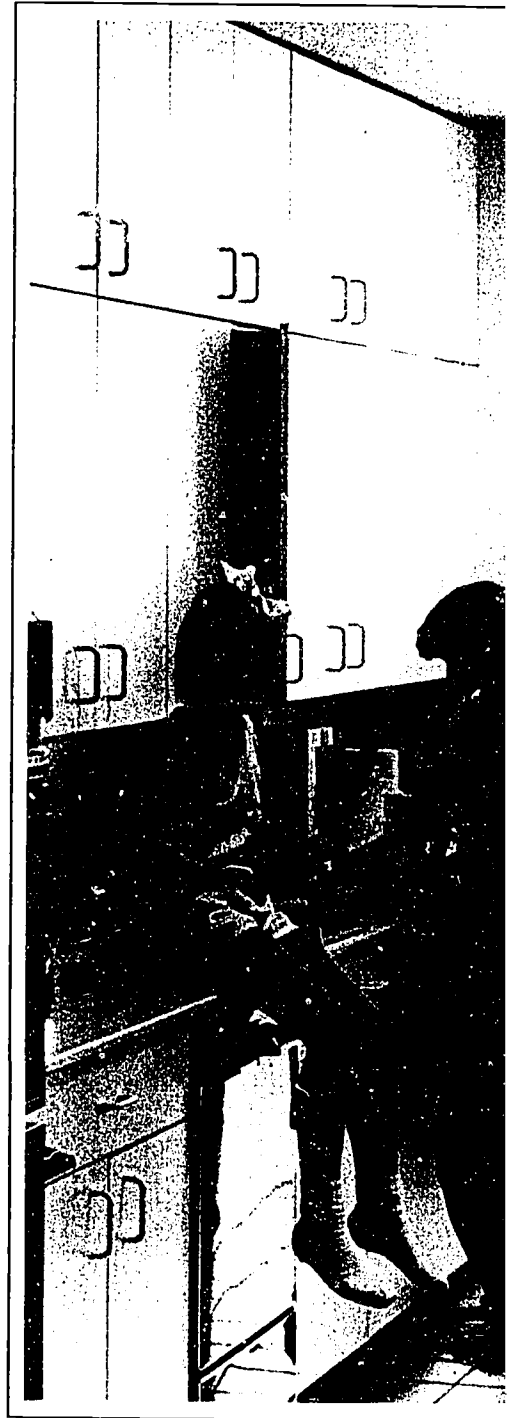
- Praise his or her honesty.
- Listen to how your child feels about the experience.
- Repeat the reasons children should not drink.
- Get your child to sign a written "contract" that he or she will not do it again.
- Help your child think of ways to say "no" in future situations involving alcohol experimentation.
- Give your child permission to use you as an excuse when faced with peer pressure. For example, "Sure, guys, I'd like to do it, but my mom told me I'd be grounded for two weeks if she caught me drinking. And she's worse than a detective!" This will help your child when he or she really doesn't want to go along with the crowd but is having difficulty in saying "no" for his or her own reasons.

If your pre-teen drinks enough to show signs of a problem, counseling may be needed to avoid future drinking problems. Unfortunately, a person may become an alcoholic at any age, and a pre-teen who drinks regularly is in as much danger as an

adult. There are some telltale signs of pre-teen alcohol abuse to watch for. These include the following:

- Sign One:** Sleeping more than usual and/or at unusual times.
- Sign Two:** Poor or erratic school work.
- Sign Three:** Complaints of "hang-over" symptoms.
- Sign Four:** Out-of-character temper tantrums.
- Sign Five:** Withdrawal from family . . . passive or rebellious attitude toward such things as family activities and discussions.
- Sign Six:** Change in peer group.
- Sign Seven:** Frequent use of eye drops and breath mints.

If your pre-teen is drinking regularly, do not simply accept a tearful promise to stop. Alcohol is a drug, and your child should have help. He or she may be using alcohol to "self-medicate" a problem, and the drinking is probably a silent cry for help. In such situations, your doctor, pastor, school guidance counselor, or local youth agencies can tell you where to go for the assistance you need.



conclusion and review

These 10 steps were designed to help you prevent pre-teen alcohol use, but many of the ideas can be used to deal with other problems such as other drug use, smoking, and sex.

The 10 steps will be helpful, but no plan can be foolproof. Children are influenced by the media and general attitudes of society, and parents can't be everywhere.

And of course, no parent is perfect. There are times after a busy day at work that the best parent would rather yell "Shut up!" than say "What I hear you saying is that you don't like what I have cooked for dinner..." Luckily, children are tougher than we sometimes think. What really matters is not the isolated episode of anger or insensitivity but the total tone of the relationship.

You have shown you care about the parent-child relationship simply by taking time to read this booklet, and no doubt that caring comes across in communication with your child. In the final analysis, that's what it's all about. Translating that caring into action, like the 10 steps, can strengthen that parent-child relationship and increase the chances that your pre-teen will make healthy lifestyle decisions—now and throughout life.

As a review, the 10 steps to help your pre-teen say "no" and some of the key points are listed below:

Step One: Talk With Your Child About Alcohol

Challenge These Myths:

1. All famous and talented people drink alcohol.
2. When things go wrong, having a drink will help.
3. Alcohol is harmless. It can't hurt me.
4. I am better at sports when I drink.
5. Drinking is the best way to "party" or celebrate.
6. Drinking relaxes people and makes it easier for them to be friendly.
7. Young people who drink are popular.
8. All young people drink a little and smoke cigarettes. The ones who don't are oddballs.

Explain These Reasons Why Minors Should Not Drink:

1. Drinking alcohol is dangerous for children.
2. Pre-teens' day-to-day activities and alcohol do not mix.
3. Alcohol use is illegal for minors.



Step Two: Learn To Really Listen to Your Child

Learn These Listening Skills:

1. Rephrase your child's comments to show you understand.
2. Watch your child's face and body language.
3. Give nonverbal support and encouragement.
4. Use the right tone of voice for the answer you are giving.
5. Use encouraging phrases that show your interest and keep the conversation going.

Step Three: Help Your Child Feel Good About Himself or Herself

Use These Esteem-Building Skills:

1. Give lots of praise.
2. Praise effort, not just accomplishment.
3. Help your child set realistic goals.
4. Don't compare your child's efforts with those of others.
5. When correcting your child, criticize the action, not the child.
6. Take responsibility for your own negative feelings.
7. Give your child real responsibility.
8. Show your children you love them.

Step Four: Help Your Child Develop Strong Values

A strong value system can help children say "no" to alcohol and can give them the courage to make decisions based on facts rather than peer pressure.

Step Five: Be a Good Role Model or Example

Your own drinking habits and attitudes about others' drinking may strongly influence your pre-teen's perceptions about alcohol.

Step Six: Help Your Pre-teen Deal with Peer Pressure

Practice These Peer Pressure Skills:

1. Teach your child to value individuality.
2. Explore the meaning of friendship with your child.
3. Give your child the support needed to say "no."
4. Know the facts about pre-teen drinking.
5. Use peer pressure to your advantage.
6. Encourage your child to practice saying "no."

Step Seven: Make Family Policies that Help Your Child Say "No"

It may be helpful to verbalize specific family rules regarding alcohol use and the consequences of breaking those rules.

Step Eight: Encourage Healthy, Creative Activities

Hobbies, school events, and other activities may prevent children from experimenting with alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs out of boredom or idle curiosity.

Step Nine: Team Up with Other Parents

When parents join together in support groups, they can take broad steps that will reinforce the guidance they provide for their children at home.

Step Ten: Know What To Do if You Suspect a Problem

Alcohol is a drug, and parents can learn to recognize the telltale signs of abuse of this drug. People who abuse alcohol on a regular basis may need professional help to stop drinking. □

resource groups

The following resource groups can provide additional information and/or assistance to parents:

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters (*includes Alateen for children or siblings of alcoholics, and Al-Anon Adult Children of Alcoholics groups*)
P.O. Box 862
Midtown Station
New York, NY 10016
(212)302-7240

Alcoholics Anonymous
Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163
(212)686-1100

American Council for Drug Education
5820 Hubbard Drive
Rockville, MD 20852
(301)984-5700

The Compassionate Friends (*made up of parents who have lost children of all ages and who "try to provide sympathetic support for other bereaved parents"*)
P.O. Box 3696
Oakbrook, IL 60522-3696
(312)323-5010

references

Families in Action Drug Information Center
Suite 300
3845 North Druid Hills Road
Decatur, GA 30033
(404)325-5799

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Central Office
669 Airport Freeway
Suite 310
Hurst, TX 76053
(817)268-MADD

National Association for Children of Alcoholics
31706 Coast Highway
Suite 201
South Laguna, CA 92677
(714)499-3889

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol Information (NCALI)
P.O. Box 2345
Rockville, MD 20852
(301)468-2600

National Congress of Parents and Teachers (PTA)
700 Rush Street
Chicago, IL 60611-2571
(312)787-0977

National Council on Alcoholism
12 West 21st Street
New York, NY 10010
(212)206-6770

National Federation of Parents for Drug Free Youth
1820 Franwall Avenue
Suite 16
Silver Spring, MD 20902
1-800-544-KIDS

National Parents Resource Institute on Drug Education (PRIDE)
Robert W. Woodruff Volunteer Service Center
Suite 1216
100 Edgewood Avenue
Atlanta, GA 30303
(404)658-2548

Parents Anonymous (*largest national self-help organization for parents with problems related to all types of child abuse*)
22330 Hawthorne Boulevard
Suite 208
Torrance, CA 90505
1-800-421-0353

Parents Without Partners international
7910 Woodmont Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20814
(301)654-8650

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. *Fifth Special Report to the U.S. Congress on Alcohol and Health from the Secretary of Health and Human Services*. DHHS Pub. No. (ADM) 84-1291. Washington, DC: Supt. of Docs. U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1983. Available from the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol Information, P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20852. (301)468-2600.

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. *Communicating With Youth About Alcohol: Methods, Messages, and Materials*. DHHS Pub. No. (ADM)86-1429. Washington, DC: Supt. of Docs., U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1986. Available from the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol Information, P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20852. (301)468-2600.

The Weekly Reader Periodicals of Xerox Education Publications. "A Study of Children's Attitudes and Perceptions About Drugs and Alcohol." Unpublished paper available from Weekly Reader, 245 Long Hill Road, Middletown, CT 06457. (203) 347-7251.



a special note to group leaders

The design of *10 Steps to Help Your Pre-teen Say "No"* lends itself to workshops that can enhance both parenting and general communication skills. Groups that may appreciate opportunities to discuss the 10 steps include:

- Parent/teacher groups
- Church and synagogue classes
- Civic organizations
- Community centers
- Families in counseling
- Seminars conducted by employee assistance programs
- Adult education classes on psychology, interpersonal communication, and home economics.

One way leaders can facilitate group discussions on *10 Steps to Help Your Pre-teen Say "No"* is to distribute photocopies of just the first step, allow approximately 10 minutes for reading, and then ask for group reactions and/or related experiences. After step one has been thoroughly explored, leaders can pass out photocopies of step two, and so forth.

Another method involves distributing the complete *10 Steps to Help Your Pre-teen Say "No"* booklets to group members. The group would begin reading step one on page 4, and turn their copies face-down when they are ready to discuss the first step.

After the groups have explored all the steps, leaders can summarize the groups' opinions on the issues raised by *10 Steps to Help Your Pre-teen Say "No,"* or leaders may encourage the groups to draw their own conclusions by asking questions such as those listed below:

- In one sentence, what is the overall message of *10 Steps to Help Your Pre-teen Say "No"* ?
- Are the recommended actions practical and useful to parents?
- Which step did you find most helpful? Which was least helpful? Why?
- Will *10 Steps to Help Your Pre-teen Say "No"* affect your behavior in the future? Why or why not?

Leaders may find that more than one group session is needed to cover all 10 steps—especially if the groups contain more than 10 people. Two sessions, covering five steps each, should be adequate. Sessions may last anywhere from 1 to 2 hours, depending on how much discussion time is desired.

Some leaders may wish to record their sessions or ask an assistant to take notes of the proceedings. Quite possibly, group members would appreciate copies of session highlights to review after they have completed the workshops.



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