

Alcohol and the Developing Brain

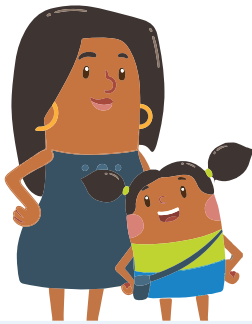


ASK, LISTEN, LEARN:

KIDS AND ALCOHOL DON'T MIX

When conversations about alcohol between parents and kids go up, underage drinking goes down. In fact, since 2003, those conversations have increased by 73%¹, and underage drinking has decreased by 50%². Start the conversation and help your kids say "YES" to a healthy lifestyle and "NO" to underage drinking.

Here are five tips to guide you in talking to your kids about alcohol:



Ask, Listen, Learn can support you as you navigate these conversations.

If you're looking for helpful resources, from [statistics](#) to [conversation guides](#), [tip sheets](#) to [classroom resources](#) – we have something for everyone!

1 Conversations count – start talking early

Starting the conversation as [early](#) as age nine can help kids feel prepared to make healthy decisions. Younger kids might ask why their parents drink an alcoholic beverage at dinner. Explain that drinking alcohol responsibly is an adult behavior, like living alone or driving a car. Older kids are going to need different support as they face new social situations. This is a time to clearly outline what risks kids face and the expectations for your household.



2 Be a resource for your child

As your kids come to you with [questions](#), remember not to shut them out, no matter how sticky the topic! If you're willing to answer all of their questions, they will be more likely to come to you when they are going through a difficult time. If you feel like you don't have the answers, you can consult doctors and educators, and visit trusted resources, such as [asklistenlearn.org](#), [kidshealth.org](#), and [samhsa.gov](#).

3 Model responsible behavior – and keep talking

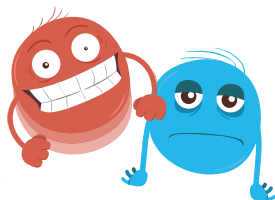
Between eyerolls and blank stares, it can feel like kids don't hear you – but they do. In fact, parents are the number one influence on their kid's decisions to drink, or not to drink, alcohol. Kids are always watching what you do. Be responsible with your own drinking behaviors – be sure to plan a safe ride home and have conversations about your responsible alcohol choices in front of them.

4 Learn the science

Kids always want to know WHY, and it's important to go beyond, "drinking underage is bad for you!" Let them know that alcohol is a chemical that can affect their developing brains. Don't fear – check out these [videos](#) together as a family to learn the science behind how alcohol affects the developing brain.

5 Become a partner in education

Underage drinking is a community issue – you don't have to tackle it alone! Many adults have a role to play, including teachers, school nurses and counselors. The conversation about alcohol may start in school, and your kids may come home with questions. Educators should always be in touch with parents, but if you have a concern or question, bring it up! They may be helpful navigating tough questions.



¹ National Institute on Drug Abuse. "Monitoring the Future 2016 Survey Results." NIDA, 13 Dec. 2016. www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/infographics/monitoring-future-2016-survey-results.

² "Current Underage Drinking Down 50% Since 1991, But Relatively Unchanged Since 2016." Responsibility.org, 14 Dec. 2017. www.responsibility.org/blog/current-underage-drinking-50-since-1991-relatively-unchanged-since-2016/.

Every family has different rules and expectations, and since we're all different, the way we enforce these rules and expectations varies not only from family to family, but also from parent to parent. Recognizing the style – or styles! – of parenting in each family can help create an atmosphere of comfort for kids and be another step in fostering their success.



Family counselors divide parenting styles into three categories³:

- **Authoritarian:** a parents-know-best approach that emphasizes obedience;
- **Permissive:** which provides few behavioral guidelines because parents don't want to upset their children;
- **Authoritative:** which blends a caring tone with structure and consistent limit-setting.

Which style or styles are present in your household? How might that shape the communication and conversations that you have with your kids?

Once you have determined your parenting style, take a look at the following skills and think of the best way to put them into action with your kids. This will help them to develop the tools they need to avoid peer pressure and make healthy decisions, such as saying "NO" to underage drinking.

COMMUNICATION

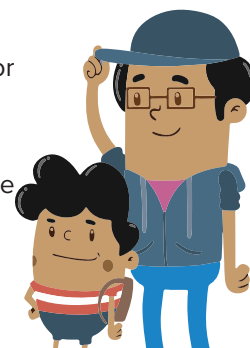
ENCOURAGEMENT

PROBLEM SOLVING

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

MODELING RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR

- **Communication:** Open lines of communication are important for building trust and bonding with your kids. Let them know they can come to you with questions, thoughts, issues, or ideas. Be sure to listen to an entire issue before trying to fix the situation.
- **Encouragement:** Words of affirmation, positive reinforcement and optimism are useful tactics in letting your kids know that you are on their team!
- **Problem solving:** Having the skills to work through issues and potential problems is key. Role playing different scenarios and discussing various options to avoid peer pressure will put your kids on the right track to saying "YES" to a healthy lifestyle.
- **Setting expectations:** Be clear about what you expect from your kids in terms of their actions and behavior whether you are present or not! Let them know that they should follow rules, be responsible and use self-control.
- **Modeling responsible behavior:** We have said it before, and we will say it again: Whether they show it or not, your kids are watching you – and listening too! Acting in a way that is kind, respectful and responsible will help guide those same qualities in your kids.



³ Davis, Susan. "Parenting Styles: 3 Different Kinds." WebMD, WebMD, 24 June 2016, www.webmd.com/parenting/features/when-parenting-styles-differ#1.