

KNOW
THE POWER OF PARENTS.

Raising Drug-Free Kids Advice by Age



www.tonkacares.org

*The Tonka CARES vision is of a community in which youth **choose not to use**, and **are supported and valued for that choice!***

Raising Drug-Free Kids: Advice by Age

How can I prevent my teenager from using drugs and alcohol?

Is elementary school too early to be talking about this “stuff”?

In response to questions such as these, Tonka CARES has compiled the series “Raising Drug-Free Kids: Advice by Age.”

Why is it so important to keep our children drug- and alcohol-free through their years in the Minnetonka Schools? According to Joseph A. Califano, Jr., Founder and Chair of The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, “A child who gets through age twenty-one without smoking, abusing alcohol, or using illicit drugs is virtually certain to never do so. And that child is much likelier to have a healthy, happy, and productive life.” Brain science also supports this assertion; i.e., that a developing brain is particularly vulnerable to the addictive properties of alcohol and drugs.

While this issue seems most relevant to parents with teens, even parents of pre-school and elementary-age kids need to be keenly aware of their critical role. Parents who clearly express their expectations about the use of alcohol and drugs raise children who are less likely to use. Establishing a warm connection with your children, discussing health-related issues, and defining limits and reasonable consequences in the early years lay the groundwork for healthy choices in later years. This series (used with permission from the Partnership for a Drug-Free America) offers an excellent starting point for raising drug-free kids.



Working Together to Reduce
Underage Substance Use

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www.drugfree.org

Raising Drug-Free Kids: Advice by Age

The Preschool Years



Since the foundation for all healthy habits — from nutritious eating to proper hygiene — is laid down during the preschool years, it's a great time to set the stage for a drug-free life. The following tips will help you work with your preschooler so that she'll grow up happy, healthy, and drug-free.

- **Talk to your child about the joys of healthy living.** Discuss how good you feel when you take care of yourself — how you can run, jump, play and work for many hours. A great conversation starter: "I'm glad I'm healthy because I can..."
- **Celebrate your child's decision-making skills.** Whenever possible, let your child choose what to wear. Even if the clothes don't quite match, you are reinforcing your child's ability to make decisions.
- **Stress the need for your child to take personal responsibility for his own health, well-being and personal environment.** Your instructions should be concrete, relate to your child's experiences, and be stated positively. Turn chores like brushing teeth, putting away toys, wiping up spills and caring for pets into fun experiences that your child will enjoy. Break the activities down into manageable steps so that your child learns to develop plans.
- **Help your child steer clear of dangerous substances that exist in her immediate world.** Point out poisonous and harmful chemicals commonly found in homes, such as bleach, kitchen cleansers and furniture polish. Read the products' warning labels out loud to your child. Explain that she should only eat or smell food or a prescribed medicine that you, a relative, or other known caregivers give to her. Also, explain that drugs from a doctor help the person the doctor gives them to, but that they can harm someone else.
- **Help your child understand the difference between make-believe and real life.** Preschoolers give meaning to things they don't understand in order to make sense of their world — but their meaning doesn't necessarily reflect the real world. Ask your child what he thinks about a TV program or story. Let your child know about your likes and dislikes. Discuss how violence or bad decisions can hurt people.
- **Turn frustration into a learning opportunity.** If a tower of blocks keeps collapsing during a play session, work with your child to find possible solutions to the problem.
- **Tell your child how proud you are of her when she helps you with things.** There's never a bad time to give your child a boost of self-esteem.

Substances in your preschooler's world can include: Tobacco, Alcohol, Cleaning supplies.

Raising Drug-Free Kids: Advice by Age

Grades K-3



Five- to eight-year-olds are still tied to family and eager to please, but they're also beginning to explore their individuality. In addition, your grade-schooler begins to spend more time at school and with peers, and begins to collect information (including messages about drugs and alcohol) from lots of new places like the media and popular culture. It's very important that you continue talking to your child about a healthy drug-free lifestyle, and stress that of all the voices your child hears, yours should be the guiding force.

Here are nine tips to help you help your child live a healthy, drug-free life:

- 1. Keep your discussions about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs factual and focused on the present.** Long-term consequences are too distant to have any meaning. Let your child know that people who drink too much alcohol get sick and throw up, or that smoking makes clothes stink and causes bad breath.
- 2. Talk to your kids about the drug-related messages they receive through advertisements, the news media, and entertainment sources.** Some TV shows or movies may even glamorize drug use. Remember to ask your kids how they feel about the things they've heard — you'll learn a great deal about what they're thinking.
- 3. Consider the following topics when discussing drugs with your child: what alcohol, tobacco and other drugs are like; why drugs are illegal; what harm drugs can do to users.** You should also consider talking about the differences between the medicinal uses and illegal uses of drugs, and how drugs can also affect the families and friends of users.
- 4. Set clear rules and behave the way you want your kids to behave.** Tell them the reasons for your rules. If you use tobacco or alcohol, be mindful of the message you are sending to your children.
- 5. Help your children explore new ways to express their feelings.** Kids who feel shy in one-on-one conversation might open up through painting, writing, or emailing a friend or relative.
- 6. Work on problem-solving by focusing on the types of problems kids come across.** Help them find long-lasting solutions to homework trouble, a fight with a friend, or for dealing with bullies. Be sure to point out that quick fixes are not long-term solutions.
- 7. Give your kids the power to escape from situations that make them feel bad.** Make sure they know they shouldn't stay in a place that makes them feel uncomfortable or bad about themselves. Also let them know they don't need to stick with friends who don't support them.
- 8. Get to know your child's friends — and their friends' parents.** Check in by phone or a visit once in a while to make sure they are giving their children the same kinds of messages you give your children.
- 9. Sign your kids up with community groups or programs that emphasize the positive impact of a healthy lifestyle.** Your drug-free messages will be reinforced — and your kids will have fun, stay active and develop healthy friendships.

Substances in your K-3 child's world can include: Tobacco, Alcohol, Ritalin.

Raising Drug-Free Kids: Advice by Age

Grades 4-6



Preteens: They're on a quest to figure out their place in the world. When it comes to the way they view that world, they tend to give their friends' opinions a great deal of power while, at the same time, they're starting to question their parents' views and messages. Your advice may be challenged — but it will be heard and will stay with your child much more than he will ever admit.

Here are eight tips to help you help your preteen live a healthy, drug-free life:

1. Make sure your child knows your rules — and that you'll enforce the consequences if rules are broken. This applies to no-use rules about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs — as well as bedtimes and homework. Research shows that kids are less likely to use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs if their parents have established a pattern of setting clear rules and consequences for breaking those rules.

2. Act out scenes with your child in which people offer her drugs. Kids who don't know what to say or how to get away are more likely to give in to peer pressure. Let her know that she can always use you as an excuse and say: "No, my mom [or dad, aunt, etc.] will kill me if I smoke a cigarette." Explain why she shouldn't continue friendships with kids who have offered her cigarettes, alcohol or pills.

3. Tell your child what makes him so special. Puberty can upend a child's self-esteem. Feelings of insecurity, doubt and pressure may creep in. Offset those feelings with a lot of positive comments about his life and who he is as an individual — and not just when he brings home an "A".

4. Give your children the power to make decisions independently of their peers. You can reinforce this message through small things such as encouraging your child to pick out the sneakers he likes rather than the pair his four friends have.

5. Base drug and alcohol messages on facts, not fear. Kids can't argue with facts but their new need for independence may allow them to get around their fears. Also, kids love to learn facts — both run-of-the-mill and truly odd. For drug and alcohol facts, visit www.drugfree.org and look at the Drug Guide.

6. Preteens aren't concerned with future problems that might result from experimentation with alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, but they are concerned about their appearance — sometimes to the point of obsession. Tell them about the smelly hair and ashtray breath caused by cigarettes. Make sure they know that it would be hard to perform in the school play while high on marijuana.

7. Get to know your child's friends — and their friends' parents. Check in by phone or a visit once in a while to make sure they are giving their children the same kinds of messages you give your children about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

8. Help children separate reality from fantasy. Watch TV and movies with them and ask lots of questions to reinforce the distinction between the two. Remember to include advertising in your discussions, as those messages are especially powerful.

Substances in your fourth- to sixth-grader's world can include: Tobacco, Alcohol, Ritalin, Adderall, Inhalants, Marijuana.

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Transitions: The First Year of Middle School



You've been anticipating this for the past few years — your child's transition from elementary school to middle school. Be warned: this is a critical time and calls for extra vigilance on your part. Your sons and daughters may still seem young, but their new surroundings can put them in some mature and tempting situations.

- The likelihood that kids will try drugs increases dramatically during this year. Your child is going to meet lots of new kids, seek acceptance, and start to make more — and bigger — choices. For the first time, your kids will be exposed to older kids who use alcohol, tobacco or other drugs. New middle school students often think these older students are cool and may be tempted to try drugs to fit in.
 - One type of drug to watch out for in particular is inhalants, since they tend to be abused at a very young age. Inhalants are ordinary household products that are inhaled or sniffed by children to get high — but can cause serious brain damage, among other side effects.
- A 2007 study showed that 20 percent of 6th-graders had tried inhalants. Also disturbing is that from 1998 to 2007, the percentage of middle school students agreeing strongly that sniffing or huffing things to get high can kill you decreased significantly, from 61 percent to 54 percent. This is a cause for potential concern, because the more risky an adolescent thinks a substance is, the less likely he is to abuse it. Therefore, it's important to be aware of these harmful chemicals and be sure to educate your children about their effects.
 - To many middle school kids, peer approval means everything, and your child may make you feel unwelcome. He is going through a period in which he feels entitled to make his own decisions, and may start to challenge your values. While your child may physically and emotionally pull away from you to establish his own identity — and may even seem embarrassed by you at times, he actually needs you to be involved in his life more than ever before.
 - Also, be aware that your child is going through some major physical and hormonal changes. Her moods may vary as she tries to come to terms with her ever-changing body and the onset of puberty. Keep yourself educated on what to expect. If you reassure her that nothing is out of the ordinary, your child can relax in knowing that what she's going through is normal.

To help your child make good choices during this critical time, you should:

- Make it very clear that you do not want her to use alcohol, tobacco, marijuana or other drugs.
- Find out if he really understands the consequences of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use.
- Get to know her friends by taking them to and from after-school activities, games, the library, and movies (while being sensitive to her need to feel independent). Check in with her friends' parents often to make sure you share the same anti-drug stance.
- Be sure you know his online friends — as well as his other online activities such as websites he visits, with whom he emails, chats and Instant Messages, his MySpace or Facebook page, and to whom he sends text messages.
- Volunteer for activities where you can observe him at school.
- Hold a weekly family meeting to check in with each other and address problems or concerns.
- Get your kids involved with adult-supervised after-school activities.
- Give kids who are unsupervised after school a schedule of activities, limits on their behavior, household chores to accomplish, and a strict phone-in-to-you policy (along with easily accessible snacks).
- Make it easy for your child to leave a situation where alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs are being used.
- Call kids' parents if their home is to be used for a party, and get assurance that no alcoholic beverages or illegal substances will be at the party.
- Set curfews and enforce them.
- Encourage open dialogue with your children about their experiences.

Raising Drug-Free Kids: Advice by Age

Grades 9-12



When it comes to drugs, teens are a savvy bunch. Drugs and messages about living drug-free have been part of their lives for years. They can make distinctions not only among different drugs and their effects, but also among trial, occasional use and addiction. They've witnessed many of their peers using drugs — some without obvious or immediate consequences, others whose drug use gets out of control. By the teen years, kids have also had to make plenty of choices of their own about drug use: whether they should give in to peer pressure and experiment with drugs, or go against some of their peers and stay clean.

Here are 6 tips to help you help your teen continue to live a healthy, drug-free life:

1. Don't speak generally about drug and alcohol use — your older teen needs to hear detailed and reality-driven messages. Topics worth talking about with your teen: using a drug just once can have serious permanent consequences; can put you in risky and dangerous situations; anybody can become a chronic user or addict; combining drugs can have deadly consequences.

2. Emphasize what drug use can do to your teen's future. Discuss how drug use can ruin your teen's chance of getting into the college she's been dreaming about or landing the perfect job.

3. Challenge your child to be a peer leader among his friends and to take personal responsibility for his actions and show others how to do the same.

4. Encourage your teen to volunteer where he can see the impact of drugs on your community.

Teenagers tend to be idealistic and enjoy hearing about ways they can help make the world a better place. Help your teen research volunteer opportunities at local homeless shelters, hospitals or victim services centers.

5. Use news reports as discussion openers. If you see a news story about an alcohol-related car accident, talk to your teen about all the victims that an accident leaves in its wake. If the story is about drugs in your community, talk about the ways your community has changed as drug use has grown.

6. Compliment your teen for all the things he does well and for the positive choices he makes. Let him know that he is seen and appreciated, and that you appreciate what a good role model he is for his younger siblings and other kids in the community. Let him know how deeply disappointed you would be if he started using drugs. Teens still care what their parents think.

Drugs in your teen's world can include: Tobacco, Alcohol, prescription drugs such as Ritalin, Oxycontin, Vicodin, Valium and Xanax, Inhalants, Marijuana, Ecstasy, Herbal Ecstasy, Cocaine/Crack, GHB, Heroin, Rohypnol, Ketamine, LSD, Mushrooms.

Tonka CARES Initiatives

Parent Networking Directory

Each fall, Tonka CARES creates networking directories for parents of middle school and high school students. Parents take a pledge and then are included in a directory that is mailed to families. We will begin taking pledges this spring for fall directories. Watch the News-O-Gram and Splash for a registration link. As an example, here is the program and pledge offered to middle school parents.



What are the benefits for participating in the “KNOW the Power of Parents” pledge program for middle school parents?

- Names, phone numbers, and addresses of MME and MMW “KNOW” participants are published in a directory, which encourages parents to network.
- When adults join together and take a united stand, they feel more empowered to “do the right thing,” and are often more effective than when they act separately.
- As your kids mature, they will become increasingly sophisticated in making plans independently. Building your own network of parents will help you stay informed.

Parental responsibility when hosting a youth party or gathering:

- Confirm with parents who call about the party that alcohol will not be available nor allowed. (Parent Tip: Facilitate a comfortable call by offering up this information before being asked. You may also want to mention media, i.e., your family position on R-rated movies, video game ratings, and/or internet monitoring.)
- Be a visible host. (Parent Tip: Use small snack dishes and replenish often!)
- Encourage “by invitation only” gatherings so you know who is at your home.
- Call the parents of anyone who appears to be under the influence or is in possession of illegal substances. (Parent Tip: If it were your child, wouldn't you want to know?)

Suggested parental responsibility when your child is invited to an activity:

- Call the adult in charge of the activity to verify the occasion, location, and that there will be “active” adult supervision.
- If the activity seems inappropriate, express your concern, keep your child home, and seek an alternate activity.
- Your job is not to just “trust,” but to “verify” your child's plans. BE A PARENT, NOT A PAL!

KNOW the Power of Parents Pledge:

- I will actively supervise the activities of my child's friends when they visit our home.*
- I will continue to foster open communication and share accurate information to help my child make good choices.*
- I will establish a clear “family position” on the use of illegal substances and discuss this position with my child(ren) on a regular basis.*
- I will support MME and MMW prevention curriculum and school discipline policies relating to illegal substance use among our youth.*
- I will not serve nor will I allow anyone under the legal drinking age to consume alcohol in my home or on my property.*

Perception or Reality?

Student Drug and Alcohol Use in the Minnetonka School District



You may hear that “lots of kids drink” or even that “most kids party.” The reality is that most MHS students **do not** drink alcohol or use other drugs. Correcting this misperception is the purpose of the Tonka CARES “Reveal what’s Real” campaign.

Key findings from the May 2009 MHS student survey of drug and alcohol use include:

- **ALCOHOL The Perception:** 92% of students believe that most students used alcohol in the last 30 days. **The Norm:** 30% of students report alcohol use in the last 30 days. **The Gap:** 62 percentage points. **The Message:** Most MHS students (70%) report **not** using alcohol in the past 30 days! ¹
- **MARIJUANA The Perception:** 83% of students believe that most students used marijuana in the last 30 days. **The Norm:** 21% of students report marijuana use in the last 30 days. **The Gap:** 62 percentage points. **The Message:** Most MHS students (79%) report **not** using marijuana in the past 30 days!
- **TOBACCO The Perception:** 75% of MHS students believe most of their peers smoked during the last 30 days. **The Norm:** 12% of students report cigarette use in the last 30 days. **The Gap:** 63 percentage points. **The Message:** Most MHS students (88%) report **not** using tobacco in the past 30 days!

You can see from these statistics that students, like most of us, tend to believe that drug and alcohol use among students is higher than it actually is. You may wonder why this is the case. One explanation is that we notice, remember and discuss exceptional or unusual events that have high emotional impact. When several events occur at the same time or have high visibility, we tend to generalize and believe that “it’s happening all the time” or “so many people are doing it,” when in fact these behaviors are not the norm for most MHS students.

Our perception of what everyone else is doing has a direct impact on our behavior.

National research reveals that when students incorrectly believe that alcohol and drug use is more common than it is, there is a greater likelihood that they themselves will “use” and not question that behavior. The Tonka CARES “Reveal what’s Real” campaign is designed to correct these misperceptions. Over time, changing perceptions will lead to students making healthier choices.

While we applaud the majority of students in our community who make healthy choices, some students continue to make unhealthy choices. Underage drinking is a leading cause of death among young people and is also associated with drug use, risky sexual encounters, violence and traffic accidents. When your child is faced with whether or not to use alcohol and/or other drugs, accurate information is an absolutely critical element in influencing that decision.

¹ All data cited is from the anonymous survey of 2490 Minnetonka High School students in 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades administered in May 2009, usually referred to as the May 2009 MHS student survey. Questions were identical to validated questions used in the Minnesota Student Survey. For more information, please visit www.tonkacares.org.

Raising Drug-Free Kids: Advice by Age

College Culture



Off to College

As you prepare your child for college – and continuing after you've dropped him off at the dorm – you can help guide him to a healthy experience, without treading on his independence. According to Amelia Arria, Senior Scientist at Treatment Research Institute, "You don't show up every weekend and make his bed. You let him know you have his back."

Wrapping Up High School

- Ideally, you've already been talking to your kids about drugs and alcohol during middle school and high school. Research shows students who drank in high school are three times more likely to begin heavy episodic drinking in college. Weitzman, Nelson & Wechsler (2003)
- Don't buy into the myth that allowing teens to drink around you will help them deal with alcohol issues when they're on their own. Research shows that, no matter with whom they drink in high school, "they'll sustain and increase their drinking level in college," says Arria.

- Make sure you keep an open line of communication with them. "It's not all about the topic of drinking and drug use," says Arria. "It's about maintaining that really supportive relationship." Your child needs to know that if any problems or difficult situations arise, she can turn to you for help. Be an at-home resource for your college student.
- Don't want to come across as over-protective? "I do think the quality of the parent-child relationship has to change, but I don't think [parents have] to back off," says Arria. "Rather than asking about her friends, you might be asking about her classes and what she's interested in."
- Stay alert to possible mental health issues. "Between the ages of 18 and 25 is when a lot of things pop up, like anxiety disorders, if they haven't already done so in adolescence." says Arria. There is a strong link between mental health issues and the use of drugs and alcohol. Just in case something does happen, make sure you know what campus mental health resources are available to your child.

Prescription Drugs in the Dorms

The most popular drugs on college campuses are alcohol and marijuana, but non-medical use of prescription stimulants, analgesics (painkillers) and tranquilizers is on the rise [McCabe, West, & Wechsler (2007)]. Though prescription drugs do have an important role when prescribed by a doctor, unsupervised use of them can be extremely harmful. While some parents turn a blind eye because they think these drugs may help their child do better in school, this is something you definitely want to disapprove of. Keep in mind:

- Abusing painkillers is like abusing heroin because their ingredients are similar (both are opioids).
- Many pills look pretty much the same, but depending on the drug and the dosage, the effects can vary greatly from mild to lethal.
- "Non-medical use of prescription drugs is actually associated with decreased academic performance, not an increase," says Arria. She adds that there also seems to be "a strong relationship between the use of other drugs and non-medical use of prescription stimulants." Researchers believe that students get into a cycle of spending a lot of time with friends, drinking and doing drugs, instead of going to classes. Then they turn to prescription stimulants to help get them through. The combination does not work. More information at www.drugfree.org/Parent/Resources/Prescription_Medicine_Misuse

Drugs in your college student's world can include:

Tobacco, Alcohol, prescription drugs such as Ritalin, Oxycontin, Vicodin, Valium or Xanax, and illicit drugs such as Marijuana, Cocaine, Methamphetamine, Heroin, Inhalants, Ecstasy, Herbal Ecstasy, Cocaine/Crack, GHB, Heroin, Rohypnol, Ketamine, LSD, Mushrooms.

~ NOTES ~

About Tonka CARES

Tonka CARES is a school and community-based coalition established in 2005 to play a leadership role in preventing and reducing illegal substance use among youth in the Minnetonka Schools. Tonka CARES collaborates with youth, families, schools and the community to create a vision where youth will choose not to use illegal substances and will feel supported and valued for their choice by the entire community. The Tonka CARES mission is to reduce illegal substance use among youth through: strengthening protective factors in the community; minimizing risk factors in the community; establishing, sustaining and strengthening collaboration among community partners; and supporting youth struggling with substance abuse issues.

For more information, please visit www.tonkacares.org or contact Imogen Davis, Tonka CARES Coordinator
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IMPORTANT Phone Numbers



Minnetonka District Service Center www.minnetonka.k12.mn.us	952-401-5000
Tonka CARES www.tonkacares.org	952-401-5042
Minnetonka Parent Education (E-12)	952-401-5056
Minnetonka Community Education	952-401-6800
Transportation Office (Busing)	952-401-5023
MHS Main Office	952-401-5700
MHS Activities Office (Hotline and Information)	952-401-5900
MHS Attendance Office	952-401-5800
MHS Booster Store (Open 11am-2pm on school days)	952-401-5841
MHS Chemical Health Specialist	952-401-5740
MHS Guidance Office	952-401-5811
MHS Health Office	952-401-5771
MME Main Office	952-401-5200
MME Attendance Office	952-401-5155
MME Chemical Health	952-401-5276
MME Guidance Office – Academic help, counselor	952-401-5209
MME Health Office	952-401-5210
MME Social Worker/Student Support Services	952-401-5215
MMW Main Office	952-401-5300
MMW Attendance Office	952-401-5310
MMW Chemical Health	952-401-5317
MMW Guidance Office – Academic help, counselor	952-401-5311
MMW Health Office	952-401-5318
MMW Social Worker/Student Support Services	952-401-5330



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