

SPRING 2013



Special points of interest:

- *Parents need to pay close attention to their teen's whereabouts and know their friends.*
- *Parents should stay involved with their teen's lives despite their attempts to build barriers.*
- *Start an ongoing conversation about alcohol and other drugs that continues through their young adult lives.*

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"TODAY'S HEALTHY CHOICES ARE TOMORROW'S HEALTHY OUTCOMES"

Parents Can Make the Difference

Once again parents are being applauded for their ability to prevent alcohol disorders in their children. Many studies have shown that parents are the greatest weapon against teen drug and alcohol use. But few parents are aware of the mountain of research that supports parental involvement in the adolescent years. Parents who closely monitor their teens' behavior can help counteract their children's genetic predisposition to an alcohol disorder.

According to a report in "Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research", teens with a difference in their genes are more susceptible to alcohol dependency. But the risk of alcohol addiction can be reduced by parental monitoring and involvement during adolescence. Lead researcher, Robert Miranda, Jr. of Brown University, explains "The key finding of this study is that while genetics appear to play a role in the development of alcohol problems

among teenagers, environmental factors can considerably reduce this risk."

"If you are a parent, pay closer attention to your child's whereabouts, and with whom your kids are affiliating socially, both of which can pay enormous dividends in reducing problems," added John F. Kelly, Associate Director of Massachusetts General Hospital-Harvard Center for Addiction Medicine. "Beginning an open and ongoing conversation with your child along these lines, including discussing the nature of alcohol-specific risks, could eradicate a potentially devastating problem."

Another study published in the "Journal of the Studies of Alcohol and Drugs", showed that parents who set rules and enforce rules on curfews, studying, as well as risky behaviors, had less teen drug and alcohol use. Parents who monitor their children's whereabouts and meet the parents of the children's friends, also

had less risk of teen substance abuse. For daughters, a permissive father was linked to more alcohol-related problems through lower levels of monitoring by fathers. But daughters with fathers who monitored them had fewer impulsive behaviors and less risk of alcohol use. The same held true for mothers and their sons.

Mounting research supports that parents need to continue monitoring their children into the teen years. Stay involved in their lives. Get to know their new friends and parents of friends. Be involved with their interests. Talk to your teens about expectations and rules. Make sure they understand why these rules are so important to you and what the consequences will be if the rules are broken.

One day soon, they will be adults. But that day is not today.

HEALTHY OUTCOMES

Regular use of marijuana by teens rose from 19% to 27% from 2008 to 2011.



48% of parents know their teens are exposed to drugs but that has not motivated them to talk about it.



2011 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study

In May 2012, the Partnership at Drugfree.org released the results of their 23rd annual "Partnership Attitude Tracking Study" also known as the PATS.

Here are some of the most significant results of the national survey:

Concerning Trends in Teen Marijuana Use According to PATS Data (2008-2011)

- Past-month use is up 42 percent (up from 19 percent in 2008 to 27 percent in 2011, which translates to about 4 million teens).
- Past-year use is up 26 percent (up from 31 percent in 2008 to 39 percent in 2011, which translates to about 6 million teens)
- Lifetime use is up 21 percent (up from 39 percent in 2008 to 47 percent in 2011, which translates to nearly 8 million teens).

Teen Marijuana Use Has Become a Normalized Behavior

- Teens now report seeing more of their peers smoking marijuana and only 26 percent agree with the statement, "in my school, most teens don't smoke marijuana" (down from 37 percent in 2008).
- 71 percent of teens say they have friends who use marijuana regularly (up from 64 percent in 2008)

Teen past-month "heavy" marijuana users are significantly more likely than teens who have used

- Cocaine/crack (30 times more likely)
- Ecstasy (20 times more likely)
- Prescription pain relievers (15 times more likely)
- Over-the-counter medicines (14 times more likely)

Teen Rx Medicine Abuse Remains High, but Relatively Unchanged, Parents Not Safeguarding Medicines at Home and Misusing Rx Medications Themselves

- Teen lifetime abuse of medicines is holding steady at 17 percent for Rx drugs and 12 percent for OTC cough and cold medicines.
- Among teens, past year abuse of the prescription pain relievers such as Vicodin and OxyContin is steady at about 10 percent.
- Fewer parents also report communicating the risks of getting high, or any other reason for abuse, from prescription medicines with their children; down from 82 percent who said they communicated the risks of Rx drug abuse to their kids in 2009 to 69 percent in 2011.

Parent-Teen Conversations About Alcohol and Other Drug Use: Parents tend to leave conversations on drugs and alcohol up to the school department. In general parents are not confident in talking to their teens about substance abuse.

- 52% of parents admit to having difficulty talking to their teens about drugs and alcohol.
- 48% of parents know their teens are exposed to drugs but that has not motivated them to talk about it.

In April 2006, Join Together, Safe and Drug Free Schools, the National Education Association and the New York State Teachers Union invited school professionals to complete an online survey. More than 3,500 teachers and administrators responded.

The goal was to learn how drug and alcohol prevention education is actually taught; identify barriers, materials, trainings, support; and improve the effectiveness of prevention education efforts.

Based on the findings of their survey and other related research, they “concluded that schools should not be relied on as the primary element in the country’s efforts to prevent the early initiation of alcohol and drug use”.

Recommendations:

“Schools should not act as the principal provider of general prevention education. They can and should play a role as part of a comprehensive community strategy that includes parents. Schools should help parents identify and support students who exhibit behavior patterns that may be precursors to adolescent substance abuse.”

Trends in Prevention:

A trend in school health curriculums is to add a parent drug abuse prevention education component to student health programs.

This bold move requires that parents attend at least one adult prevention education workshop per school year. Each school year, parents can choose from a few programs offered on a variety of subtopics within teen substance abuse prevention. Social host liability, prescription drug abuse prevention, marijuana use, and adolescent brain development are common topics. Prevention strategies and improving

communication skills should be included in each program.

Parents may attend as many workshops as they like, but a minimum of one program is required each school year beginning in middle school through high school.

Choosing Parent Workshops:

The goal of adding parenting programs to your curriculum is to increase parent confidence in dealing with drug and alcohol use so they will talk to their children and know how to handle problems if they arise.

Healthy Outcomes’ parenting workshops are designed to increase primary prevention by empowering parents to be more proactive to prevent teen substance abuse through (1) parent-teen conversations, (2) setting strict rules and (3) enforcing those rules. Healthy Outcomes also prepares parents to deal with current teen drug use and underage drinking through (1) early recognition of symptoms of substance abuse, (2) early intervention, and (3) increasing the ability to locate resources for treatment.

Evidence Based Programs:

In 2011, Healthy Outcomes’ parenting programs were proven effective with a federal grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental

Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Results showed that after taking Healthy Outcomes’ workshops, parents were more confident in:

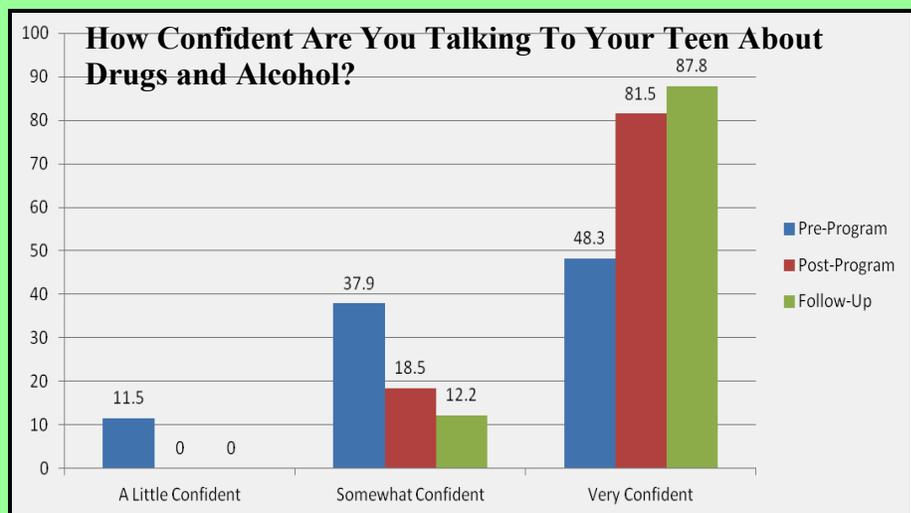
- Talking to their teens about drugs and alcohol
- Answering specific drug questions
- Setting and enforcing rules
- Recognizing signs of drug use
- Talking to their children if they are using drugs
- Locating treatment resources

These results increased even more 6 weeks later in follow-up surveys.

Parent participants in the Healthy Outcomes survey also increased the number of times per month that they talked to their children about drugs and alcohol.

Parents who begin an ongoing conversation could prevent devastating problems with drugs and alcohol. Therefore giving parents the skills they need to act as primary substance abuse educators will do more for prevention than any other health curriculum class.

Full report available upon request.



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The Only Mistake Is Not Talking

The Partnership for a Drug-Free America recently printed a full-page parent guide in The New York Times. It is a "Time To Talk" kit of talking points designed to help parents with some of the toughest parts of discussing substance abuse with adolescents. The entire talk-kit is available at TimeToTalk.org.

The bottom line is that it's never too early to start talking about healthy choices with your children. Adolescents act like they're not listening which acts as a barrier to open communication. Parents perceive this barrier as a sign to stop talking. But studies show that adolescents are listening even when they act otherwise. Parents should not become discouraged and keep talking.

Most parents are afraid to talk to their children about drugs because they fear discussing their past drug experiences. According to the Time To Talk kit, "The issue isn't about your past. It's about your children's future. What's important now is that your kids understand that you don't want them to use drugs".

- 1. THIS ISN'T ABOUT YOU.** Many parents are afraid their teen will ask them if they ever did drugs. Do not let them turn the focus of the conversation on you. Keep the conversation on them.
- 2. CONFESSION ISN'T ALWAYS BEST.** Most experts agree that confessing your past drug and alcohol use is not a good idea. "*Do as I say, not as I do*" rarely works as a deterrent. Teenagers often will perceive that if you could do drugs and end up fine, they can do drugs for a few years then quit and end up fine too.
- 3. WHEN SHOULD YOU LIE?** Experts say never. Parents always risk losing credibility if the truth comes out. Speak honestly without detail then talk about the differences in drugs since you were young. Potency of drugs has increased, making addiction occur quickly now.
- 4. SAY WHAT YOU MEAN TO SAY.** Be clear with your expectations. Say "I don't want you to use drugs because..."
- 5. DON'T JUST TALK. LISTEN TOO.** Try asking open-ended questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer. Ask what they think of celebrities who use drugs. Ask about the effects of drug use on people they know. Listen to their answers then comment calmly.

Start an ongoing conversation. Keep conversations brief but frequent. Be consistent with your expectations. Don't be afraid that you might make a mistake. The only real mistake is to not talk about drugs with your children.

www.GetHealthyOutcomes.org