

With summer, prom and graduation approaching... some thoughts on keeping our kids safe.

My kids are really good kids. They won't get into drugs or alcohol.

FACT: Good kids can make REALLY bad decisions (because their brains are not fully developed...really). Recent science shows that the areas of the brain responsible for impulse control, planning, and anticipating consequences are not fully developed until the mid twenties. (*More info—for the full article, "Beautiful Brains," go to www.tritowncouncil.org*)

ACT: Be patient with your teen, and don't expect that they will always make good decisions without your guidance. Navigating the teens years can be tough, but research shows that kids who learn from their parents about the dangers of alcohol and drug use and other risky behaviors are less likely to engage in them.

FACT: You can stop them, and here's why you should. We know more now about the effects of alcohol on the teenage brain; the earlier kids start using alcohol and drugs, studies show the more susceptible they are to addiction, even more so than the adult brain. Teens who drink are more likely to drive drunk, be promiscuous and experiment with other drugs. The Essex County DA, Atty. Jonathan Bodgett, notes that while it's the fatalities that make headlines, he sees a disturbing number of sexual assault cases among Essex County teens involving drinking. "We know that young people who drink are more likely to use illegal drugs, have sexual contact against their will, and be victims of rape, assault and robbery than teens who do not drink." (*More info—for the full article, "Teen Drinking: The Whole Story," go to www.tritowncouncil.org*)

ACT: Do not accept underage drinking as a phase. With each year that you postpone the first use, the risk of addiction reduces exponentially. Tell your kids of these risks, and if asked about your past, phrase it in such a way that is about your concern for them. "When I was younger we didn't know as much about drug and alcohol use as we do now. What I am most concerned about is ensuring your health and safety."

It's just a phase. They'll grow out of it. I can't stop them from doing the same things I did at their age.

If I set limits, my kids won't be popular.

FACT: Kids whose parents are involved in their lives are less likely to use alcohol and drugs. Survey after survey shows that fear of disappointing parents is still the primary reason kids choose *not* to use. (*More info—www.abovetheinfluence.com*)

ACT: Talk to your teen about your expectations. Set rules and enforce them. The more often parents set clear rules and enforce those rules, they lower the risk that their children will abuse drugs and alcohol.

FACT: Kids get their alcohol predominantly from their homes and their friends' homes. They count on parents "not paying attention" to get away with either sneaking alcohol or "hiding it in plain sight" at gatherings in each other's homes (note that "sleepovers" can play a part in this).

ACT: Make the call! You will be surprised to learn many parents do. Even if you know the parents, check to make sure they will be home (we don't want to believe our kids lie, but the truth is not always clear). Ask if an adult will be home and if that adult will be checking in on them. If they are hanging out at your house - pay attention. It's your house! Check on your kids when they are having friends over, popping in and out periodically to see if they need anything. No need to hover — sometimes knowing you are vigilant can be deterrent enough.

When my kids go to their friend's homes, I don't usually call the parents. It would embarrass my kid. Sometimes, I just don't know the parents well enough to call.

Social host liability doesn't apply to me or my teen.

FACT: Simply put—underage drinking is against the law. Period. Both parents and teens can be held both criminally and civilly liable with regard to underage drinking depending on the circumstances of the situation (at home, rented hotel room, or any place over which you have control). (*More info—www.socialhostliability.org*)

ACT: Learn the facts about the law regarding Social Host Liability and discuss with your teen. Make sure they know that THEY—despite their age—can be held liable for providing alcohol to underage friends. There is too much at stake for this avoidable mistake; know the law. Go to www.tritowncouncil.org to watch a recent presentation by Atty. Richard Campbell on Social Hosting and how it applies to you.

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR
**Keeping our
teens safe.**

OR CURRENT RESIDENT

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YOUTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION COALITION

RESOURCES...

FOR YOU:

- Socialhostility.org
- SearchInstitute.org
- National Institute on Drug (NIDA) drugabuse.gov
- adolescent-substance-abuse.com
- SAMHSA.gov
- Parentingteensinfo.com
- Bethewall.org
- Drugfree.org

More resources on TTC's Facebook page

FOR YOUR TEEN:

- Project Safety Net
24/7 Crisis Hotline 978-771-4619
- abovetheinfluence.com
- sadd.org
- NIDA for teens - teens.drugabuse.gov
- thecoolspot.gov
- lovesrespect.org