REALLY GREAT BRAND

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR TEENAGERS

About Alcohol Use: Tips for Parents

YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES OF HADDAM-KILLINGWORTH INC.
Strong families equal strong communities

HADDAM KILLINGWORTH COMMUNITY COALITION

Effective Strategies for Open Conversations

Choose the right time and place to discuss alcohol use with your teen, ensuring a comfortable environment.

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

Why Now?

It's important for parents to talk to their middle schoolers about alcohol even if it feels too early because early conversations build trust and open lines of communication before kids face peer pressure. Hearing from parents first helps them make informed choices. Starting these talks early also gives parents a chance to set clear expectations and provide accurate information, reducing the mystery and temptation around alcohol use.

Conversation Starters

"I noticed that character in the show we watched was drinking. What do you think about that? Have kids at school mentioned alcohol?"

"You're growing up fast, and I want to be someone you can talk to about anything—even if you're just curious. I'll always be honest with you."

"If someone at school offered you alcohol, how do you think you would respond?"

"How can I help you if you ever feel unsure or pressured about alcohol or other substances?"

Tips and Tricks

Keep it calm and open: *Create a relaxed, judgment-free space so your child feels safe asking questions or sharing what they've heard.*

Be clear about your expectations: *Let them know where you stand on underage drinking and why—it gives them a solid foundation to make healthy choices.*

Use real-life moments to start the conversation: *TV shows, news stories, or social media posts can be great natural openers for meaningful talks.*

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR HIGH SCHOOLERS

Why Now?

Talking with high school students about alcohol is crucial—they're more independent, exposed to riskier situations, and making more decisions on their own. Early and consistent conversations help protect them during key social events like parties, prom, graduation, and sporting events. Teens who know their parents' expectations are more likely to delay drinking and make safer choices when faced with peer pressure. It's not about one big talk—it's about ongoing, honest conversations that evolve as your teen grows.

Conversation Starters

"What do you think about how alcohol is shown on social media or in movies?"

"If someone offered you a drink at a party, what would you do?"

"Do you think most teens drink? Why or why not?"

"What would you need from me if you were in a situation involving alcohol?"

Tips and Tricks

- ***Set clear, consistent rules and consequences.*** *Teens need boundaries, even if they push against them—clarity helps them make safer choices.*
- ***Keep communication two-way.*** *Listen more than you lecture. Ask open-ended questions and respect their thoughts and experiences.*
- ***Reinforce healthy coping skills.*** *Stress, anxiety, and peer pressure are real—help them build confidence in saying no and choosing alternatives.*

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR YOUNG ADULTS

Why Now?

Just because your child is legally an adult doesn't mean your influence is gone—in fact, parental support continues to be a major protective factor. Ages 18–21 are high-risk years for alcohol use, especially with the pressures of college, work, parties, and new freedoms. Talking now helps your young adult think critically, navigate risky situations, and make informed, responsible choices. They may seem more independent, but many still look to their parents for guidance—even if they don't always show it.

Conversation Starters

"How are you managing stress or pressure at work/school without turning to alcohol or substances?"

"What's the culture around drinking like where you are? Do you ever feel pressured?"

"If you're ever in a situation where you or a friend needs help getting home safely, how can I support you?"

"Have you heard about how alcohol can impact brain development and decision-making into your early 20s?"

Tips and Tricks

- ***Stay connected without being controlling.*** *Keep open, respectful conversations going. Ask how they're doing, not just what they're doing.*
- ***Focus on health, safety, and goals.*** *Frame the conversation around how alcohol can impact what they care about—sports, career plans, relationships, or mental health.*
- ***Model and reinforce responsible behavior.*** *Talk about your own choices with alcohol, including how you manage stress or socialize without relying on drinking.*