

• *Communicate*

• *Role Model*

• *Become Involved*

The Power of Networking

When our children are young we get to know the parents of their friends fairly easily. As our children get older, they become more independent and building relationships with other parents becomes more difficult. Although friends become more important to our children in their teen years, it does not mean that having parents involved in their lives is any less important.

Networking with other parents can be a powerful tool in preventing your child from using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs or becoming involved in other risky behaviours. It can help you:

1. Learn about your child's social environment
2. Predict problem situations before they occur and
3. Prepare your children to make safe and healthy choices throughout their lives.

Networking becomes especially important as your children enter high school and their get-togethers become more frequent and involve them going to the homes of parents you do not know. It is important to know where these parents stand on the issue of alcohol and other drug use and to ensure that they are

present when teens gather at their homes. A 2006 survey by the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University reveals that teens who say parents are not present at the parties they attend are 16 times more likely to say alcohol is available, 15 times more likely to say illegal and prescription drugs are available and 29 times more likely to say marijuana is available, compared to teens who say parents are always present at the parties they attend. Another interesting finding of this survey is that 98% of parents say they are present during parties they allow their teens to have at home, but 33% of teens report that parents are rarely or never present at parties they attend.

Friends are so important to our children. As parents, it is our job to get to know the parents of these friends. That way, we can discuss expectations about what our teens do and how they behave. Also, it's nice to know there is strength in numbers - we're not the only one raising teens.

"We must be the change we wish to see." - Gandhi

PREVENTION TIPS

Tips on Building a Network with Parents

- If you don't know the parents of your child's friends, take the initiative and call them or invite them over to develop a relationship.
- Organize a directory of phone numbers and email addresses and keep it handy by the phone.
- Call the friends' parents to give them details about a party or other activity your child is hosting. Then they'll be sure to do the same.
- Call other parents to make sure they will be present during a party or get together and that there will be no alcohol or other drugs present.
- Talk with other parents about rules around alcohol and other drug use, curfews, movies, computer use, sexual activity and other issues to make sure parents know where you stand.
- Ask other parents to call you if they find your child involved with alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and/or committing violent acts.
- Identify places in your community where trouble occurs, including sources of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Restrict your child's access to these places and discuss your concerns with other parents.
- Get involved with parent groups and school organizations to connect with other parents and address risky teen behaviour in your community.

If your community has a substance abuse prevention event or activity you'd like to share with our readers, please contact Cathy Mah at cathymah@ades.bc.ca © 2007

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ASK AN EXPERT

My daughter is starting to go to more parties and social gatherings since she has entered high school. How can I support her in not using alcohol or other drugs?

Many factors contribute to the choices youth make during the critical years of adolescence. Decisions pertaining to alcohol and other drug use are no exception. Fortunately, parents still have influence. Prevention research clearly identifies family "protective factors" and family "risk factors" that impact the overall resilience of young people and their ability to navigate the challenges of adolescence, including alcohol and other drug use. Some examples of "protective factors" include a high degree of family support, positive family communication, family involvement in schooling, setting clear boundaries within the family about rules and expectations, positive adult role models, and values that encourage the constructive use of time (sports, clubs, music lessons, volunteer work). Conversely, "risk factors" include poverty and economic deprivation, poor family communication and conflict, association with anti-social peers, family alcohol or other drug use, poor parent-child bonding, and overall poor family management. Regardless of one's circumstances, however, it's never too late to begin strategic parenting.

The following 7 practical strategies will help parents delay their children's first exposure to alcohol or other drugs and hopefully "buffer" them from any significant problems associated with substances:

1. **Increase supervision:** the more youth are monitored, the less trouble they get into.
2. **Communicate and connect:** share "comfort time" together, be curious and ask questions about today's youth culture, know your child well
3. **Network with other parents:** good relationships with other parents will help keep you "in the loop"
4. **Provide your child with opportunities that promote competence and confidence:** success helps empower youth, boosting their self esteem.
5. **Get educated:** familiarize yourself with the signs and symptoms of problematic drug use
6. **Monitor money spent:** request receipts if necessary
7. **Stop enabling:** let your child experience the natural consequences of their choices, don't rescue.

Though youth might indicate otherwise, parents and family are still highly valued by young people. Leverage your relationship accordingly.

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RESOURCES

Books:

1. Clavier, Ron, 2005, **Teen Brain Teen Mind, What Parents Need to Know to Survive the Adolescent Years** (Paperback), Key Porter Books

Review -

www.theparentreport.com/books/display_book.html?book_id=171

2. Schwebel, Robert, 1998, **Saying No Is Not Enough: Helping Your Kids Make Wise Decisions About Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs**, Newmarket Press

Synopsis and review -
www.newmarketpress.com/title.asp?id=440

- For a regular subscription to our newsletters, [click here](#)
- To enjoy all the benefits of an Alcohol-Drug Education Service membership, [click here](#)

COMMUNITY CORNER

Cranbrook High School Drug Free Scholarship

For the past three years the community of Cranbrook has awarded a student who has chosen a drug-free lifestyle with a scholarship worth \$1400.00 to pursue postsecondary education.

The money for the scholarship is raised through a golf tournament organized by the RCMP. Students must fill out an application which includes a 500 word essay explaining why being drug free has and continues to be important to them. In addition, students provide 3 references who can attest to their drug-free lifestyle.

The scholarship is growing in popularity with the number of applicants increasing each year.



Lainey Klassen DARE scholarship winner

This is an excellent way to celebrate youth who have chosen to live a healthy lifestyle. It is one of many prevention initiatives Cranbrook and the RCMP provide for their community.

For more information contact Alan Nutini of the RCMP Drugs & Organized Crime Awareness Service at (250)420-4219 or



Available Resources & Workshops

Making Decisions Series

A leading education initiative to combat drug and alcohol abuse and encourage social responsibility. < [More info](#)

Grades 4, 6, 7, 8 & 9

Parents as Preventors™

Workshops designed for parents, emphasizes the central role parents play in influencing their children to make healthy choices regarding alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

< [More info](#)

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