

Teens, Alcohol, Marijuana and Reality... Setting the framework for healthy communication

Kevin P. Haggerty, MSW, Ph.D.

How to begin the conversation

“You are really important to us, we want what is best for you, we want you to....”

“I’ve been hearing talk amongst other parents and...

“This may seem out of the blue but I think it’s important that...we talk about our expectations/family rules on drugs and alcohol.”

“What is your thinking/expectation on this front?”

“Well, our position is...

“We are taking this position because we know that early exposure to drugs and alcohol (can impair your brain development; lead to bad/potentially dangerous choices; etc...—choose the ones that will most resonate with your child).”

“Because you are so important to us/because we know that sometimes your teen brain isn’t fully capable of always making the wisest decisions, we will be helping you to stay within these guidelines by:

- Calling your friends parents before you go over to their house
- Helping you practice refusal skills
- Providing lots of opportunities for you and your friends to get together and have fun WITHOUT alcohol (taking them to movies, sporting events, paintball, performances--have parents in the audience throw in their ideas/suggestions)

“We will trust you to follow these, and if you don’t there will be consequences.”

List potential consequences here:

Language that build responsibility and respect:

What’s your understanding of ...?

What do you think you need to accomplish next?

What do you need to do to ...?

Let me be sure I understand ...

What kind of things did you find out...?

Your ideas count!

I’d like to hear your opinion about...

I’d love to hear what you have to say about...

What do you think we can do to improve ...

What do you like most about...? Least about...?

If we could make our family better, what would you like to see us do?

*What **are you feeling about** ...?*

Notes on developing clear guidelines:

Imagine yourself driving on a winding mountain road at night in the rain without any guardrails along the side of the road--how would you feel? Clear expectations from parents act as a guardrail and protector for our teen's behavior. Here are some tips for developing clear guidelines:

G=Create clear and specific guidelines.

Examples:

- You will not drink any alcoholic beverages for example, beer, wine, hard liquor or drinks made from liquor until you are of legal age.
- No one in our family will accept a ride with anyone who appears to be or is actually under the influence of a drug, but will instead stay where you are and call home for a ride.

Other _____

M=Monitor

Examples: Hugging, kissing goodnight, talking to other parents, calling to ask about supervision at parties.

Other _____

C=Celebrate and Consequence

Examples of celebrations: "Hey, you've done a great job!", family celebration night.

Examples of consequences: Family problem solving meeting, restrictions, reduced freedoms, individual talk with the teen.

Other _____



Identify an area where you feel you need to set clearer and more specific guidelines for behavior in your family:

G=Create clear and specific guidelines (have a good reason).

M=Monitor

C=Celebrate and Consequence

Situations to consider.....

You've come to recognize that you smell cigarette smoke when your teen comes home. When you ask about it your teen explains that some of his/her friends have a cigarette sometimes. They go on to explain that of course they never smoke. Based on your GMC—what would you do in this situation?

Your teen is hosting a party and someone brings alcohol and suggests they drink it. Your teen tells you about this and asks what they should do with their friend. Based on your GMC-what would you do in this situation?

While coming into a basketball game you see students hanging around a car. They look like they have been drinking. Based on your GMC—what would you do in this situation?

Your kid says he's going to a friends to spend the night, the other teen tells his parents he's coming over to your house. Both friends end up at a party that gets busted by the police. Based on your GMC—what would you do in this situation?

After a week-end away, you come home to find that your 17 year old had a party while you were gone. They police were called to your house. A 15 year old girl had to be taken by an aid unit from the bathtub because she had alcohol poisoning. Based on your GMC—what would you do in this situation?

Your 15 year old son calls you shortly after you dropped him off to do a team project with some other kids. He tells you he's "not feeling well" and wants to come home right away. When you pick him up he lets you know that he was feeling a lot of pressure by the other kids to get high. Based on your GMC—what would you do in this situation?

Your 14 year old daughter calls you and asks for a ride home from where she is babysitting. When you pick her up she explains that the parents had been drinking and she didn't want to ride with people who had been drinking. Based on your GMC—what would you do in this situation?

While at a family party your 16 year old is offered a drink by one of the oldest boys at the party, s/he accepts the drink. Based on your GMC—what would you do in this situation?

| Risk Factors | <i>Substance Abuse</i> | <i>Teen Delinquency</i> | <i>School Drop-Out</i> | <i>Violence</i> | <i>Depression & Anxiety</i> | |
|---|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Community | | | | | | |
| Availability of Drugs | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| Availability of Firearms | | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| Community Laws and Norms Favorable Toward Drug Use, Firearms, and Crime | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| Media Portrayals of Violence | | | | | ✓ | |
| Transitions and Mobility | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Low Neighborhood Attachment and Community Disorganization | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| Extreme Economic Deprivation | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Family | | | | | | |
| Family History of the Problem Behavior | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Family Management Problems | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Family Conflict | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Favorable Parental Attitudes and Involvement in the Problem Behavior | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| School | | | | | | |
| Academic Failure Beginning in Late Elementary School | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Lack of Commitment to School | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Individual/Peer | | | | | | |
| Early and Persistent Antisocial Behavior | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Alienation and Rebelliousness | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | |
| Friends Who Engage in the Problem Behavior | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Favorable Attitudes Toward the Problem Behavior | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Early Initiation of the Problem Behavior | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Constitutional Factors | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ |

