

ATTACHMENT 5

I. You're the one they depend on.

Many parents underestimate the influence they can have helping their children navigate the difficult decisions that come with adolescence. You might be reluctant to talk to your kids about the dangers of drinking because you think they won't listen to your advice.

- In spite of their peer pressures, your kids look up to **you** more than anyone else. Your wisdom and concern will be major motivators in building their values and guiding their behavior.
- Kids expect and depend on parents to be parents. Being a parent includes sharing information, making rules and imposing limits.
- Your kids might not seem engaged, and might even roll their eyes during your "serious talks." In spite of these signals, they do hear you. And love you for being their parent.

II. New research reveals teen drinking is more dangerous than previously thought.

New findings can help jump-start your conversations with your young teens about the dangers of drinking. This research reveals that teens who drink risk irreversible, long-term brain damage. Alcohol has also been found to cause more health problems than cocaine or heroin.

- To succeed in life, kids will need to have healthy brains and bodies. Teen drinking can ultimately limit boys' attention spans and girls' ability to comprehend visual information.
- Long term brain damage is permanent. This is a consequence of teen drinking that gives new urgency to parent-teen conversations.

III. Many other problems are linked to drinking.

If any substance is associated with poor judgment and reckless behavior, it's alcohol. By talking to your kids about the dangers of drinking, you may head off a host of other problems later – like drug use, personality changes, and car accidents.

- Teens who drink are more likely to experiment with unsafe sex and recreational drugs.
- Teen drinking is correlated with emotional and behavioral problems such as depression, bullying and violence.
- Teens who drink don't do as well in school.

IV. Bad things can happen to good kids.

Good kids from loving families are still vulnerable to the social temptations and peer pressures to drink. Lots of parents try to do their best to set the right example for their kids. It's critical to have ongoing conversations about drinking to counter all the pro-alcohol messages kids are exposed to every day.

- Kids are surrounded by messages – and friends – eager to relate the pleasures of drinking. This makes all kids susceptible to alcohol use.
- Even if you believe your “don’t drink” stance is already understood by your children, there is no substitute for having a focused conversations on this topic.

V. My kids are too young.

Pre-adolescence is the phase when kids first experience new social situations and face new choices, and this makes parental guidance especially important during these years. The best time to start talking to kids about drinking is before they reach their teens and before their first drinking encounter.

- The average age for first drinks is 11 for boys and 13 for girls.
- Binge drinking often begins around 13 and can tend to increase during adolescence.
- By age 14, 41% of children have had at least one drink.
- Drinking before 15 triples a child's risk of developing alcohol addiction and criminal behavior.
- Long before they're thinking about drinking, kids are exposed to a barrage of commercial messages about the pleasures of drinking.

The following messages are concepts that will be tested in child interviews:

- VI. Your brain is not fully developed until your mid-20s. Drinking when your brain is not fully developed may cause permanent damage to your memory and your ability to learn.**

- VII. Even if it seems like we're always making rules and telling you what to do and *not* do, we want you to know about the dangers of drinking alcohol because we care about you. We're trying to help you make good decisions so you can grow up to have a healthy and successful life.**